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8TH BATTALION

The Royal Warwickshire Regt.



Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

A SHORT DESCRIPTION OF THE BATTLE OF BEAUMONT-HAMEL

JULY 1ST, 1916.

COMPILED FROM ACCOUNTS OF THE SURVIVORS
AND OF A VISIT TO THE FIELD OF BATTLE,
MARCH 12TH, 1918,

BY

Brigadier-General W. R. LUDLOW, C.B.

JULY 1ST, 1918.

On the banner of
Cruice you spoke of
the Royal warrant
Repunit: the attached may be
of interest to you as I was informed
in writing by Mr. Bah? in 1908. &
Cruice was 1913 It was almost
wiped out on July 1, 1916.

8TH BATTALION
The Royal Warwickshire Regt.



Dulce et decorum est pro patria mori.

A VISIT TO THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD.

STORY OF THE GALLANTRY OF THE WARWICKS.

HOW THE OFFICERS AND MEN ATTACKED THE ENEMY.

It will be no doubt of interest to the many relatives and friends of the 1/6th and 1/8th Battalions of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment for me to give an account of a visit I paid to the Somme Battlefield about a week before the Germans commenced their great thrust for Amiens. The object in view was to endeavour to locate the grave of my son and those of the many officers and men of the 1/8th Battalion who fell in action on July 1, 1916, and a description of the part taken by these two battalions on that memorable day can now be made public. The position is best illustrated by the diagram below:—

4TH DIVISION.

31st Division.	11th BRIGADE.		29th Division.
	1/8th R.W.R.	1st Rifle Brigade. 1st East Lancs.	
	1/6th R.W.R.	1st Somerset L.I. 1st Hampshires.	
	10th BRIGADE.		
	1st R.W.R.	1st Essex.	
	1st Dub. Fus.	1st Seaforths.	

In support were the 12th Brigade, with the 48th Division in rear. It will thus be seen that the two Birmingham battalions were allotted the place of danger and of honour, there being eight Regular battalions of the Old Contemptibles in the two brigades. On the right of the position to be attacked was the village of Beaumont Hamel, and on the left the hamlet of Serre. The ground rose gradually for about 2,000 yards to these villages, and was honeycombed with a series of deep chalk pits, giving every advantage, both of grazing and overhead fire, while an acute salient, known as the quadrilateral, gave a flanking fire along the whole position, which bristled with machine guns. A previous air reconnaissance provided a most accurate map of the position, showing every detail, and every officer and a proportion of the N.C.O.'s had a map served out to them. The enemy's trenches were everywhere protected by wire, and the nearest trench was about 800 yards distant. At that stage of the war the artillery had not been brought to such a pitch of perfection as it is to-day, and the preliminary bombardment only partially destroyed the enemy's wire or cut broad lanes through it. The 1/8th Battalion, as were each of those engaged, was about 800 strong, while 200 were in reserve manning the original trenches in case of a counter-attack. The total storming infantry in the 10th and 12th Brigades were nearly 8,000 men, and the frontage of the objective near the quadrilateral was 400 yards. There was not a vestige of cover between the German trenches and our own, but there was a slight rise in their direction. The objective was Pendant Copse. On the previous night all front battalions were moved back to the fourth line of trenches, the first three being lightly held. The reserve division was in the vicinity of Mailly Maillet.

A FORMIDABLE POSITION.

On looking at the position to be attacked from our first line of trenches marked with a board "Old British Line," it seemed an impossibility for any troops to attack it successfully, and well might the officers say as they strung over the top, "We are in for it this time, by Jove!" The Germans opened with a terrific bombardment of the three front-line trenches. The battalion moved off to the assault at 7-30 a.m. on July 1st in eight successive waves of skirmishers at three paces apart, rifles being carried at the port and bayonets fixed. All the officers were in line with the men, and each carried three bombs, as well as 170 rounds of ammunition, entrenching tools, and spade or pick. In addition, between each of the four double companies in the rear were ten men carrying bombs. No other equipment was carried by the men, except a haversack with two days' rations and water bottle. The first, second, third and fourth lines of German trenches were carried by 7-50 a.m., and at that hour two or three officers found themselves in possession of the position with about 20 unwounded men, which number was subsequently increased by various regiments of the Regular brigade to between 150 and 200. Other parties of men and officers had penetrated into the village of Serre and to the outskirts of Beaumont Hamel. The position was held tenaciously until half-past one, but the 29th and 31st Divisions, having failed to reach their objectives, Beaumont Hamel and Serre, the 4th Division was ordered to retire. Our aeroplanes did magnificent work, and drove off the Germans, and messages were constantly sent back for reinforcements, more ammunition and bombs, but such was the intensity of the artillery fire kept up by the enemy on No Man's Land that the 6th Battalion, which followed, suffered heavily, arriving in the wake of the 8th with only about 25 men, and was unable to render any effective aid beyond helping to consolidate the ground already won.

SAVED VERDUN AND PARIS.

The object of this assault was to occupy the German guns and the attention of the enemy while the French and ourselves were taking a position at Pozieres, but the real value was that this great attack served to keep the German forces busy and prevented the French from being crushed at Verdun. In the opinion of officers I have seen and talked with, it was this offensive which saved Verdun and probably Paris. It was a gain of the utmost value. The 10th and 12th Brigades were unable to relieve the 11th in consequence of the intensity of the fire. The brigadier was killed early in the action when in the act of crossing No Man's Land by moving his Brigade Headquarters from the Old British Line trenches to the German trenches taken by the 8th Warwicks and while leading and cheering on the 1/8th Battalion in the assault; prior to this he christened the 11th Brigade the "stone wall brigade" on account of its gallantry, courage, and determination. The distance between the successive waves of the advance was 100 yards, and eye-witnesses have described it as being just like an advance on an Aldershot field day, the distance kept and the dressing of the men being remarkable. As there was no prospect of the supporting troops coming up in sufficient numbers to hold the position, and the advance of 29th and 31st Division being stopped, the Germans in the afternoon organised a strong counter-offensive, and large numbers of wounded and dead officers and men of the 1/8th Battalion had to be left behind in the German lines. Several officers were killed and wounded when they had taken the position at the final stage of the objective by Germans who came out of dugouts behind and threw bombs among them.

A HEAVY CASUALTY LIST.

90 per cent. in the 1/8th.

In those days there were no "mopping up" parties regularly told off to clear out these nests of the enemy left behind in the course of our advance, and this accounted for

the enormous number of casualties. Very few prisoners indeed were taken on either side, and it was only those who were wounded who fell into the hands of the Germans, and as far as could be ascertained only one officer and four men of the 8th were taken prisoners, and these were all severely wounded before capture. All the officers were dressed as nearly as possible like the men and took their place in line with them, but did not carry rifles. One officer, however, carried a Winchester Repeater shot gun, with which he did good execution on arriving in the German trenches. It was originally intended that the 1/6th Warwicks were to have gone through the 8th, and taken the fifth and sixth lines of German trenches, which were on higher ground in front of the village of Serre, but they were decimated before they got to the position. The consequence was that from the bombing and machine-gun fire from the German trenches in the fifth and sixth lines, and the high ground beyond, the casualties were so heavy that the remnant who got to the fourth line of German trenches were forced with the 8th to retire in the shell holes and craters in No Man's Land, where they lay until it was dark and could retire in comparative safety into their own lines. There are several large craters on the ground to-day, three of them being within 100 yards of each other on the road to the Mailly Maillet Serre Road, and they would be 60ft. to 80ft. in diameter, while there are others in different parts of the lines, and it was due to the existence of these craters made by our mines that the survivors of the two gallant Birmingham battalions escaped. The other battalions forming the 11th Brigade suffered almost in the same proportion.

The splendid heroism displayed by these two Territorial Battalions was the admiration of the Regular Brigade to whom they were attached. Well may Warwickshire and the City of Birmingham be proud of their fine discipline and glorious sacrifice, which have added another immortal page in the history of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment.

CEMETERIES OF THE SOMME BATTLEFIELD.

WHERE MEN OF THE MIDLANDS FOUGHT AND DIED.

GROUND NOW IN GERMAN OCCUPATION.

I left Amiens with my interpreter before daybreak on March 11th for Albert on a train which was packed with French women and children sitting on the floor of our carriage, who were returning to their ruined homes from which they had been driven before the French occupation of Peronne. At 8 o'clock we arrived at Albert, which was the headquarters of an army corps, and had suffered very severely, the town being partly in ruins and the magnificent statue of the Virgin and Child hanging tragically down from the spire of the Cathedral. The corps headquarters placed every facility for my inspection on explaining my errand and showing the sketch of the spot where my son fell, and we were at once furnished with large-scale maps showing the line of the British and Hun trenches as they existed in 1916. From there we went to the Graves Registration Department and discussed the matter thoroughly with the officers in charge, who showed us maps on the wall over which they worked, covering a distance of about 18 miles long and 20 miles wide. This was shaded off into different areas showing the battle areas that had been cleared and the number of graves identi-

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fied. It did not include the Serre and Beaumont Hamel areas and a good many others, but they had already located many thousand graves and made a large number of cemeteries. This gives some faint idea of the awful losses which have taken place in the blood-stained fields of the Somme. We were advised to go to Avuloy, a village about three miles away, where there was a working party. The weather was extremely hot, but we got a lift in a motor and walked the rest. Avuloy and what were woods have been the scene of some of the fiercest fighting around Albert during the last fortnight. It was like all the rest of the villages, more or less of a ruin, with a few houses standing, and in a small hut we found the working party; but as they were all in some distant part of the area we had to return to Albert by the same means.

A SCENE OF DESOLATION.

Later on in the morning, through the kindness of the Graves Registration Department, a motor and a guide were placed at our disposal, and after a few miles we got beyond the cultivated area to the old battlefield of Beaumont Hamel, Serre, Auchenvilliers, Hebuterne, Foncvilliers, and Goumercourt. These were only names upon the map, as there is nothing to denote that they have ever been occupied as human habitations. Having located the village of Serre, we worked our way back along the road south to the point where the old British line of 1916 crossed. When I visited the spot on March 12, beyond this village, of which only the outside walls of a few houses remained standing, the country was a complete waste, a series of rolling plains covered with thick coarse brown grass, every tree, hedge and pollard had disappeared, and only mounds covered with grass showed where villages had been. A few cabbages or broccoli struggled through the matted surface, and stumps of apple trees denoted what had once been gardens and

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flourishing orchards. The trenches were grown over or had fallen in, or filled with water in places, while the whole area was a mass of old shell holes. The high road from Mailly Maillet was like a bright ribbon winding up and down the slopes, but every tree which formerly bordered it had vanished. It was here that the 8th Battalion consolidated the fourth line German trench. Several of the officers, including my son, were seen shouting out to their men, "That's our objective," smoking cigarettes, and waving them on. The 1/8th Battalion lost heavily, but after being reinforced and reorganised, it again took part in the victorious advance in the direction of Cambrai, and was the first battalion that entered the town of Peronne. A message was sent to them that they were in their wrong place, as they were far in advance of their objective, but having covered their front with machine-guns, they sent back a message saying that they intended to hold on and to have Peronne on their colours. This, alas, is again in the hands of the Germans.

RELICS OF THE BATTLEFIELD.

In the subsequent fighting in the advance on Peronne, and the German retreat from Serre, the whole country has been so badly shelled that it was extremely difficult to get about the area. This part of the field had not been fully explored, and here and there one came across piles of equipment, coats and tunics, rusty rifles, bayonets and frogs, bully beef tins not opened, shells, hand grenades, and boxes of Mills bombs unopened, and all the usual debris of the battlefield. Along the line occupied by the 11th Brigade there were the remains of Huns' skulls, and bones, and shrapnel helmets, in all directions. A number of officers' tin hats were lying about, and one grave with a cross upon it and no inscription, had a tin hat attached to it. One grave was marked by a harrow, but the majority of them were hidden by the tall rank grass

or were destroyed by subsequent shell fire. I sat on the edge of a shell hole opposite to the German position in No Man's Land, and I wondered how it was possible that any troops in the world could attack such a position in broad daylight on a lovely July morning. From careful investigation it was obvious that the wire had not been completely destroyed. There was not sufficient cover for a mouse, except that which was afforded by the shell holes in moving forward to the attack. Anyone would feel very proud and sad at the same time that two splendid battalions, which I once had the honour of commanding, should have behaved so splendidly and been attached to the immortal brigade of Regulars which formed the storming troops on that wonderful day. It was quite possible to realise and to understand, with the German artillery pounding No Man's Land, that the reserves were unable to come up and consolidate the position, and I regard it as a sheer impossibility, unless the same tactics were adopted as the Germans in moving on in massed formation, almost shoulder to shoulder. Within the old German lines is the Serre Road Cemetery No. 1, a little square of about one acre, crowded with graves of our gallant regiments. A great number of these were nameless and inscribed to "an unknown British officer" or "an unknown British soldier," but there were a great many names of old friends in the rank and file, although I could find very few officers. About 100 yards to the right of Serre Road Cemetery No. 1 was a very fine stone obelisk with a bronze inscription and bronze chains and posts round it, bearing the following inscription in French: "To the brave soldiers of the 242nd Regiment, who died for their country, June 15th, 1915," and the thought ran through my mind that my friends in Birmingham might wish to see a similar suitable memorial to the 6th and 8th Battalions, which might be erected after the war. On a slight rise in the ground to the west of the cemetery was a wooden cross to an officer of the Somerset

Light Infantry, bearing the following inscription: "God buried him, and no man knoweth his sepulchre, 1st July, 1916."

PERMANENT TOMBSTONES.

Serre Road Cemetery No. 2 lies about 300 yards in front of the old line on the east of the road, and mainly consists of graves of the officers and rank and file of regiments of the 11th Brigade. There is another cemetery at Mailly Mailliet, containing a large number of graves of men of the regiments who took part in the fighting on July 1, 1916. As this part of the battlefield has not been thoroughly examined or cleared, there are only approximately one-tenth of the number who fell in that battle who had been identified and buried within the area of these cemeteries, and now it will be even more difficult to trace their graves, as the Hun is occupying all his old trenches, and no doubt busily improving and digging fresh ones, and the ground will be further ploughed up with shot and shell. So we must attach the same inscription as that of the Somerset Light Infantry, and say, "God buried them, and no man knoweth their sepulchre," but I am sure that the citizens of Birmingham will wish to have a suitable memorial of these two brave battalions on or near the spot. The many hours I was on the battlefield I never saw a single sign of life of any kind or description, or traffic, nor were there any signs of large bodies of troops anywhere within the immediate neighbourhood. On arrival again at Albert, the Graves Registration Staff promised to prosecute the search, but of course this is now impossible. They also showed us a book of designs which the army are getting out for permanent tombstones to replace the wooden crosses, which were very simple and beautiful, and the cost will be kept down, so that people with very modest means may have a permanent memorial to their dear ones. On the journey back to Amiens I was much struck with the marshy nature

of the ground, the numerous canals and obstacles that there are in the way of an army advancing from Albert, and although they may destroy the city of Amiens, and have communication by distant shell fire, yet it will be an exceedingly difficult position to take by storm, and let us hope it will prove another Verdun or Ypres to Hindenburg and his army, and another nail in the Kaiser's coffin.

W. R. Ludlow

Colonel and Hon. Brig. Gen.

LOVELACE HILL,
SOLIHULL.
JULY 1st, 1918.

ROSTER of Officers of the 1/8th Battalion Royal Warwickshire Regiment who took part in Attack on German Trench System known as the Quadrilateral, N. of Beaumont-Hamel. July 1st, 1916.

HEADQUARTERS.

Lieut.-Col. E. A. INNES, C.M.G. Killed.
 Major J. N. TOWNSEND, D.S.O. Wounded.
 Lieut. and Adjutant A. PROCTOR, M.C. Killed.
 Signalling Officer: Lieut. H. M. JONES Wounded.
 Medical Officer: Lieut. F. N. WALSH Wounded.

A Company.

Captain C. W. MARTIN, D.S.O. Wounded.
 Lieut. L. W. AUSTER Wounded.
 Lieut. J. G. FUSSELL Killed.
 2nd Lieut. J. RICHARDS. (In reserve.) Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. R. H. FISH Wounded.

B Company.

Lieut. C. HOSKINS Killed.
 Lieut. R. BLOCK. (In reserve.) Killed.
 2nd Lieut. E. R. SHUTTLEWORTH Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. S. H. ANSTEY Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. L. GRIFFITHS Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. J. TURNER, M.C. Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. S. W. PEPPER Killed in a subsequent Action.

C Company.

Captain SKERATFORD W. LUDLOW Killed.
 Captain D. R. ADAMS Wounded.
 Lieut. R. ADAMS, M.C. Killed.
 2nd Lieut. F. HEATH Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. E. A. BRETTELL Wounded and Prisoner.
 2nd Lieut. F. FREEMAN Killed.
 *2nd Lieut. LAING.

D Company.

Major A. A. CADDICK Killed.
 Captain S. N. COXON, M.C. Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. J. TEAGUE Wounded.
 2nd Lieut. F. W. WAREHAM Killed.
 2nd Lieut. F. B. KEY Killed.
 2nd Lieut. J. DENNISON Killed in a subsequent Action.

Transport Officer.

2nd Lieut. W. DURAND.

Quartermaster.

Lieut. C. HARDING.

The casualties among the rank and file were 573 out of 600 who took part in the assault, exclusive of officers. There were only five prisoners out of the casualties, one of whom was an officer, and all severely wounded.

* The only unwounded officer.

From LIEUT.-GENERAL SIR AYLMER HUNTER-WESTON, K.C.B., D.S.O.
To ALL OFFICERS, N.C.O.'s and MEN of the VIII ARMY CORPS.

In so big a command as an Army Corps of four Divisions (about 80,000 men) it is impossible for me to come round all front line trenches, and all billets, to see every man as I wish to do. You must take the will for the deed, and accept this printed message in place of the spoken word.

It is difficult for me to express my admiration for the splendid courage, determination, and discipline displayed by every Officer, N.C.O., and man of the Battalions that took part in the great attack on the Beaumont-Hamel-Serre position on the 1st July. All observers agree in stating that the various waves of men issued from their trenches and moved forward at the appointed time in perfect order, undismayed by the heavy artillery fire and deadly machine-gun fire. There were no cowards nor waverers, and not a man fell out. It was a magnificent display of disciplined courage worthy of the best traditions of the British Race.

Very few are left of my old comrades, the original "Contemptibles," but their successors in the 4th Division have shown that they are worthy to bear the honours gained by the 4th Division at their first great fight at Fontaine-au-Pire and Ligny, during the great Retreat and greater Advance across the Marne and Aisne, and in all the hard fighting at Ploegsteert and at Ypres. Though but a few of my old comrades, the heroes of the historic landing at Cape Helles, are still with us, the 29th Division of to-day has shown itself capable of maintaining his high traditions, and has proved itself worthy of its hard-earned title of "The Incomparable 29th."

The 31st New Army Division and the 48th Territorial Division, by the heroism and discipline of the units engaged in this their first big battle, have proved themselves worthy to fight by the side of such magnificent regular Divisions as the 4th and 29th. There can be no higher praise.

We had the most difficult part of the line to attack. The Germans had fortified it with skill and immense labour for many months; they had kept their best troops here, and had assembled North, East, and South-East of it a formidable collection of artillery and many machine-guns.

By your splendid attack you held the enemy forces here in the North, and so enabled our friends in the South, both British and French, to achieve the brilliant success that they have. Therefore, though we did not do all we hoped to do, you have more than pulled your weight, and you and our even more glorious comrades who have preceded us across the "Great Divide," have nobly done your duty.

We have got to stick it out, and go on hammering. Next time we attack, if it please God, we will not only pull our weight, but will pull off a big thing. With such troops as you, who are determined to stick it out and do your duty, we are certain of winning through to a glorious victory.

I salute each Officer, N.C.O., and Man of the 4th, 29th, 31st and 48th Divisions as a comrade in arms, and I rejoice to have the privilege of commanding such a band of heroes as the VIII Corps have proved themselves to be.

H.-Q. VIII CORPS,
 4th July, 1916.

AYLMER HUNTER-WESTON,
 Lieut.-General.