

CHAPTER XIX

THE TAKING AND HOLDING OF THE POZIÈRES HEIGHTS

THE position on the Pozzières heights on July 29th was still practically as the 1st Australian Division had left it—the Germans on the crest in the O.G. Lines and Brind's Road,¹ and the 2nd Australian Division on the plateau before them, close in front of Pozzières village, faced with the task of preparing a new attack. The policy pursued by Sir Douglas Haig since July 23rd had brought a complete change over the nature of the struggle. The diarist of III Corps artillery for August 7th comments:

The fighting has now really returned to rather active trench warfare.

It had all the conditions of the minor offensives of trench warfare—small attacks, easily located by the enemy, never penetrating far enough to be clear of further lines of occupied trenches or to disorganise the enemy infantry or artillery, and consequently subject to instant counter-attacks and to concentrated bombardment from most of the surrounding batteries. Haig was now able to give his army commanders a fairly accurate notion as to how long this policy of local offensives would continue—that is to say, how much time must elapse before he had the necessary instruments and troops for the resumption of the wide offensive that he had throughout contemplated. That offensive, he informed them on August 3rd, would probably be undertaken about the last half of September. Till then, although the attack was to be continued in close co-operation with the French, its methods must be "suitable to the existing situation." As the enemy had brought up considerable reinforcements and could "continue for some time still to replace his tired troops,"² he must be "worn down" during the present phase. The British at the same time must

practise such economy of men and material as will ensure our having the "last reserves" at our disposal when the crisis of the fight is reached, which may—and probably will—not be sooner than the last half of September.³

¹ Except the small portion of this road captured by the 6th Brigade.

² Letter from Haig's Chief of the General Staff to Generals Rawlinson and Gough.

³ Aug., 1916.

⁴ *Ibid*

Although the intervening phase might "be regarded as a 'wearing-out' battle,"⁴ Haig decided that it should also have a tactical object—"to secure the whole of the Morval-Thiepval Ridge" as a basis for his great attack in September. To this end "the first necessity" was to gain ground on the right—to help forward the French by capturing Guillemont, Falfemont Farm, and Ginchy. "Due regard to economy" was enjoined even here; the attacks of the XIII Corps, which Haig looked upon as his main operation throughout this period of piece-meal fighting, were to be delivered on a front as wide as possible, but to be limited in their objectives.

In the centre the XV and III Corps—from Delville Wood to Munster Alley—were to make "no serious attack," but to prepare for a subsequent one, of which, however, the date was not yet forecast.

On the left the operations, though important, were regarded by Haig as purely secondary:—



For the present, operations west of Munster Alley will be restricted to careful and methodical progress designed to gain possession of Windmill Hill above Pozières, of the enemy's main second line trenches running thence north-westward to about Mouquet Farm, and of the enemy's trenches on the spur between Mouquet Farm and Ovillers-la-Boisselle. Each step in this progression must be thoroughly prepared, and no attack is to be made unless and until its success has been ensured so far as forethought and careful preparation can do so.

The army commanders were warned that all these operations must be carried out "with as little expenditure of *fresh troops*⁵ and of munitions" as circumstances would permit, but that economy was to be sought by ensuring that the attacks would succeed—that is, by carefully selecting the objectives and always employing sufficient troops to capture and hold them.

⁴ Letter from Haig's Chief of the General Staff to Generals Rawlinson and Gough, 3 Aug., 1916

⁵ The italics are not in the original.

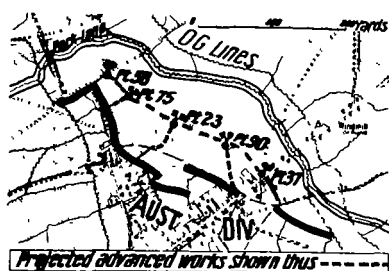
The Australians were, therefore, engaged in what the Commander-in-Chief intended to be merely secondary operations, designed partly to secure the Second Line Ridge, partly to wear down the enemy by tactics that Haig afterwards described as gaining ground "methodically, and without haste, trench by trench."

This aspect of their operations was naturally unknown to the actual participants in the Pozières fighting; but, even had they possessed full knowledge, it is hard to see what meaning the term "methodical progress" could have conveyed to them other than that of a dreadful succession of trench operations renewed daily on a narrow front. Doubtless to the Commander-in-Chief, and possibly to Cabinet, the use of terms implying leisurely progress brought some comfortable assurance of economy of life as well as of munitions; but to the front line the method merely appeared to be that of applying a battering-ram ten or fifteen times against the same part of the enemy's battle-front with the intention of penetrating for a mile, or possibly two, into the midst of his organised defences. The troops of the Anzac Corps were already vaguely conscious of the consequences of this policy. They were to have them seared into their minds by the experiences of the next few weeks.

In the renewal of his difficult attempt the commander of the 2nd Division was not left without assistance. Immediately after the conference on July 29th,⁶ General White, whose tactical ability lay largely in his always seeing an operation whole, wrote out for Legge a number of points of advice embodying a thorough preparation for the attack. Communication trenches were to be advanced; strong-points established at their heads; the strong-points linked together by a new front line; saps then pushed out farther, ending in T-heads, from which posts could guard the new line during assembly. Trench-mortars, field-batteries, and machine-guns should be moved forward and a thorough bombardment carried out. This time the whole operation would "be undertaken deliberately. The actual date will be determined by the progress of preparation."

⁶ See pp. 644-5.

Before the day was out it was obvious that such preparations could not be completed before Sunday night, and that the hope of attacking on the same evening as the Fourth Army was therefore vain. The Fourth Army's attacks were



launched in due course and were everywhere defeated, except between High Wood and Bazentin, where the 34th Division managed to seize and hold part of the "Intermediate Trench." It may here be added that no other operation of importance except three limited attacks⁷ took place on the Somme during the operations of I Anzac Corps dealt with in this chapter.

On the postponement of the 2nd Division's attack, half the artillery of the 1st Division, exhausted by the constant firing of barrages night and day for nearly a fortnight, was at once relieved by putting in the remaining artillery of the 2nd Division, Brigadier-General Johnston, C.R.A. of that division, now relieving Brigadier-General Hobbs. The command of all the artillery in the corps had also changed, a British officer, Brigadier-General Napier,⁸ having assumed it⁹ on the day before the last attack. Napier, having been asked to look with especial care into the artillery arrangements, informed White on July 30th that the O.G. Lines were not yet sufficiently destroyed; that bombardment by heavy howitzers was advisable for the destruction of the wire and indispensable for the demolition of the trenches; that the bombardment would require 4,800 heavy shell, which, if so wished, could be fired in one day by nine batteries, each expending 540 rounds. The plan of barrages devised by

⁷ See pp 670, 676-7. Heavy fighting was of course in progress on other fronts—at Verdun, in Russia, and on the Isonzo.

⁸ Maj.-Gen. W. J. Napier, C.B., C.M.G.; RA. Commanded 7th Brigade, R.G.A., 1915/16; I Anzac Corps Artillery, 1916/17; Director of Artillery, War Office, 1917/20. Of Selkirk, Scotland; b. Selkirk, 10 Nov., 1863. Died 18 Nov., 1925.

⁹ In succession to Brigadier-General C. Cunliffe Owen (also of the British Army), who had been the chief artillery officer of Birdwood's staff since before the Landing.

Napier for the actual attack was based on the supposition that this preparatory bombardment would first have been completed.

As this preparation could be completed in a day, the date for the attack depended upon how long it would take the infantry to dig the requisite 1,400 yards of "jumping-off trench" and the necessary approaches. Accordingly on July 30th Legge was informed that the bombardment would be spread out over the period required by him for this purpose. He had by that time made up his mind that the assembly and attack should not be undertaken in the dark hours; his brigadiers were also opposed to a night attack, hating, as did all men and officers, the bewildering confusion and uncertainty which invariably accompanied trench operations on a large scale carried out in the dark. All three brigadiers appear to have agreed that the troops should assemble towards the end of the day and attack while there was still light enough to see where they were going.¹⁰ Legge consequently fixed the hour for the assault at 9.15 p.m.,¹¹ when there would still be ample light for discerning the objectives. But as this meant assembling the troops in daylight, they must be provided not only with a "jumping-off" trench in which to lie hidden, but also with a completely hidden route to it. To ensure punctuality they must also have separate communication trenches for the several brigades. Legge was of opinion that these works would be finished on August 2nd. The programme of bombardment was therefore provisionally¹² spread out over the intervening days.

The plans for the bombardment were cleverly drawn by Napier in conjunction with the artillery commanders of the Reserve Army and II Corps, and contributed an element of surprise in a campaign in which that most effective of all methods seems generally to have been striven after on a

¹⁰ Holmes also urged that the explosion of heavy shells had a less frightening and confusing effect in daylight than at night.

¹¹ This was "summer time" under a daylight-saving regulation. The true time would be 8.15 p.m.

¹² In case the necessary works were not completed by August 2, White, who was determined that on this occasion there should be no undue haste, added: "The date and time . . . will be decided upon your reports as to the progress of preparations."

small scale, though unattained—or probably discarded as impossible of attainment—in the main offensive. The demolition of the O.G. Lines was to be carried out in four very heavy bombardments, each lasting an hour, by the heavy howitzers of the I Anzac and II Corps. The portion of these lines to be destroyed by each corps¹³ was further divided into battery areas, a particular length of both trenches, O.G.1 and O.G.2, being allotted to each of the heavy batteries taking part. The III Corps would deal with the trenches south of the Bapaume road. The four bombardments were fixed for:

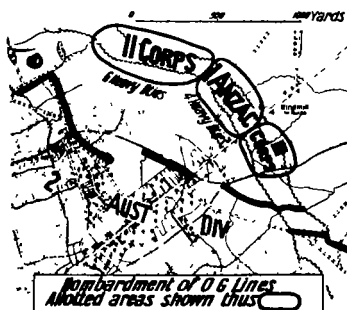
July 31 6-7 p.m.

Aug. 1 11.30 a.m.—12.30 p.m.
7.30-8.30 p.m.

Aug. 2 8-9 p.m.

The Anzac Corps heavy artillery included four siege batteries,¹⁴ which were directed on the trenches, and four batteries of 60-pounder guns,¹⁵ which were used mainly against the enemy's batteries. That of the II Corps included six siege batteries.¹⁶ In each bombardment the following allotment of shells was to be fired:¹⁷

		II Corps (6 batteries)		I Anzac (4 batteries)		Total.
6" howitzer	..	550	..	250	..	800
8" howitzer	..	460	..	180	..	640
9.2" howitzer	..	200	..	200	..	400
						<hr/> 1,840



¹³ The heavy artillery of II Corps, as before, dealt with the O.G. Lines north of The Elbow and that of I Anzac with the sector south of it.

¹⁴ The 45th Heavy Artillery Group, consisting of the 36th, 54th (Australian), 55th (Australian), and 108th Siege Batteries.

¹⁵ The 55th Heavy Artillery Group, consisting of the 132nd, 142nd, 146th, and 156th Siege Batteries.

¹⁶ The 17th, 20th, 27th, 41st, 62nd, and 70th. The work of the 41st Siege Battery was taken over by the 56th on July 31.

¹⁷ These orders were slightly varied, but the alterations are immaterial. The full allotment was usually fired by the 9.2- and 8-inch howitzers, but the 6-inch through certain defects fired less than half of theirs.

For the purposes of the field artillery also, the O.G. Lines were divided in a somewhat similar manner between the brigades and batteries, the Australian batteries dealing with most of the front and those of the neighbouring corps¹⁸ with the flanks. These did not take part in the demolition bombardments of the siege artillery, but in a special series of hurricane barrages, each lasting from ten minutes to half-an-hour and designed to mystify and harass the enemy and to practise the field artillery for the actual attack. The programme of one of these bombardments, which imitated closely that behind which the assault would be launched, was as follows:

Time.

10 min. before "zero"	For ten minutes all fire ceases.
"Zero" to + 5 min. ..	Five minutes' intense fire by 18-pounders on O.G.1. (During this fire, one minute after its commencement, all available heavy howitzers simultaneously fire one shell upon O.G.2. They repeat this two minutes later.)
+ 5 min. to + 8 min.	18-pounders lift their fire to O.G.2 and barrage it intensely for three minutes.
+ 8 min. to + 9 min.	18-pounder fire brought back to O.G.1 for one minute.
+ 9 min. to + 19 min.	No fire.
+ 19 onwards ..	The ordinary night-firing.

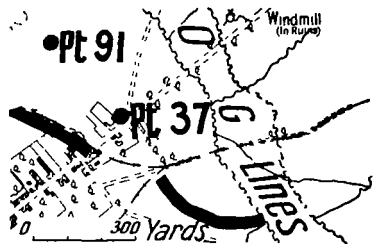
These "special bombardments" were ordered daily, each differing slightly from the others; the series up to August 2nd was as follows:

Night of July 29/30	10.15 p.m. 2.55 a.m.
July 30	noon.
Night of July 30/31	10 p.m. 2.30 a.m.
July 31	2 p.m.
Night of July 31/August 1	10.10 p.m. 3 a.m.
Night of August 1/2	3.10 a.m.

The general order for the other vitally important item of preparation—the digging of the "jumping-off" trench and the whole system of avenues thereto—was issued by Legge on

¹⁸ The artillery of the 25th and 34th British Divisions, detached from their proper divisions, were acting under the II and III Corps respectively, on the flanks of the I Anzac.

July 31st. Certain preliminaries had already been undertaken on the two preceding nights, the southernmost strong-point (known as "Point 37") having been established—again largely through the effort of Captain Kirke of the 18th Battalion—on the main road east of Pozières,¹⁹ and the 2nd Pioneers having also begun a new communication trench which was afterwards continued, chiefly by the 4th Pioneers, through the centre of Pozières and became known as "Centre Way." But the main work did not commence until, late on the afternoon of July 31st, the divisional scheme reached



the engineer companies and pioneer and infantry battalions. It apportioned the task in the forward area between the three brigades, each of which was to send large parties to dig in No-Man's Land, under the direction of engineers, the "jumping-off" trenches for its own battalions and, in general, the communications thereto. The 7th Brigade was not holding any part of the front, but would send up its detachments from bivouac at Tara Hill. As a preliminary, early in the night, before the parties arrived, the engineers were to mark out the position of the "jumping-off" trench 200 yards from and parallel to the enemy's line.

These orders did not reach the 7th Brigade until 6 p.m., and the 7th Field Company, which was responsible for directing the work of that brigade and of the 5th, did not receive its instructions from the latter until 7 o'clock. The scheme was extensive: the "jumping-off" trench was to be marked out and dug three feet in depth in a single night by 250 men of the 6th Brigade and 325 of the 7th—each man digging two yards:

6th Brigade.

250 men to dig 500 yards.

7th Brigade.

325 men to dig 650 yards.

¹⁹ This was almost at the same point where the 5th Field Company under Major Henderson had attempted to dig one on July 25 (*see p. 568*)

Lewis gunners, lying farther out in No-Man's Land, were to cover the digging, and the diggers were to work as far as possible in the shelter of shell-holes; but General Paton, who could not forget how his troops, unprotected by artillery, had been caught in No-Man's Land on the night of July 28th, expressed a hope that the artillery-fire arranged for that night would be sufficiently intense to suppress the German machine-gunners. For digging communication trenches there were allotted other large parties, including 450 men of the 5th Brigade.



Late though the orders were, these detachments were sent forward about dusk to find their allotted positions, General Paton himself remaining at the front till 10 o'clock to assure himself that the parties from his brigade were duly arriving. The night passed, as far as headquarters was aware, without special incident. Next morning, however, the several commanders, expecting to receive reports of the completed work, were shocked by a message from the C.R.E.²⁰ of the 2nd Division stating that, in consequence of German shelling, no work had been done on the forward line. It was afterwards ascertained that this was incorrect, so far as it concerned the 6th Brigade, which, under difficulties presently to be described, had established an outpost on the "jumping-off" line and dug a trench to it; but the forward line of the 7th Brigade had not even been marked out. Legge's chief-of-staff wrote to Paton:

This trench to be dug to-night is most important, and I do not think your officers quite realised it last night. I would like you to put a senior officer in charge to-night to see the thing through. We may have to put up with some casualties, but all ranks should know

²⁰ Officer commanding engineers—Lieutenant-Colonel S. F. Newcombe. R.E. (the same who afterwards took part in the campaign in Arabia).

that the work is to save our men in the attack. . . . The 6th Brigade got half of their trench down last night and expect to finish it to-night. Will you give this your personal attention? . . . If the attack is to be made in daylight there must be lines in which troops can form up. . . .

It is probably true that the importance of the work was not understood by the battalions; it is certain that the staff of Corps and Army had not, then or afterwards, the faintest conception of the circumstances in which it had to be performed; nor were they fully realised at the headquarters of division or even of brigades. The difficulty to be met in one part of the preparation—the work of entrenching—was directly caused by the other part—the bombardment. The demolition bombardments, inflicting great suffering on the enemy and obviously heralding some offensive, and the surprise bombardments, conveying the impression that the attack was imminent, seldom failed to sting the enemy to a furious reply. Sometimes, believing himself attacked, he replied with his full barrage on front trenches and communications; at other times, recognising the ruse, he answered with a retaliatory bombardment intended to be sharply felt. Under these bombardments lay either the ground which the working parties were to entrench, or the approaches to it, and any movement of troops at such times was rendered almost impossible.²¹ The first of the “special” bombardments, for example, occurred at 10.15 p.m. on the night of July 29th, when the 21st Battalion was reaching Pozières to relieve the 22nd and 23rd. The answering barrage fell full upon “K” Trench, through which the battalion must pass. So heavy was the fire that, as there was no urgent reason for incurring heavy loss, the relief was stopped after a platoon and a half had got through. All the guides provided by the 22nd were worn out, and most of them wounded. Major Duggan²² of the 21st, who was at 22nd Battalion Headquarters making arrangements for the relief, left that position about 3 a.m., but the second “special” bombardment, at 2.55, provoked a renewal of the German shelling, and the

²¹ The 2nd Division had been warned by corps headquarters that heavy fire from the enemy must be expected during the days of preparation, and that the garrison of Pozières must therefore be kept low; there is no evidence, however, that the probable effect of particular bombardments upon the working parties was realised.

²² Lieut.-Col. B. O. C. Duggan, D.S.O. Commanded 21st Bn., 1917/18. Farmer; of St. Arnaud, Vic; b. Sutherland, Vic., 12 Jan., 1887.

face of the ground was by that time so changed that the guides could not recognize it; Duggan returned at 5 a.m., after having been completely lost. It was not until this barrage slackened that the 21st continued its relief.

German accounts show that the II/162nd in the O.G. Lines north-east of Pozières had reported at 3 a.m. that it was being attacked. The German official history says that the Australians attempted to assault three times but that each attempt was smothered in the German artillery-barrage!

During the night of the 30th, although there were two short "special" bombardments, the enemy's reply was less violent, his artillery staff probably recognising that they were merely a ruse. But on the evening of the 31st, when the main programme of works began, the demolition bombardments also began: from 6 to 7 p.m. ten batteries of heavy howitzers pounded the O.G. Lines; at 10.10 p.m. there broke out a "special" bombardment, and another at 3 a.m. This activity naturally called forth a reply so strong that an observer of the III Corps reported that it might indicate a German attack. It was this counter-bombardment that caused the miscarriage of the 7th Brigade's arrangements on that night; the authorities in rear—as throughout the Pozières fighting—had little conception of the conditions in the front line: it was certainly no pleasant place, and was not much visited by officers of the higher staffs—except of the intelligence branch. On this occasion brigade reports stated next morning that the shelling of Pozières had decreased, and the artillery reported it as "normal." It is true that, partly through the excellent British counter-battery fire, partly from motives of economy, the enemy's artillery was not as active as during the terrible bombardments of July 24th to 26th. But it was constant and at times intense. There exists a vivid account, from the pen of a junior officer, of what the work on the night in question, July 31st, actually meant to the 200 men of the 23rd Battalion who—already strained by the last terrible fight—were sent back to the line and, together with some engineers, in spite of the shelling, carried out part of the task set to the 6th Brigade. The writer was an Australian journalist, Lieutenant J. A. Raws,²³

²³ Lieut. J. A. Raws, 23rd Bn. Journalist; of Melbourne; b Manchester, Eng., 21 Sept., 1883. Killed in action, 23 Aug., 1916.

one of two brothers of fine quality belonging to that battalion. His platoon was included in the working-party.²⁴ Some readers, judging by their own experience of bombardments in earlier years or on other fronts, have held that such reports as that which follows were exaggerated; but they might as justly have measured a tornado by a dust eddy. The hurricanes which perpetually whirled around a few centres such as Fort Vaux at Verdun, and Delville Wood and Pozières on the Somme, could not be measured by the experience of ordinary battles, or described in the same terms. Not all natures were impressed in the same way, but the narrative is a fair and accurate record of the experience of a sensitive man, and other accounts to be found in soldiers' letters and suchlike intimate records—both German and British—exhibit a striking similarity both of phrase and fact.

The great horror of many of us (says Raws) is the fear of being lost (*i.e.*, losing the way) with troops at night on the battlefield. We do all our fighting and moving at night, and the confusion of passing through a barrage of enemy shells in the dark is pretty appalling. . . .

Our battalion . . . had to march for three miles, under shell-fire, go out into No Man's Land in front of the German trenches, and dig a narrow trench to be used to jump off from in another assault. I was posted in the rear to bring up the rear and prevent straggling. We went in single file along narrow communication trenches. We were shelled all the way up, but got absolute hell when passing through a particularly heavy curtain of fire which the enemy was playing on a ruined village (Pozières). . . . In the midst of this barrage our line was held up. I went up from the rear and found that we had been cut off, about half of us, from the rest of the battalion, and were lost. I would gladly have shot myself, for I had not the slightest idea where our lines or the enemy's were, and the shells were coming at us from, it seemed, three directions. As a matter of fact that was right. Well, we lay down terror-stricken along a bank. The shelling was awful. I took a long drink of neat whisky and went up and down the bank trying to find a man who could tell where we were. Eventually I found one. He led me along a broken track and we found a trench; he said he was sure it led to our lines, so we went back and got the men. It was hard to make them move, they were so badly broken. We eventually found our way to the right spot, out in No Man's Land. Our leader was shot before we arrived, and the strain had sent two other officers mad:²⁵ I and another new

²⁴ The 23rd had carried out the attack north of Pozières three nights before, and since that operation Lieutenant R. G. Raws had been missing. He had led the right flank of the battalion, and had in fact been killed at or near the German position. Lieutenant J. A. Raws, whose letters are here quoted, was himself killed during the next tour of his division in the line.

²⁵ By madness, Raws (as he makes clear later) means unavoidable and "justifiable" loss of self-control. A striking example of the meaning of these terms is given in footnote 31 on p. 710.

officer (Lieutenant Short)²⁶ took charge and dug the trench. We were being shot at all the time,²⁷ and I knew that if we did not finish the job before daylight a new assault planned for the next night would fail. It was awful, but we had to drive the men by every possible means and dig ourselves. The wounded and killed had to be thrown on one side—I refused to let any sound man help a wounded man: the sound men had to dig. . . .

Just before daybreak an officer (of another unit) out there, who was hopelessly rattled, ordered us to go.²⁸ The trench was not finished. I took it on myself to insist on the men staying, saying that any man who stopped digging would be shot. We dug on and finished amid a tornado of bursting shells. All the time, mind, the enemy flares were making the whole area almost as light as day. We got away as best we could. I was buried twice, and thrown down several times—buried with dead and dying. The ground was covered with bodies in all stages of decay and mutilation, and I would, after, struggling free from the earth, pick up a body by me to try to lift him out with me, and find him a decayed corpse. I pulled a head off—was covered with blood. The horror was indescribable. In the dim misty light of dawn I collected about 50 men and sent them off, mad with terror, on the right track for home. Then two brave fellows stayed behind and helped me with the only unburied wounded man we could find. The journey down with him was awful. He was delirious—I tied one of his legs to his pack with one of my puttees. On the way down I found another man and made him stay and help us. It was so terribly slow.

We got down to the first dressing station. There I met another of our men, who was certain that his cobbler was lying wounded in that barrage of fire. I would have given my immortal soul to get out of it, but I simply had to go back with him and a stretcher-bearer. We spent two hours in that devastated village searching for wounded—but all were dead. The sights I saw during that search, and the smell, can, I know, never be exceeded by anything else the war may show me.

I went up again the next night, and stayed up there. We were shelled to hell ceaselessly. X—went mad and disappeared.

The experiences to which the infantry were at this stage subjected ripped away in a few moments all those conventions behind which civilised men shelter their true souls even

²⁶ A colleague of Raws on the Melbourne *Argus* (Capt. L. G. Short, M.C.; 23rd Bn., Journalist, of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Herne Hill, London, Eng., 3 June, 1885). "Short was wonderful," says Raws, "quiet, serene, philosophic, though shelled from trench to trench and crater to crater. I saw him, calm and collected, when giants of physical strength were cowed and helpless—it was . . . just the fine spirit in that frail body." Short, afterwards writing of Raws, said that his actions this night won him the esteem of all who knew of them, and—had he not been soon afterwards killed—assured his future in the battalion. The leader of the whole party, who had been hit, was Captain F. H. Ward (of Kyneton, Vic.) He died next day.

²⁷ Capt. Short has recorded his impression that the Germans did not see—and were not firing at—the working party, but were laying their barrage on the trenches behind it. Many of the men, he says, "were nervy and shaken." Raws says: "It seems impossible to think that I did—though I remember clearly that I did—say most dreadful things to broken men to shake them into activity for some last enterprise."

²⁸ It is almost certain that this officer was merely carrying out an order to send the working parties back before the "special" bombardment timed for 3 a.m.

from the milder breezes of life, and left them facing the storm with no other protection than the naked framework of their character. The strain eventually became so great that what is rightly known as courage—the will to persist—would not suffice, since, however keen his will, the machinery of a man's self-control might become deranged. The same officer wrote:

I have had much luck and kept my nerve so far. The awful difficulty is to keep it. The bravest of all often lose it—courage does not count here. It is all nerve—once that goes one becomes a gibbering maniac. The noise of our own guns, the enemy's shells, and the getting lost in the darkness. . . .

Only the men you would have trusted and believed in before proved equal to it. One or two of my friends stood splendidly, like granite rocks round which the seas stormed in vain. They were all junior officers; but many other fine men broke to pieces. Everyone called it shell-shock, but shell-shock is very rare. What 90 per cent. get is justifiable funk, due to the collapse of the helm—of self-control.

The shelling at Pozières did not merely probe character and nerve; it laid them stark naked as no other experience of the A.I.F. ever did. In a single tour of this battle divisions were subjected to greater stress than in the whole Gallipoli campaign. The shell-fire was infinitely worse than that subsequently experienced in the Third Battle of Ypres, but with one mitigating circumstance: it was only the infantry and their associated front-line units who suffered severely. The bombardment was almost confined to the forward area. Despite several sharp visitations upon troops in Sausage Gully and Tara Hill (east of Albert), the successive rows of field artillery had actually to be protected against fire from the rear more securely than against that from the front—the defective shells from the new British and American ammunition factories, and those of the old 4.7-inch battery in Sausage Gully, being more dangerous to the guns' crews than the fire of the enemy.²⁹ But the area in which the infantry lived was shelled till there remained (to quote Raws again)—

nothing but a churned mass of débris with bricks, stones, and girders, and bodies pounded to nothing. And forests! There are not even tree trunks left, not a leaf or a twig. All is buried, and churned up

²⁹ The British field-guns also, at this stage, were constantly put out of action—chiefly by internal trouble in their buffer springs, due to incessant use

again, and buried again. The sad part is that one can see no end of this. If we live to-night, we have to go through to-morrow night, and next week, and next month. Poor wounded devils you meet on the stretchers are laughing with glee. One cannot blame them—they are getting out of this. . . .

. . . We are lousy, stinking, ragged, unshaven, sleepless. . . I have one puttee, a dead man's helmet, another dead man's gas protector, a dead man's bayonet. My tunic is rotten with other men's blood, and partly spattered with a comrade's brains. . . .

To cover up the corpses, which lay thickly about Dead Man's Road and other approaches, a party of the 6th Brigade was organised under Sergeant Lang³⁰ of the 24th, who, with the assistance of Chaplains Durnford,³¹ Clune,³² and others,³³ buried several hundreds, their work being afterwards taken up by a standing fatigue party of 100 men.³⁴ Only the devotion of one or two junior leaders had made possible the work done by the 6th Brigade on the night of July 31st. It is obvious that, if troops were to be asked to perform under these conditions fatigue duties that only indirectly concerned themselves, extraordinary qualities of leadership were necessary. If there were any defects in that respect, nothing was likely to be accomplished. As already stated, Legge, conceiving that the 5th Brigade must be worn out, applied to Birdwood on July 31st for assistance from the 4th Division, but Holmes refused the proffered help, and such was the effect on the tired units of his ceaseless driving and cheery personality—and so excellent was his young corps of officers—that the 5th Brigade's achievement at least equalled that of either of its sisters. This was all the more remarkable since, from the day when it entered the line (north of

³⁰ Sgt. W. Lang, M.M. (No. 1812; 24th Bn.). Labourer; of Melbourne, Vic.; b. Glasgow, Scotland, 1883.

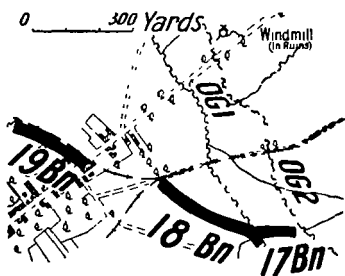
³¹ Chaplain the Rev. F. H. Durnford, M.C. Of Burra and Berri districts, S. Aust.; b. Lyminster, Sussex, Eng., 7 Jan., 1882.

³² Chaplain the Rev. F. Clune, M.C. Of Sydney; b. 17 March, 1869.

³³ Durnford and Clune both employed these dreadful days in stretcher-bearing, water-carrying, and such tasks of mercy in the dangerous area. Chaplain Dexter, with support from the Australian Comforts Fund, established at the corner of Bécourt Wood a coffee stall which henceforth became a cherished institution on the edge of every Australian battlefield.

³⁴ At the beginning of August, 4 officers and 400 men of the 13th Battalion were employed on regular fatigues—chiefly burying and salvage. After the next operation a report that the dead still lay thickly about the approaches to Pozzières reached the ears of General Gough, and it was suggested that for the sake of the morale of incoming troops these should have been buried. Accordingly on August 6 Birdwood's chief medical officer, Colonel Manifold, with representatives of the Army and Corps staffs, specially visited Pozzières. Finding the whole area under severe shell-fire, they reported that it was simply a question of military expediency whether the dead should be allowed to lie unburied, or whether more lives should be risked through attempting to bury them.

Pozières) to the day on which it went out, the 18th Battalion was consistently shelled by the artillery of its own side. Daily complaints—and even conferences of artillery and infantry officers in the front line when it was actually being shelled—never succeeded in correcting this error, which from first to last is said to have caused at least 150 casualties.⁸⁵ But the 18th was commanded by one of the best leaders in the A.I.F., Lieutenant-Colonel Wisdom; and the 19th, which for eleven days occupied Tramway Trench at the Bapaume road under incessant barrage, was sustained by a magnificent staff of juniors.⁸⁶



The 7th Brigade was subject to special disadvantages. It was not in the front line, and therefore had to send up its working parties nightly from Tara Hill, two and a half miles in rear, to work in ground not well known to them. In the Pozières fighting an additional and serious difficulty was that not only were parts of old trenches every day filled in and blocked by shell-fire, so that it was sometimes impossible even to trace their original course, but there had come into existence a maze of new trenches unmarked in the maps but constantly referred to by name in orders which laid down routes and rendezvous for incoming units or working parties. It was now realized that maps with the trench-names marked should be issued every few days. This was done, the maps being roughly drawn and reproduced on foolscap sheets at the headquarters of the 2nd Division. Accurate information as to the situation even

⁸⁵ In their efforts to check the error, artillery officers were hampered by the fact that during this period the fire was incessant, rendering it very difficult to identify the shell-bursts of any particular battery. The experience was almost inevitable. French and Germans constantly suffered similar loss. The historian of the 64th R.I.R., which later in August held the German line east of the Windmill, estimates that, owing to uncertainty as to its position, its front posts had to reckon on receiving daily 40 to 50 of their own shells, "which by no means tended to heighten their spirits!"

⁸⁶ These included Captain Heritage, who was killed while observing from the front line. He had rowed in the New South Wales eight at Henley

of their own front trenches was obtained by the staff (and by the draughtsmen who made the maps) almost exclusively from aeroplane-photographs.³⁷ These, if taken in the early morning, would be hurriedly developed and printed at the aerodrome, and sent by motor-cycle to reach the headquarters of the corps and the division by the afternoon. The prints would clearly show the disappearance of trenches under the latest bombardment, and the extension of trenches and saps by the previous night's working-parties; but this precious assistance to brigadiers and battalion commanders was as yet rarely provided.

It was ascertained that the working parties of the 7th Brigade had on the first night reached their several rendezvous near Pozières; but their engineers had been prevented by shell-fire from marking out the "jumping-off" line, and the troops, after waiting most of the night in the communication trenches, had been sent back. Thus one of the two precious available nights had elapsed without any result, so far as the 7th Brigade was concerned, except to tire and disconcert the troops. On the following night, in consequence of Legge's order, the commander of the 27th Battalion, Lieutenant-Colonel Dollman,³⁸ was appointed to control the parties in person. In order to reduce the artillery activity a special bombardment, which was to have occurred early in the night, was cancelled.³⁹ An hour's heavy bombardment, however, was laid down before dusk, stirring up a furious reply which lasted far into the night.

On this occasion part of the work was carried through. A considerable section of the trench north of the main road was marked out—Lieutenant Richardson⁴⁰ of the 2nd Pioneers being killed while taping it—and the 2nd Pioneers and part of the 27th Battalion commenced digging. The 7th Brigade

³⁷ These were taken by the squadron attached to the Anzac Corps. This was the 7th Squadron, R.F.C., which had previously served with the Corps at Armentières.

³⁸ Col. W. Dollman, V.D. Commanded 27th Bn., 1915/16 Accountant; of Unley, S. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 20 Feb., 1873.

³⁹ The working parties were informed that no bombardments would take place this night between 9 and 4 o'clock. The information proved incorrect, notice arriving later of a "special" bombardment at 3.10 a.m. The C.R.E., 2nd Division, afterwards complained that the orders of the Corps artillery staff for "special" bombardments were frequently issued too late to allow the digging parties to be warned before starting.

⁴⁰ Lieut. E. A. Richardson, 2nd Pioneer Bn. Of Melbourne; b. North Ockenden, Essex, Eng., 30 Oct., 1880. Killed in action, 2 Aug., 1916.

reported next morning that its forward line had been almost completed; Colonel Dollman estimated that, although the brigade's work had again been delayed by shelling and was unfinished on the left, it could be completed by 200 men working for two hours. The 6th Brigade reported its tasks practically finished.⁴¹ Nevertheless it was evident that another night's digging would be necessary, and the flanking corps were accordingly warned that the attack must be deferred until August 3rd, by which date the 2nd Divisional staff felt sure of being ready. The completion of the work was to be supervised on the night of the 2nd by the acting-commander of the 28th, Major A. W. Leane,⁴² an officer of high repute and member of a family whose name in the Australian service was becoming a hallmark for the power of leadership. At corps headquarters, however, General White suspected that the expectations of readiness were again too optimistic. Aeroplane-photographs taken that day showed that the "jumping-off" trench was far from completion, and a personal visit to all the brigades entirely confirmed White's fears. On his return he telephoned to the headquarters of General Gough—whose tendency throughout was to press for an early attack—that the 2nd Division could not be ready by August 3rd. The answer was that Legge had stated the opposite. "Well, you can order them to attack if you like," replied White, "but I tell you this . . . and this . . ." stating certain facts known to him. The army commander at once postponed the operation⁴³ until Friday, August 4th. For some reason which is not obvious,

⁴¹ Working parties of the 6th Brigade had this night been hampered by a German searchlight being turned upon them. It was eventually suppressed by howitzer fire.

⁴² Lieut.-Col. A. W. Leane. Commanded 28th Bn., 1916. Manufacturers' agent; of Perth, W. Aust.; b. Mount Gambier, S. Aust., 11 May, 1871. Died of wounds, 4 Jan., 1917.

⁴³ Gough wrote to Birdwood asking for an explanation from Legge of the several postponements and adding what amounted to a request for Birdwood's opinion as to that general's ability. Birdwood, who withheld this letter from Legge until the worry of the operation was over, replied that the preparations had been rendered difficult through shell-fire, and that in accordance with the Australian Government's policy of appointing Australian commanders, he was anxious to give Legge a fair chance. On receiving the letter Legge himself pointed out that his original estimate had been based on the express proviso that the preparations were not seriously interfered with by the enemy. The work had, however, been disorganised by very heavy bombardment.

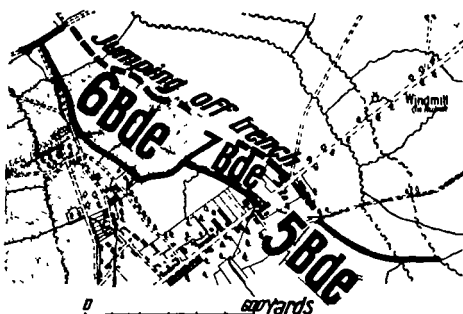
The army threw upon subordinate generals the whole responsibility for difficult operations on narrow fronts, and it seems fair that those generals should have been allowed to make such alterations in plan as they found necessary.

however, it was not considered practicable to defer any longer certain subsidiary operations by the corps on each flank; and these now took place as two widely separated operations on the night of Thursday, August 3rd.⁴⁴ Nor was the postponement altogether welcome to Legge's staff. In a note to the brigadiers Colonel Bridges made the comment: "This gives us a bit more time for preparation, and more time to the Boche too!"

The delay was entirely justified by the result. On the night of August 2nd a demolition-bombardment from 8 to 9 p.m. again caused the German signal rockets and flares to rise in sheaves, and brought down a tempest through which even runners with messages could not penetrate.

German records show that the 18th Reserve Division, then holding the front opposite the I Anzac Corps, reported that at 9 a.m. it had beaten off an infantry attack on both sides of the Bapaume road! It is possible that this impression was caused by the sight of parties working on the "jumping-off" trench.

In the confusion of this night the 26th Australian Battalion, sent up to assist in completing the 7th Brigade's task, caught some local or sectional order to retire, and withdrew, taking with it portions of other working parties. Ninety men of the 27th, brought up by Captain Dey⁴⁵ after midnight, were able to work for about two hours, and Leane, after inspecting the result, reported that 550 yards of the "jumping-off" trench had been dug; more than a quarter of this work, however, was only one or two feet in depth. Even this estimate—which subsequently proved to be excessive—showed that the necessary works were far from finished. Actually, none of the brigades had fully completed their task. To help forward



⁴⁴ See pp 670-1.

⁴⁵ Capt G. Dey, 27th Bn. Metallurgist, of Port Pirie, S. Aust.; b. Mosgiel, N Z., 30 Sept., 1882.

the work on the following night, Birdwood for once permitted working parties to stack their rifles and kit at convenient alarm-posts some distance in rear, if the situation allowed, instead of carrying them to the actual site of their work. To assure, if possible, completion of the 7th Brigade's "jumping-off" trench, one of its battalions, the 25th, took over before nightfall the front line in that sector. The commander of this battalion, Colonel Walker, was a contractor, accustomed to the handling of men, and in the A.I.F. he had a wide reputation for crude fearlessness based on deliberate exposure of himself to danger.⁴⁰ As soon as his battalion had relieved the 19th, about 10 o'clock on the night of August 3rd, he led his men out to the position, and, with Captain Webb⁴¹ of the 7th Field Company (formerly Chief Magnetician of the Mawson expedition to the Antarctic) and Lieutenants Healy⁴² and Stuart,⁴³ placed two of his companies upon the line to be completed.⁴⁴

The bombardment that night was again furious; the operations by the flanking corps, originally devised to coincide with those of I Anzac, were taking place, and "special" bombardments on the Anzac front had been arranged for 9.50 p.m. and 3.20 a.m.

German records make it evident that these bombardments, coming on top of the already protracted strain, resulted in another false alarm, the 18th Reserve Division reporting⁴⁵ that the 162nd I.R.,

⁴⁰ On 18 June, 1916, in the wretched trenches opposite Messines, Walker found the men in a sector of his front line somewhat cowed by an enemy sniper. The company commander, Captain R. J. Lewis, had just been shot through the brain while looking over the parapet, and the same fate had befallen the man who took his place. A number of periscopes were broken. "Always this talk of getting shot!" he exclaimed. "We'll see if they can shoot." Putting his elbows on the parapet, he looked over. After one bullet and then another had narrowly missed his head—"The man's a damn bad shot," he said. "That was six inches away. Here, give us a rifle and I'll teach the beggar." As he took the rifle another bullet hit the sandbags. After letting the German have a fourth shot to show where he was, "There you are, me man!" exclaimed Walker, and fired. Though he was a very good shot, it is hardly likely that he hit his opponent, but an eyewitness has stated that, whatever the reason, the German ceased fire.

⁴¹ Maj. E. N. Webb, D.S.O., M.C.; 7th Field Coy. Engrs. Civil engineer; of Christchurch, N.Z.; b. Lyttelton, N.Z., 23 Nov., 1889.

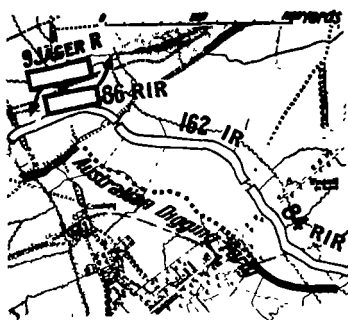
⁴² Lieut. W. P. Healy, M.C.; 25th Bn. Warehouseman; of Sydney, N.S.W., and Wellington, N.Z.; b. Wellington, 1877. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

⁴³ Lieut. A. Stuart, 25th Bn. Station hand; b. Kirkwall, Orkney Islands, 22 Aug., 1881. Killed in action, 5 Aug., 1916.

⁴⁴ Colonel Walker afterwards reported that he found that very little digging had previously been done even on the southern half of the line, and that 300 yards on the left was merely "spitlocked."

⁴⁵ The report was sent in at noon on the 4th, but presumably refers to the previous night.

holding the O.G. Lines north of the windmill and the adjoining sector along Brind's Road, had been attacked along its whole front. The attacking force was reported to have been caught in the German larrage, and defeated with heavy loss; from the windmill southwards, on the front of the 84th R.I.R. (said the report) it had apparently been broken by the barrage, since no movement had developed. This report of an operation, which, so far as it concerned the fronts of the 162nd and 84th, was entirely imaginary, may again have been due to the detection of the 25th Battalion and troops of the 6th Brigade working upon the "jumping-off" trench, together with the news of the British attack on Fifth Avenue.⁵² The German divisional staff recorded its impression that a strong attack had been made from the north of Pozzières towards the east with a subsidiary attack



(by the 12th British Division) against the 117th Division. It inferred that the Australian attack had been suppressed by the barrage, and that the British assault, thought temporarily and partly successful had no chance of ultimate success. The 9th Reserve Jager Battalion (which had that night relieved the 86th R.I.R. on the front north of Pozzières) had been ordered to assist the 117th Division to retake the lost trenches.⁵³

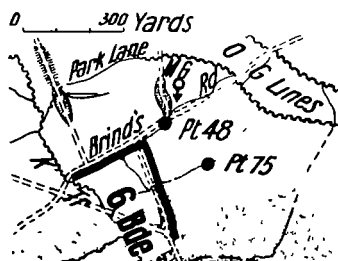
Although no-one on the Australian side was aware of the precise motives that caused the enemy to lay down that night's bombardment, its results were soon apparent. In the 25th Battalion 5 officers and 80 men were killed or otherwise placed out of action.⁵⁴ But Colonel Walker with his assistants kept the troops as far as possible upon the work, and in the morning he reported that "what was really a day's work was completed in three or four hours." In the 5th Brigade sector all the forward trenches and saps had been personally visited on August 3rd by General Holmes, who had stirred his heavily worked units to finish

⁵² The assault by the British 34th Division on Intermediate Trench, some distance beyond the other flank of I Anzac, occurred on the same night but is not referred to in the report above quoted.

⁵³ The 12th Division had actually seized and held much more than its objective, and the counter-attacks by the 11th R.I.R. and 9th Reserve Jager Battalion failed.

⁵⁴ Lieutenant J. L. Fletcher (of Cunnamulla, Q'land) was wounded while bringing up the troops; 2 officers and 55 men were killed or wounded; and 2 officers and 15 men buried or badly shell-shocked. Some of the casualties appear to have been caused by the erratic fire of the supporting guns, which at this stage were suffering from mechanical troubles due partly to excessive use.

an uncompleted sector south of the main road where they had been continually shelled by the supporting guns. The 6th Brigade, working to the last, had also completed its task. Thus a "jumping-off" trench had, apparently, been provided along the whole front, although at an average distance of 300 yards (instead of 200 as in the order) from the enemy lines, and only roughly parallel to them. Behind it, on each flank, emplacements had been dug for a number of trench-mortars, from which smoke bombs were to be fired by a detachment of the "Special Brigade" of British engineers, in order to raise a cloud screening the flanks. It was known that one part of the 6th Brigade's preparatory work had not been accomplished. This was the seizure of a German machine-gun post known to exist on the northern side of the Owillers-Courcelette (Brind's) road, along part of which the northern flank of the 6th Brigade already lay. The post, although the Australians were not aware of the fact, was one of a series in the Neuer Ganter Weg, and formed part of the enemy front-line system. Persistent attempts to capture it as a preliminary to the main attack failed.⁵⁵ This failure was to have serious results.



In rear of each brigade's front line large fatigue parties, working day and night for a week, had completed the necessary communication trenches, finally extending them across the Bapaume road, despite the shelling which never ceased upon that highway. The avenues thus driven across the road were Centre Way, leading to the left centre; "Copse Avenue," to

⁵⁵ Probably an early attempt to extend this flank along Brind's Road forms the basis of the exaggerated account of an attack given in the *History of the 86th R.I.R.*, p. 146. On the night of July 31 a party of the 6th Brigade occupied what was at first thought to be the site of the German post above referred to, and forthwith connected it by a trench with the Australian line. It was then found that the German post lay still farther ahead, and two attempts were made at night by a party under Lieutenant R. G. Moss (of Bairnsdale, Vic.), 23rd Battalion, first to locate and then to capture it. A barrage was laid around it, but the assault failed, a number of men being hit.

the right centre; and a short sap known as "Mac's Trench" connecting the other two.⁵⁶ "Emu Avenue," farther to the right, was also to have crossed the road; but when the 4th Pioneers were lined out to make the extension, 7 were killed and 23 wounded within a quarter of an hour; its course was then altered to strike the front line south of the road. Farther south another approach had been provided by an extension of "Walker's Avenue." These trenches had been dug mainly by the 2nd and 4th Pioneer Battalions and the 6th, 7th, and 13th



Field Companies, which with large fatigue parties of all brigades worked day and night. The severity of the task may be judged by the fact that the 4th Pioneers alone lost 8 officers and 222 men in ten days, mainly while digging and keeping open the section of Copse Avenue at the main road, where the trench was levelled almost daily by the enemy barrage. As a result of this work Legge was able, in his operation order of August 3rd, to choose Centre Way as the approach for the 6th Brigade, Copse Avenue for the 7th, and Emu and Walker's for the 5th.⁵⁷ Other preparations arranged for the use of horse-transport farther forward than it had hitherto been employed, so as to save needless carrying by men. The task of evacuating wounded from the

⁵⁶ Mac's Trench connected Centre Way with First Aid Trench, which led to Copse Avenue. Copse Avenue was an extension of the old trench dug round Pozieres copse during the 1st Division's attack.

⁵⁷ The routes detailed in this order were:—

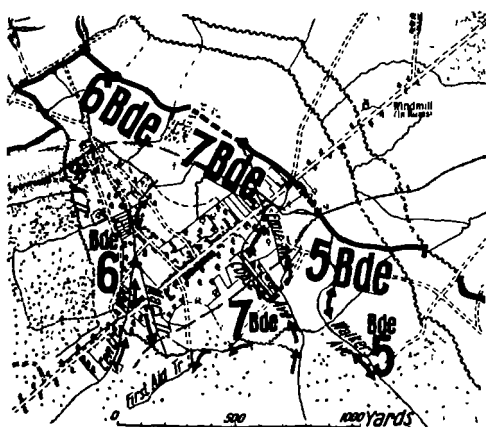
6th Brigade: Centre Way to near Gibraltar and thence either by "K" Trench or Centre Way.

7th Brigade: Sunken Road—Copse Avenue

5th Brigade: Sunken Road—Copse Avenue—Emu Avenue; or Sunken Road—Walker's Avenue (as far as possible, the 5th Brigade was to use the latter route).

Mac's Trench was allotted for diverting some of the returning wounded of the 6th Brigade into First Aid Trench, which, with Pozieres Trench, "Long Drive," Pioneer Trench, the Chalk Pit Road, and the Tramline, was appointed for out-traffic.

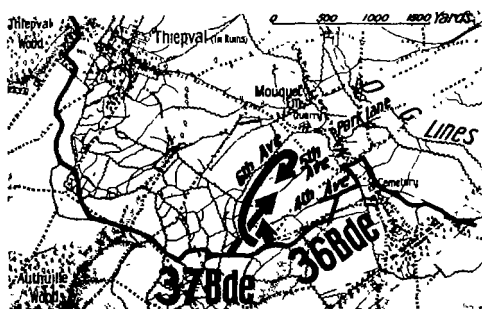
aid-posts was in the hands of the 5th Field Ambulance, which had dressing stations in Albert and at Bécourt Château, and had under its orders the bearer-sections of the 6th, 7th, and 12th Field Ambulances as well as its own. But the chief difficulty in evacuation was



in the front area, the nearest shelter to which regimental bearers could bring their patients being 2,000 yards behind the front line. Although their numbers had been specially increased from 16 to 24, such a "carry" was likely to exhaust them.

Both British corps on the flanks had carried out their operations on the night of August 3rd; those of the III Corps failed, the 34th Division taking part of the Intermediate Trench but being later driven out. A projected attempt on Munster Alley and Torr Trench by the 23rd Division had been deferred in order to coincide with the Australian attack,

and it was decided to renew the attack on Intermediate Trench at the same time. On the left of I Anzac, the 12th Division met with signal success in its operations against the uncaptured section of Fourth Avenue—one of the successive trenches west of "K."



Missing its direction, part of the 36th Brigade seized a section of Fifth Avenue ("Ration Trench"), and a patrol of the 7th Royal Sussex actually reached and

temporarily occupied part of Sixth Avenue ("Skyline Trench"), from which it looked into the valley west of Mouquet Farm.⁵⁸ It was driven out by a counter-attack from the farm. But the western part of Fifth Avenue was held, although an attack on the German strong-point at its junction with "K" Trench was for the third time defeated.⁵⁹ It was therefore decided to complete the capture of Fifth Avenue on the following night in conjunction with the main Australian attack, but to leave the strong-point to be dealt with after that operation. Such was the position on the afternoon of August 4th when the brigades of the 2nd Australian Division moved off on the approach-march for their second attempt upon the O.G. Lines.

The last demolition-bombardment was to open at 6 p.m. and continue for an hour.⁶⁰ The artillery would then fire normally until 9 p.m., when it would cease for a quarter of an hour—as it had frequently done in the programme of "special" bombardments. At 9.15 the field-guns would lay down an intense barrage on O.G.1 for three minutes, the heavy howitzers firing as usual one simultaneous salvo upon that trench. After three minutes the field-guns would lift their barrage to O.G.2; the heavies, lifting in the same way, would fire a second salvo and then turn upon all German batteries whose positions were known. The first

⁵⁸ Particulars of the 12th Division's attack are as follows. Part of Fourth Avenue adjoining "K" Trench had already been taken, and small attacks to increase that holding had been made, with slight success, by parties from the 11th Middlesex and 7th Royal Sussex on the nights of July 30 and 31. During the next few days the division prepared a rather more extensive night attack on the whole uncaptured portion of Fourth Avenue, to be carried out by parts of two brigades. The enemy's position had been bombarded by siege artillery and heavy trench-mortars, and the 8th Royal Fusiliers (36th Brigade) not only captured their objective, but, missing the direction, seized on their left a strong-point (which was to have been attacked on the following night) and the western end of the next trench—Fifth Avenue (more generally known, from the German ration parties which used to traverse it, as "Ration Trench"). Here part of the 6th Buffs (37th Brigade) went through them and bombed up Fifth Avenue; and, a company of the 7th Royal Sussex being sent to reinforce, a patrol under Lieutenants E. G. Routley (of the Buffs) and C. F. Rolfe (of the 7th R. Sussex) and Company Sergeant-Major Lond (of the Buffs) actually moved over to Sixth Avenue on the skyline on the next spur (and, for that reason, commonly known as "Skyline Trench"). From this deep new work, which appeared to be occupied by only a few of the enemy, one of whom was rushed by Lond, they looked down into the valley at the head of which stood Mouquet Farm. They were seen by the garrison of the next trench Thiépal way, and were counter-attacked and driven out by a force advancing from the farm, the gallant Lond being shot during the withdrawal.

⁵⁹ This point was assaulted by the 7th Royal Sussex. The previous attempts had been made by the 8th Warwicks and 11th Middlesex on the nights of July 27 and 29 respectively.

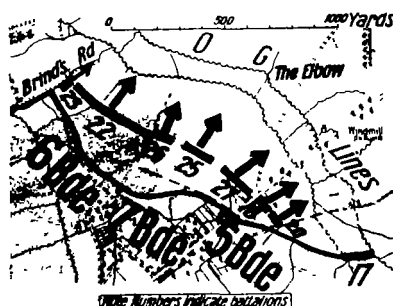
⁶⁰ When it was decided to prolong the preparation over August 3 and 4, this additional demolition-bombardment and several more "special" bombardments had been ordered.

two waves of infantry would take O.G.1 and the third and fourth would move up to deliver at 9.30—when the barrage would again lengthen—the assault on O.G.2.⁶¹

A fifth wave, composed of detachments from the troops forming the other waves, would follow the other four as carrying party. Only the first two would start from the new "jumping-off" trench,



the third and fourth moving from the Tramway Trench and the carriers assembling behind the fourth wave in the communication trenches. The front to be attacked was allotted (from left to right) as follows: O.G. Lines from Brind's Road for 350 yards south-eastwards, to the 22nd Battalion (6th Brigade); the same lines for 900 yards farther southwards, including The Elbow, to the 7th Brigade, whose battalions would be in the same order as before, except that the 27th (South Australia) took the place of the 28th (Western Australia), which had suffered so heavily in the previous assault. South of the road the 5th Brigade would attack as far south as the old railway, having



the 18th Battalion next to the road and the 20th (facing this enterprise for the third time) next to the railway. As air-photographs showed that O.G.2 opposite the 5th Brigade's sector and near the windmill had been destroyed, Legge appears to have intended that only O.G.1 should be formally attacked in this part, and O.G.2 merely occupied by strong

⁶¹ The composition of the waves had been changed, each attacking battalion having two companies in the first two waves, and two in the third and fourth.



48. POZIÈRES CEMETERY

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E1.
Taken on 27th November, 1916*



49 STAKES OF THE OLD GERMAN WIRE IN FRONT OF THE "O.G LINES"

This photograph, taken on 11th October, 1916, looks north-west towards the windmill, which is seen on the horizon

Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E13

To face p 672



50 THE PLATEAU EAST OF POZIÈRES, ACROSS WHICH THE ATTACKS OF JULY 28-29TH AND AUGUST 4TH WERE DELIVERED

Photograph taken on 28th August, 1916, from "Centre Way" where the old railway crossed it, east of the cemetery. The view is E.S.E. towards O.G.I., which rims the horizon. The windmill (then a mound) can just be seen on the sky-line above the trench.

patrols with Lewis guns;⁶² but his order was open to other interpretations, and the brigade commander arranged for a formal assault upon both lines. On the extreme right flank the short sector of the O.G. Lines south of the railway was to be made good by bombing. On the extreme left the 23rd Battalion (6th Brigade) was to connect the existing flank with the O.G. Lines by forming a series of posts along Brind's Road. As the whole operation was only a preliminary to the northward thrust, which Gough was eager to commence, it was ordered that after the night's advance no time must be lost in ascertaining whether the German trenches north of the northern flank were strongly held. The advance to Mouquet Farm, it was anticipated, would be made in two steps, the first of which it might be found possible to launch even on that night. Such a possibility, however, was not thought likely, and, with a view to launching the northward advance on the night of August 5th, Legge was ordered to confer with the commander of the 4th Division, whose foremost brigade was already on the battlefield and providing carrying-parties.⁶³

The night of August 4th-5th was followed by days so overwhelming in strain, anxiety, and eventual relief, that even the bare outlines of its true story were left unascertained;⁶⁴ nor was it realised how nearly the operation came to disaster. To watchers at brigade headquarters the signs on this night were very different from those on July 29th, being favourable from the outset.

At 9.15 (wrote one spectator) we opened 3 minutes' bombardment with all field-guns and some big guns. . . . After 3 minutes, bombardment lengthened. Before this the Germans had put up red flares (breaking into stars) from three points. After 13 minutes our bombardment lengthened again. The German flares ceased, except in left-hand corner.⁶⁵ . . .

9.48. Two green flares and an odd one. That means 22nd is "in" (*i.e.*, that the 22nd Battalion had reached the O.G. Lines—three pairs of green flares being the arranged signal).

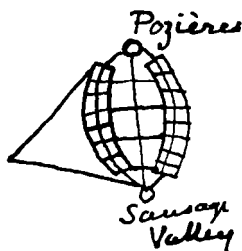
⁶² This suggestion came from General Gough. The corps staff ordered that the shell-craters occupied by the patrols should subsequently be linked up into a trench.

⁶³ The 46th Battalion (12th Brigade) had been detailed for this duty in the attack.

⁶⁴ An official narrative of the I Anzac Corps, for example, passes over the crisis of the action with the misstatement: "by 9 p.m. . . . all troops were in position."

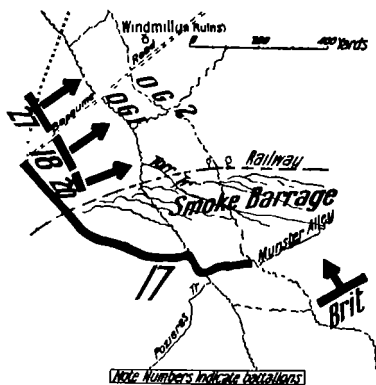
⁶⁵ Flares soon afterwards rose opposite all parts of the front; but they were 50 yards farther back than before.

Extraordinary measures had been taken to ensure uninterrupted telephone communication as far forward as Gibraltar at least, not less than thirty miles of wire having been laid in one system of "ladders" (an arrangement—roughly shown in the marginal diagram—by which connection could be maintained in spite of numerous breaks). Consequently communication was good almost throughout the night,⁶⁶ and within about two hours after the assault it was known at divisional headquarters that all brigades had reached their objectives. The course of the attack (taking the operations from right to left) was as follows.



(From a private diary.)

The right attacking battalion of the 5th Brigade—the 20th—had not completed its assembly when the intense barrage opened; but the junior officers of the rear waves, who were then bringing their platoons up Walker's Avenue, did not wait to assemble them at the front-line trench; they led them straight out into No-Man's Land, and thus made up for the delay.



The left battalion, the 18th, although for a time held up by a block in a forward communication trench,⁶⁷ had got through in time, and started precisely as ordered. Officers and men of the 20th, under the strain of two successive failures, had become somewhat "nervy"; but that feeling vanished the

⁶⁶ Pigeons could not be used at night, but, among other measures, a French field-searchlight for signalling was carried forward by the 26th Battalion. Its bearer was, however, killed by a shell when crossing No-Man's Land, and the lamp lost.

⁶⁷ By a special arrangement, the trench leading to advanced strong-point "37," on the Bapaume road, was to be shared by two brigades; but the 27th Battalion, which was to clear it by 8 p.m., did not clear till 8.30.

moment they were over the parapet. There was practically no fire from the enemy, and the hated tin discs, which were thought to have betrayed the advance on the previous occasion, were now covered and exhibited only when required.⁶⁸ Advancing quickly during the three minutes when the barrage lay on O.G.1, and half-trotting over the dry shell-pitted earth, they reached O.G.1 before they were aware of it. The Germans in this sector, when first alarmed, appear to have thrown over their parapet canisters of oil, which, bursting into flame, for a time illuminated a certain area of No-Man's Land. But there was little firing and no loss, except that of the leading company-commander, the gallant Kirke, who was killed at this juncture by a shell. The trench was easily taken, most of the enemy being still in their deep dugouts, from which in most cases they came up and surrendered willingly as soon as a summons was shouted to them. Some, who did not understand and had bombs rolled down upon them, fought; and in the 20th Battalion sector, when an officer and sergeant⁶⁹ were exploring the underground chambers after the unwounded Germans had surrendered, a wounded officer lying in a dark corner threw a bomb at them. But for the most part there was no resistance. The prisoners were sent back with returning men of the carrying parties; the dugouts, littered with dirt and equipment, were taken over by the new garrison, with the exception of one which was unapproachable through the stench of corpses. Then the cleaning out of the trench and digging of communication trenches began. Meanwhile the third and fourth waves had gone on to seize O.G.2; but that trench was so damaged that both battalions, eager to find Germans, went beyond it. So swift was the advance of the 18th that Sergeant Bryson⁷⁰ had his Lewis gun in position beyond O.G.2 in time to fire at figures of the enemy withdrawing over the edge of the hill.⁷¹ Captain Sadler,⁷² whose men had gone too far, had

⁶⁸ See footnote 59 on p. 628.

⁶⁹ Lieutenant C. Morgan Jones (of Bondi, N.S.W.) and Sergeant T. V. Burnett (of Newtown, N.S.W.)

⁷⁰ Sgt. J. L. Bryson, M.M. (No. 1884; 18th Bn.). Seaman; of Pyrmont, N.S.W.; b. Coupar Angus, Perthshire, Scotland, 1876.

⁷¹ A German officer captured in this sector said that he found himself suddenly surrounded by Australians, who entered his position (Torr Trench) from the rear as well as the front.

⁷² Lieut.-Col. R. M. Sadler, D.S.O., M.C. Commanded 17th Bn., 1918/19. Public servant; of Hurstville, N.S.W., b. Paddington, N.S.W., 8 Oct., 1893.

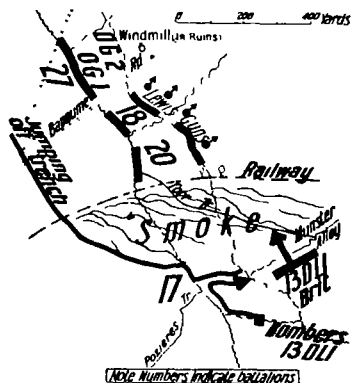
to pull them back to the line of O.G.2, which could be traced only by the old stakes of the wire-entanglement in front of it. A newly-joined officer of the 20th, Lieutenant Gallagher,⁷³ afterwards described how he passed this wire without recognising it and then "noticed about a thousand shells bursting in front and realised that it must be our barrage." He instructed the men to fall back about twenty yards, only to be asked by two of them: "Who the hell are you, anyway?" Nevertheless the troops were quickly brought back to O.G.2; the nearer end of Torr Trench was seized and blocked; and, since there was at first no sign of the British who were attacking Munster Alley and the southern part of Torr Trench, a Lewis gun was stationed on that flank. By the time darkness fell the 5th Brigade had secured the whole of O.G.1 south of the road, and its advanced line was digging on the site of O.G.2, with Lewis guns out in front on the ridge and patrols endeavouring to find touch with the next troops of their own side on the flanks. A number of the 7th Brigade came into O.G.1, where the left of the 5th Brigade was digging; but no sign of them could yet be seen towards the windmill. The casualties of the 5th Brigade, so far, were not heavy, being mainly those caused by a scattered and inaccurate machine-gun fire from the unattacked part of the neighbouring sector. This fire would probably have been much heavier, had it not been for the special smoke cloud which, as arranged, was streaming past the southern flank of the brigade's attack, screening it from the enemy beyond. But the 13th Durham Light Infantry (68th Brigade), who were again responsible for the assault upon Munster Alley, derived no assistance from this smoke, but had actually to charge into it. In spite of heavy fire from the enemy barricade, Captain Austin⁷⁴ and a few of the Durhams crossed the Alley and entered Torr, and a party under Lieutenant Target⁷⁵ then bombed

⁷³ Lieut. P. Gallagher, 20th Bn. Shorthand reporter, Supreme Court of N.S.W., of Sydney; b. Menangle, N.S.W., 4 Jan., 1887.

⁷⁴ Capt. A. H. P. Austin; 13th Bn., Durham Light Infantry. Of Reading, Eng. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916

⁷⁵ Lieut. N. A. Target, M.C.; 13th Bn., Durham Light Infantry. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

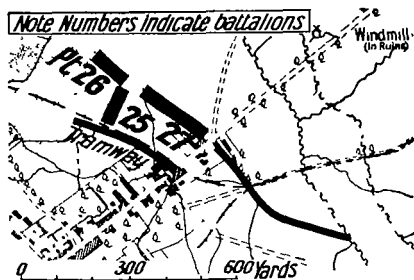
up Munster Alley. Both Austin and Target, however, were killed and the attack failed. The Australian infantry could see and hear this bomb-fighting and, later in the night, the 68th Brigade asked General Holmes for help; but he, while promising to assist with a "bombing demonstration," on this occasion forbade his troops to move beyond the positions they had captured. The other enterprise of the III Corps—the renewed attempt upon Intermediate Trench—also failed.



The advance of the 7th Brigade succeeded almost as swiftly as that of the 5th. Although the battalions moving up into Pozieres had to pass through the strong barrage evoked by the demolition-bombardment from 6 to 7 p.m., they reached the front area in time; but at this stage there occurred a dangerous hitch. Part of the front waves of the 26th, filing through the "jumping-off" trench to reach their proper sector on the left of the brigade, found that, in spite of the reports of its virtual completion, the trench came to an end, little if any of the sector to accommodate their battalion having been dug.⁷⁶ Consequently the 26th filled the sector of "jumping-off" trench allotted to the 25th, and the front waves of the 25th were forced to wait crowded in the bottom of the communication trench (known as "Sydney Street") leading to it. These companies in their turn blocked the second wave of the 27th Battalion, but at about 9 o'clock it moved into position across the open, thus allowing the third wave of that battalion to reach its position

⁷⁶ Colonel Walker of the 25th, which was responsible for the last night's digging, appears to have believed that the trench had been completed and later broken down by shell-fire. Air-photographs, however, prove that this was not so. The head-quarter's diary of the 7th Brigade accurately states: "We found that at least 250 yards of the left of the jumping-off trench had not been touched."

in Tramway Trench. The fourth, however, was still in a communication trench when the time for attacking arrived. The first three waves of the 27th thus started according to plan. But the fourth, being so far back and so late, caught the enemy's barrage, and lost direction; its commander, Major Cunningham,⁷⁷ who led it out from the communication trench, was killed, and many of his men eventually

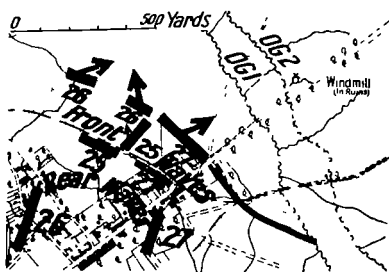


reached sectors far to right and left of their own. In the 25th Battalion, the rear waves started duly from Tramway Trench; and, though the front waves were launched mainly from a forward communication trench, three of the officers—Captains Stuart and Boys and Lieutenant Healy—had hurriedly agreed to lead their men over the northern side of the sap as soon as the barrage fell and to swing up their left to advance straight upon O.G.I. This they accomplished, although they had to pass through shell-fire and with formation naturally somewhat loose. The 26th was faced with more serious difficulties. Its first wave was in the "jumping off" trench of the 25th, south of its proper area, the second had gone through the trenches farther north⁷⁸ and was north of its area, and the rest were in communication trenches to the rear under sharp bombardment. When the artillery opened—the signal for the advance—officers were still organising their men and collecting stragglers; since, however, it was daylight, the situation was apparent, and the leaders of the first two waves ran forward with their men to bridge as best they could the gap between them. The third wave managed to follow in some formation, and the adjutant, Captain

⁷⁷ Maj. T. R. Cunningham, 27th Bn. Salt manufacturer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Coleraine, Vic., 27 May, 1874. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

⁷⁸ See p. 682

Robinson,⁷⁹ endeavoured to send forward the remainder in the right direction, though piecemeal, from any part of the trenches where he found them. In these circumstances, as on the previous occasion, the 25th and 26th headed too far to the left, leaving O.G.1 from The Elbow southwards to the main road to be assaulted by only one battalion, the 27th.



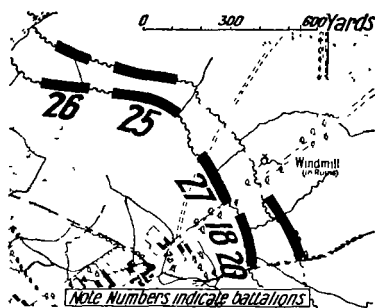
In spite of these difficulties, the foremost waves of the 7th Brigade crossed No-Man's Land without opposition and so swiftly that those of the 25th Battalion are said to have been within twenty-five yards of the barrage when it lifted from O.G.1. Rushing the trench, the 25th found the Germans snug in their dugouts, not yet having begun to mount the stairs and bring out their machine-guns. Most of the garrison's machine-guns, in spite of replacements, appear to have been out of action through shell-fire. But the 27th intercepted Germans coming up from dugouts with their guns, and this proved that even a minute's delay in following the barrage might have been fatal. As matters were, there was no more resistance than in the 5th Brigade's area. Bombs were rolled down the stairs and sentries placed at each entrance, with the result that at intervals during the next fifteen minutes shouts of "Kamerad" were heard and the occupants came up as prisoners.⁸⁰ If the occupants showed no sign of emerging, a phosphorus bomb was thrown in. The dense smoke, together with the fear that the place would take fire, scared out of the chambers all except the badly wounded, who ran a terrible chance of being burnt to death. The 26th, having had the worst start, appears to have reached O.G.1 later than its sister battalions. However, no

⁷⁹ Maj. (tempy. Lieut.-Col.) J. A. Robinson, D.S.O.; 26th Bn. Lecturer in mathematics, Teachers' Training College, Brisbane; b. Nudgee, Q'land, 20 Jan., 1888.

⁸⁰ Eleven came from one chamber, nine from another, fourteen from a third, and so on.

machine-guns had yet been mounted, and as the Australians approached, cheering, Germans were seen to leave O.G.1 and run back to O.G.2. Recognising that the later waves of the 26th, which were to attack that part of the second trench, were not yet assembled, Major Currie⁸¹ moved on to assault O.G.2 with most of the first two waves of the battalion, only a few men being left to hold O.G.1. Holding straight on, some of his men ran into their own barrage, which was still on O.G.2, and Currie himself was wounded in the foot; but the trench was rushed and occupied as soon as the barrage lifted. Two machine-guns were found there with their breech-blocks removed, the crews having fled.

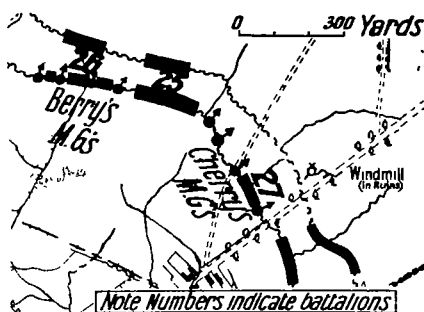
Next on the south, the third and fourth waves of the 25th, which had moved forward over O.G.1 in excellent order, on the lifting of the barrage seized O.G.2 north-west of The Elbow. Both the 25th and 26th, however, had made rather too far to the left, and consequently the whole sector between The Elbow and the main road had, as has been mentioned, to be covered by the 27th, whose fourth wave was dispersed. Part of that battalion, under Lieutenant Julge,⁸² moved forward from O.G.1 to occupy O.G.2, but the whole area was a wilderness of craters, and, finding no semblance of a trench, Julge and his men advanced in error 100 yards beyond its site and far into their own barrage. A few stayed out here all night, and when—having been wounded—they endeavoured to return in the morning they were captured by Germans who were behind them. Early in the night Julge and others made their way back to O.G.1, which became the front line of the battalion.



⁸¹ Lieut.-Col. P. Currie, C.M.G., D.S.O. Commanded 28th Bn, 1918/19 School teacher; of Sandgate, Q'land; b. Nambour, Q'land, 2 Aug., 1883.

⁸² Capt. (temp Major) P. E. Julge, M.C.; 27th Bn. Hardware merchant; of Southwark, S. Aust.; b. Southwark, 14 July, 1894.

Even this line was but weakly held,⁸⁵ owing to the sister battalions having swerved to the north. Captain Devonshire,⁸⁴ on whom the command of this part of the front line had fallen, at once discovered the gap on his left; but the immediate arrival of four Vickers machine-guns of the 7th Company, under Lieutenant Cherry,⁸⁵ enabled him to fill it, these guns then becoming the main defence of the sector immediately south of The Elbow. Farther north Lieutenant Murray⁸⁶ had been killed while taking forward four other guns of the same company, but Lieutenant Berry⁸⁷ had emplaced them in O.G.1 on the left of the brigade. Lieutenant Lennon⁸⁸ with several Stokes mortars of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery reached O.G.1 at 9.45,⁸⁹ emplaced them in a section of Captain Dey's trench, and helped to consolidate it. A patrol of Lennon's men, moving out towards O.G.2, met and exchanged shots with a party of Germans,⁹⁰ whose presence showed that the enemy still held some part of that trench north of the windmill.



⁸⁵ Among the officers there were Captain Dey, who had led his men there although his right hand was blown off by a shell, and Lieutenant H. McD. Campbell (of Perth, W. Aust., and Otago, N.Z.), who, though wounded, cleared several dugouts of Germans and remained for a time to organise the defence.

⁸⁴ Lieut.-Col. W. P. Devonshire, D.S.O.; 27th Bn. Master tailor; of Prospect, S. Aust.; b. Victoria, 19 Sept., 1884.

⁸⁵ Capt. P. H. Cherry, V.C., M.C.; 26th Bn. Orchardist; of Cradoc, Tas.; b. Drysdale, Vic., 4 June, 1895. Killed in action, 27 March, 1917.

⁸⁶ Lieut. J. C. Murray, 7th M.G. Coy. Joiner and builder; of Townsville, Q'land; b. Townsville, 12 Dec., 1889. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

⁸⁷ Capt. S. S. Berry, 5th M.G. Bn. Tailor's cutter (now farmer); of Myrtleford district, Vic.; b. Collingwood, Vic., 4 Aug., 1894.

⁸⁸ Capt. A. Lennon, M.C.; 25th Bn. Clerk; of Brisbane; b. Townsville, Q'land, 29 April, 1891.

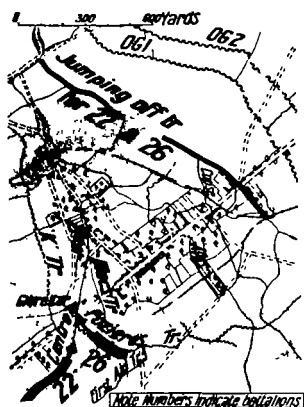
⁸⁹ Lieutenant W. R. Bird (of Brisbane, Q'land) had been wounded in the approach march, and Lieutenant H. P. Bateman (of East Fremantle, W. Aust.) was killed while making the dump in Walker's Avenue before the action.

⁹⁰ The Germans wounded Private D. R. Royan, but were driven off by his mates, Corporal J. Mitchell and Private W. G. Le Bhers. (Royan belonged to Bundaberg, Q'land. Mitchell—who having been once rejected for enlistment had changed his name from Robert Arthur Williams—to Manly, N.S.W.; and Le Bhers to Nundah, Q'land.)

The northernmost sector of the objective in the O.G. Lines was on this occasion apportioned to the 22nd Battalion of the 6th Brigade. Legge's operation order had allotted Centre Way and "K" Trench to this brigade for its approach march, and in the map attached to the instructions those trenches were marked with its name—but, apparently by some arrangement of which all memory has now faded, the 6th intended to use it only so far as Gibraltar, and at that point to switch aside into "K." This would leave the northern end of Centre Way unused, and the 7th Brigade had decided to send in by that route its northernmost battalion, the 26th, followed by part of the 7th Machine Gun Company and of the 28th Battalion. These had accordingly been ordered to move into Centre Way through Mac's Trench, which entered it beyond Gibraltar. When, however, the 22nd Battalion (6th Brigade) was making its way through Centre Way into the south-west corner of Pozières, some distance short of Gibraltar, voices were heard close ahead calling

such commands as "B company, this way!" "C Company, halt!"

At first it was thought that these orders were meant for the 22nd. But they were presently found to come from the officers and N.C.O's of a strange battalion—the 26th, of the 7th Brigade—which was filing into the trench ahead of the 22nd. The Germans were heavily barraging that end of the village, and it seems probable that the 7th Brigade in the resulting confusion had mistaken Pozières Trench for Mac's—the two being easily confused. The route of the 6th Brigade was thus blocked. The leading company of the 22nd under Captain Elmiger⁹¹ managed to make its way along the trench, but the 26th then flowed in again, blocking the second company of the 22nd under Major Murdoch



⁹¹ Capt. L. Elmiger, 22nd Bn. Accountant; of Magill, S. Aust; b Sydney, 5 Jan., 1894.

Mackay. However perilous the mistake, the rights and wrongs could not be argued at such a time. Fortunately, Mackay was a singularly determined officer. A Bendigo boy, who at the age of sixteen had passed through State and High schools to Melbourne University, and, after a brilliant course, had become a barrister at twenty-one, he was of the stuff which makes good leaders but difficult subordinates. He had on occasion opposed his battalion commander, Lieutenant-Colonel R. Smith,⁹² so stubbornly that Smith had been driven to consider whether he could retain him under his command. He had kept him, however, on account of his stubborn character; if Mackay once said he would do a thing, that thing he would do. Because of Mackay's differences with his colonel, the brigadier, Gellibrand, from whom also he had stoutly differed on questions concerning courts-martial, had hesitated in confirming him in the rank of major, but, on a similar estimate of his character had made the promotion just before this battle. "I was never so thankful for any decision I have made," said Gellibrand afterwards.

In this crisis Mackay never hesitated; the 22nd must proceed to "K" Trench directly from the point then reached. He accordingly asked a junior officer, Lieutenant Alderson,⁹³ who knew the way, to lead the battalion along the main road, and thus directed the 22nd's column across the open to that trench, and then along it northwards in face of a fierce shrapnel barrage from German guns which were firing straight down it.⁹⁴ Men were falling to the floor of the trench, killed or wounded, and those following could seldom avoid trampling on them. Mackay was doing the work of ten, collecting disjointed parties, directing, leading, driving, until they reached the cemetery. Here he turned into a trench to the right and after climbing into the open with the greater part of the 22nd trailing behind him, hurried straight to the "jumping-off" position.⁹⁵

⁹² Brig.-Gen. R. Smith, C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D. Commanded 22nd Bn., 1916; 5th Inf. Bde., 1917/18. Wool merchant; of Brighton and Geelong, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 6 Sept., 1881. Died 14 July, 1928.

⁹³ Capt V. C. Alderson, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Musician; of Melbourne; b. Seven Oaks, Kent, Eng., 20 Dec., 1890.

⁹⁴ Major W. Brazenor (of Ballarat, Vic.), then commanding the 23rd, and Lieutenant F. H. Dunn (of Parkville, Vic.), his adjutant, assisted in directing the troops to follow Mackay.

⁹⁵ C.Q.M.S. E. R. Bregenzer (of Camperdown, Vic.), of the 22nd, standing at the opening near the cemetery, directed the men across the open as they arrived.

Meanwhile Captain Elmiger of the leading company with about sixty men had reached the "jumping-off" trench eleven minutes before the time for launching the assault. There they met Major Matthews,⁹⁶ second-in-command of the battalion, who had been sent to control the start.

When the barrage descended, only this handful had arrived. It was a moment for decision one way or the other, the men began to scramble out of the trench and go forward, but Matthews, considering that the advance of a mere fraction of a wave, unsupported, would

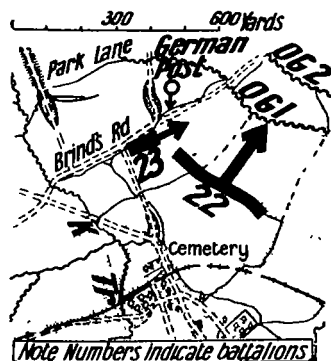


result in confusion and disaster, ordered Elmiger to stay until there were enough to form a wave. The men were pulled back, but still no sign appeared of the remainder of the battalion, and for a quarter of an hour the attack proceeded without the participation of the 22nd. These were moments of tense anxiety; but at 9.30 some one shouted that Major Mackay was coming up to the rear of the trench, and this officer and his men were seen approaching. On reaching the trench, without waiting for consultation, he assumed control and, calling "Come on boys!", instantly led the troops forward. The later waves coming up on his heels, seeing Elmiger waving to them to follow on, stayed only a few minutes to pick up some formation in the assembly trench, and then hurried forward as they arrived, from 9.40 onwards.

But in the interval a serious change had taken place. A German machine-gun post—apparently the one that had been unsuccessfully attacked during the days of preparation—situated about half-way to O.G.1 but beyond the left flank of the advance, had been manned, and opened fire. This post was too close to be included in the flank barrage of the 25th Division's artillery, which fell, as ordered, on Park

⁹⁶ Maj L. W. Matthews, D.S.O.; 22nd Bn. Engineering student; of Ballarat, Vic.; b Maryborough, Vic., 11 Feb., 1888.

Lane. There is no record of any special measure, other than the smoke barrage, having been planned for its suppression during the advance; and, as the waves of the 6th Brigade were not attacking northwards, it was not swamped, as on July 29th, by a too vigorous advance. This machine-gun was the only one brought to bear direct and at close range on any part of the Australian attack on August 4th, and its effect was deadly. The wind being contrary, the smoke-mortars which were to screen the advance from enemy observation had proved useless on this flank, and had ceased their fire. The stream of bullets was enfilading the advance. Of the leaders, the gallant Elmiger was wounded almost immediately after leaving the trench. Lieutenants Pritchard⁹⁷ (at Mackay's side) and Scanlon⁹⁸ were killed, and Lieutenant Wolff⁹⁹ wounded on the way across. But the wave reached O.G.1 and swarmed along it. A captured German officer afterwards said that, though the attack on this flank at first appeared to be held up, the Australians presently flowed into the trench and bombed their way up it from both sides. "They were in too great number to be stopped," he added, ". . . fine strong lads." The 22nd found few Germans in the trench except dead or wounded, but a number were still in two of the deep dugouts. These shelters were bombed; one of them caught fire and burned furiously all night.¹⁰⁰ Three machine-guns were captured. The third and



⁹⁷ Lieut. L. B. Pritchard, 22nd Bn. Govt. agricultural expert; of Moonee Ponds, Vic.; b Brunswick, Vic., 1 July, 1892. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

⁹⁸ Lieut. H. D. Scanlon, 22nd Bn. Orchardist, of Mildura, Vic.; b Nottingham, Eng., 2 Aug., 1887. Killed in action, 4 Aug., 1916.

⁹⁹ Capt. W. S. G. Wolff, 22nd Bn. Flour miller; of Essendon and St. Arnaud, Vic.; b Sydney, 7 April, 1892.

¹⁰⁰ A few minutes after reaching O.G.1 word was passed along that there were "prisoners." Lieutenant Alderson, making his way down the trench, found two Australian sentries arguing with some Germans who wished to come out of the shelter. The Australians were trying to persuade them that they were safer below, but one of the Germans, an N.C.O., made frequent use of the French word

fourth waves presently passed over O.G.1—the troops there shouting that they were “all right”—and with some difficulty recognising O.G.2 by its shredded entanglement, moved down it to right and left, killing the few Germans whom they met. The 22nd Battalion thus occupied its whole objective.

But the splendid young leader whose initiative and determination were the direct cause of this success did not live to see it. Within a few yards of O.G.1, Mackay was shot through the heart. It is not too much to say that by his conduct during a crisis of the utmost difficulty and peril the whole operation was snatched from imminent risk of complete failure. Had the 22nd Battalion failed to secure the northern sector of O.G.1, enemy machine-guns firing at close range would have cut all communication with the 7th Brigade as soon as daylight broke, and the situation of that brigade—furiously shelled, bombed from the flank, and short of supplies—would have been desperate. As it was, only a comparatively slight difficulty remained. On the extreme left, where Brind's Road ran through and dipped into the valley leading to Courcelette, there was presently an exchange of shots and bombs with the Germans, who appeared to be occupying dugouts farther along the road. At this point intermittent fighting continued, and the precise situation was not clear, the new Australian front really coming into contact there with a switch (Bayern Riegel) on which the enemy had retreated. The flank was reinforced with part of Captain Godfrey's¹⁰¹ company of the 24th, which early in the night was sent into the O.G. Lines.¹⁰²

The task of linking the left flank in the O.G. Lines with the old left flank near “K” Trench was duly carried out by Lieutenant Barnes¹⁰³ and 120 men of the 23rd with six

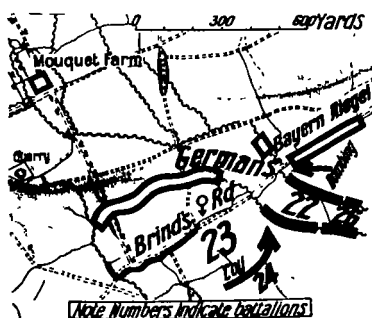
“brûler” (burn). Two minutes later a cloud of smoke rolling up the stairs made clear his meaning—the dugout was on fire. An officer and nineteen men came out, and the place burst presently into flame. Efforts to extinguish it were unsuccessful, and the troops were accordingly withdrawn for some distance either side of it.

¹⁰¹ Capt. T. C. E. Godfrey, M.C.; 24th Bn. Accountant; of East Melbourne, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 25 April, 1891. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917.

¹⁰² This movement was ordered by Colonel Smith upon hearing that the third and fourth waves of his own battalion would be late. They reached the O.G. Lines, however, before the 24th.

¹⁰³ Capt. D. Barnes, M.B.E.; 23rd Bn. Funeral director; of Ballarat, Vic., b. Learmonth, Vic., 19 April, 1890.

Lewis guns. Filing out along Brind's Road from the extreme left of the old position, they were stationed beside the road to dig in, the Lewis guns meanwhile protecting them. But the German machine-gun post that played such havoc with the 22nd sometimes rendered the work impossible. Losses were heavy, four officers and fifty men being hit, and, according to the battalion commander's report, "twice the situation seemed to warrant withdrawal." Yet the party held on through the night, reinforced near the O.G. Lines by some pioneers under Lieutenant Patterson.¹⁰⁴



The O.G. Lines, with the exception of part of O.G.2 near the windmill, had thus been wrenched from the enemy—the fiery vigour of such leaders as Mackay and the quality of the troops having more than made up for any mistakes and miscarriages in preparation. The German narrative, as far as it is known, may be shortly set down.

The attack on August 4 had been expected, but not at that date or hour; the heavy shell-fire which had been experienced on the Courcellette front since July 30 had indeed made it obvious that an offensive was in preparation. On the night of July 31 the bombardment had cut the communications with the front line and prevented the carriage of hot food to III/162 R.I.R. north of the windmill, and its commander asked that his troops should be relieved. The tension increased, rather than relaxed, in the days which followed, the fire of Stokes mortars and the barrages of machine-gun fire laid by the Australians upon the roads and communication trenches enfiladed by them—especially those leading from Mouquet Farm southwards—adding to the strain and loss.¹⁰⁵ On August 2 a German of the 84th R.I.R. wrote—

The Pozieres fighting can be summed up in a word, for in truth the state of affairs resembles nothing on earth. Heaps of corpses, a horrible stench, and wire lying among pieces of dead men. The 84th Regiment has lost at least two-thirds of its strength.

A company of the 162nd in the O.G. Lines, notwithstanding the excellent protection of its dugouts, lost 84 men in four days. The German airmen were barely seen, and each platoon or section of infantry was convinced that the British airmen, flying low, were

¹⁰⁴ Maj. G. B. Patterson, M.C., M.S.M., 2nd Pioneer Bn. Member of Aust. Permanent Forces, of Adelaide, S. Aust., b. Portsmouth, Eng., Oct., 1882.

¹⁰⁵ *History of 86th R.I.R.*, p. 145.

directing artillery-fire upon their particular dugout. One consequence was that, although the traffic of Australian troops backwards and forwards along part of "K" Trench was clearly visible to the Germans in the O.G. Lines, they would not snipe at it for fear of incurring heavier bombardment. "The best thing that can happen," wrote a German infantryman, "is to get a slight wound."

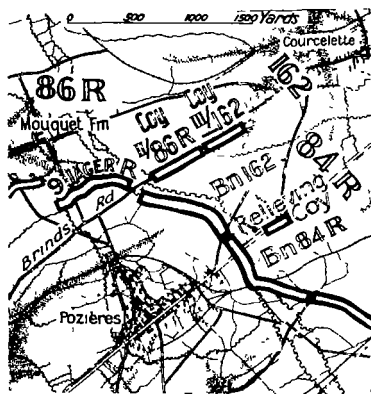
These results were not dissimilar from those produced in the Australian garrison by the prolonged bombardment. But the "special" bombardments, which puzzled the Germans, caused the strain to show itself in the false alarms already described. Yet whether the front-line troops of the 162nd opposite the Australian front really believed (as did their staff) that they had been attacked on the night of August 3, is more than doubtful. The diary of an officer in the German line under date "afternoon of August 4" says:

In front of Pozières we can see the English working. Between 5 and 7 (i.e., 4-6 p.m. English time) strongest English artillery fire and trench mortars. Thick clouds of dust make it impossible for our artillery to see the red lights fired by us.

Enemy officers subsequently said that the attack was expected to occur some morning at daylight. and 84th R.I.R. appear to have been in progress, and the relieving troops of the 34th were approaching the windmill when the bombardment descended.

The front line of the 18th Reserve Division, opposite 1 Anzac, was held that night by the following troops. On its right, north of Brind's Road, was the 9th Reserve Jäger Battalion with most of the 86th R.I.R. behind it. Next to the Jäger, in the O.G. Lines from Brind's Road southwards to near the windmill, lay the III/162nd. In the O.G. Lines, from near the windmill southwards, was the II/84th R.I.R.

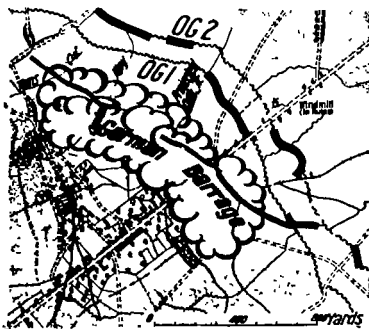
(which had relieved the III/84th on July 31). The Jäger, whose main line was in Park Lane, were hardly attacked except at the junction of Brind's Road with the O.G. Lines.¹⁰⁸ But the sectors held by the two other battalions were lost, with the exception of part of O.G.2 near the windmill. Here the officer at the head of the relief, already mentioned, pushing on into that trench, saw lying there three wounded Australians. Judging that a new attack was being delivered, he ordered his platoon to extend north of the road and counter-attack. In the confusion of the night, however, these troops were split up, the officer and three men being afterwards captured in a shell-hole between O.G.1 and 2, where they had endeavoured to dig in. The remainder possibly occupied during the night part of O.G.2.



¹⁰⁸ The Jäger, however, had from the time of their entry into the line been involved in constant fighting on their right where the British had taken part of Ration Trench and eventually cut off one company. The battalion had been strengthened by the attachment of the II/86th, two of whose companies were in the front area. The combined unit was called the "Regt Mansfeld."

The confusion of that night may be judged from the fact that the 18th Reserve Division reported that the assault had taken place at midnight¹⁰⁷ without artillery preparation. It added that the attack had made progress but had been checked by the German barrage on the windmill crest, and that an immediate counter-attack had been ordered.

The German barrage, which on the launching of the Australian attack had been laid down promptly and in tremendous density near the line of the Tramway Trench (the front line prior to the assault), caught such parts of the later waves of Australians as had been unable to reach their intended starting-points and also most of the carrying parties and pioneers. So dense were the shells that in the 7th Brigade's sector it was almost hopeless to attempt sending the parties through. After its struggle through the barrage, the 22nd Battalion had brought only four shovels to O.G.2, and in other sectors of the advanced line picks and shovels were almost equally scarce, so that the men had to work with their entrenching tools. Four field companies—the 5th, 6th, 7th, and 13th—and the 2nd and 4th Battalions of pioneers were to be responsible mainly for digging and keeping open the trenches communicating with the new line. In the 5th Brigade's sector, where No-Man's Land was narrow, these works were duly accomplished; and in the sector of the 6th Brigade, where the parties had the advantage of two old German communication trenches¹⁰⁸ to work in, they succeeded in clearing those avenues through to O.G.1 before midnight, and even in digging certain communications between O.G.1 and 2; but in the 7th Brigade's sector, where all work had to be carried out in the open under the densest of the barrage, saps could not be completed, so that the only way of reaching that part of the O.G. Lines was still overland. North of The Elbow the glow of the burning dugout in O.G.1, which could be seen all



¹⁰⁷ 1 a.m. by German time.

¹⁰⁸ Centre Way and Tom's Cat.

night, afforded a landmark towards which runners and carrying parties were constantly directed. In that sector, moreover, there were fair numbers of men for the work. South of it very little material came through,¹⁰⁹ and the line was thinly held, with wide gaps, filled to some extent by the 7th Company's machine-guns; the several groups of the garrison had been in touch, but were only vaguely aware of one another's position. Towards morning, as the result of continuous work, a number of isolated lengths of O.G.1 and, in the northern and southern sectors, several hundred yards of O.G.2 had been dug out sufficiently to afford good shelter.¹¹⁰

About midnight a distinct change occurred in the enemy's barrage; the fire, though it continued upon Tramway Trench, diminished in the rear areas and began to fall heavily around the O.G. Lines. Naturally enough, in the dark the new barrage was not accurate, the shells mostly missing O.G.2, although O.G.1. and the ground in its rear caught a large proportion. Nevertheless they so increased casualties that few officers were left to organise and direct the consolidation.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁹ Lieutenant Healy afterwards stated that in the 25th Battalion's sector, so far as he knew, only one runner, Private N. D. O'Connell (of Toowoomba, Q'land), succeeded in making the double journey through the barrage.

¹¹⁰ An order that Lewis guns should be stationed in advance of O.G.2 in shell-holes was carried out in the 5th Brigade's sector. O.G.2 itself, however, was little more than a succession of shell-holes, and in the other brigades the Lewis guns were at this stage mostly retained in O.G.2 or O.G.1, whichever was the front line.

¹¹¹ In the 5th and 7th Brigades on either side of the main road, the direction appears largely to have fallen on the undermentioned officers. South of the Bapaume road in the 18th, Captain H. L. Bruce commanded (after the death of Kirke) in O.G.1. In O.G.2 Captain R. M. Sadler and Lieutenant J. N. Doyle (of Sydney) were hit soon after the capture of the trench. Lieutenant R. McG. Fitzgerald (of Melbourne) was killed while encouraging his men in the subsequent bombardment, and Lieutenant E. P. Allison (of Broken Hill, N.S.W.) was killed about the same time. Lieutenant N. H. Hobbs (of Gosford, N.S.W.) took charge of the 18th in the forward trench until Lieutenant C. G. Walklate (of Roseville, N.S.W.) was sent up at about midnight. In Captain Devonshire's sector north of the road, Sergeant C. G. Thomson undertook a leading part in the direction until he collapsed through loss of blood; and among others Private F. Hemsley (of Brentwood, S. Aust.), who was killed during the night, rendered conspicuous assistance.

Farther north, in the 25th, Capt. Boys and Lieut. Stuart had been killed, and Capt. H. Cross (of Brisbane) seriously wounded. The remaining company commander, Lieutenant F. R. Corney (of Melbourne), though wounded in the hand, continued as long as he could to supervise the work in O.G.1. Eventually the whole responsibility fell upon Lieutenant Healy, who, early on August 5, discovered that there was no officer of the battalion in O.G.2. Lieutenant T. Hobgen (of Roma and Cloncurry district, Q'land) of the battalion transport was sent up, but was soon wounded. On hearing of this, Healy himself took over the front line, leaving Company Sergeant-Major C. G. C. Thompson (of Lakemba, N.S.W.) in charge of the battalion sector of O.G.1. Healy was assisted by Sergeants W. Harrison, Cameron, F. M. Mortyn, J. B. Gordon, and others. In the morning he found touch on his northern flank with Captain G. Bond (of Hobart) of the 26th. In that battalion's sector Captains F. B. Cless (of Ayr, Q'land) and R. J.

West of the windmill in the sector commanded by Captain Devonshire of the 27th, N.C.O's and even privates were eventually doing officers' work. The machine-guns and trench-mortars were still officered; the company commanders of the 25th Battalion north of The Elbow were all killed or wounded, and the command of the battalion in both lines eventually fell upon the only officer remaining there, Lieutenant Healy, and upon his N.C.O's. The position of the 26th was almost the same. In the 22nd, to replace officers lost during the preceding days, eleven N.C.O's had been commissioned a few hours before the battle. As invariably happened in such cases in the A.I.F., these fine men felt bound to prove their courage and devotion to their old comrades, with the result that three were killed and six wounded—two of them mortally—before the night was out.¹¹² Despite these and other losses, the 22nd was still well officered in O.G.2, where Captain Curnow,¹¹³ an admired leader, was in charge with three juniors.¹¹⁴

At midnight the barrage protecting the Australians was temporarily lifted in order to permit of scouting by patrols.¹¹⁵ Small reconnaissances were made, then or later, on most parts of the front, though loss of officers and the confusion of

Thompson (of Mackay, Q'land) were killed, and the work fell largely on the N.C.O's, especially Sergeants A. Single (of Mudgee, N.S.W.) and C. A. Stapleton (of Charters Towers, Q'land), and upon Lieutenant S. J. Morgan (of Ipswich, Q'land), the signalling officer.

¹¹² Of this eleven, the Lewis gun officer, Lieutenant H. D. Scanlon, was killed and Lieutenants C. Kennett (of South Melbourne, Vic.) and I. C. Handasyde (of Camberwell, Vic.) were both wounded, the former mortally, in crossing No-Man's Land; Lieutenant H. R. Thomas (of Albert Park, Vic.), until he too was killed, and Lieutenant R. Blanchard (of Brighton, Vic.) took charge of the battalion's line in O.G.1. Lieutenant R. M. Condon (of Prahran, Vic.) was killed after taking out a patrol. (His father, J. D. Condon, a private in the 46th Battalion, A.I.F., took part in this battle, and was subsequently killed at Messines.) Lieutenants A. W. Yates (of Ballarat, Vic.), F. G. Kellaway (of Northcote, Vic.), and S. Scammell (of Elsternwick, Vic.) were wounded, the first-named mortally, soon after reaching O.G.2. Lieutenant Scammell was subsequently killed at Bullecourt, and Lieutenants Kellaway and Blanchard at Ypres. The only survivors, Lieutenants Handasyde and H. J. King (of Daylesford, Vic.), were invalided to Australia through wounds, the former after this fight, the latter in 1918.

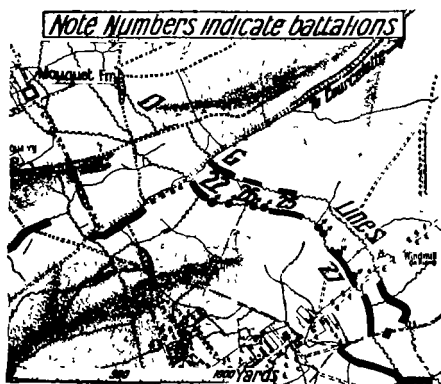
¹¹³ Capt. H. F. Curnow, 22nd Bn. Public servant; of Melbourne and Bendigo, Vic.; b. Kangaroo Flat, Vic., 9 Jan., 1893. Killed in action, 5 Aug., 1916.

¹¹⁴ Lieutenants H. T. Lanyon (of Shepparton, Vic.), H. C. Rodda (of Hawthorn, Vic.), and E. B. McKay (of Melbourne). Major Matthews, on hearing that Major M. N. Mackay and Captain Elmiger had been hit, assumed the command in O.G.1.

¹¹⁵ East of O.G.2 the barrage was gradually advanced 500 yards for this purpose, and afterwards gradually brought back.

the night prevented the businesslike return of collated reports. East of the O.G. Lines—except in the case, already mentioned, of the trench-mortar men near the windmill—the scouts found the area close in front of the O.G. Lines to be clear of the enemy. The enemy

had, indeed, received a staggering blow, and it is probable that, except for certain reserves in Brind's Road, this part of the front was virtually clear as far as Courcellette. Over the reverse slope of the ridge, the Australians working in O.G.2 could see the dark shapes of the trees around that



village and the naked flashes of a German battery a mile to the north-east. Shortly before midnight there were seen at intervals, over the brow of the hill Courcellette way, five great explosions, in which dark objects were flung hundreds of feet into the air. Some enemy battery, it was conjectured, was destroying its ammunition in fear of a deeper advance. "Are you in Courcellette?" was the first question asked by a young German officer when brought as a prisoner to brigade headquarters. But the British plans did not propose any present advance in that direction; nor, on the front of a single division, would it have been advisable. The next objective lay northwards from the 6th Brigade's flank, and reports as to whether the enemy in that direction were weak (as General Gough supposed) and a rapid—perhaps immediate—advance possible were eagerly awaited. From that direction, however, no reports arrived. Accordingly the brigadier, Gellibrand, taking Plant, his brigade-major, himself went up at 2.5 a.m. through the barrage to Tramway Trench. He found that patrols had been sent out but had met with bombs and machine-gun fire, and that the confused but stubborn fighting then occurring on the northern front put out of the question any immediate attempt to press northwards.

Such was the position when at dawn—about 4 o'clock¹¹⁶—on Saturday, August 5th, the occupants of the posts north of The Elbow in O.G.2, and the sentries of the machine-gun detachments in O.G.1 south of it, observed an extended line of figures coming up over the brow of the hill towards the windmill. Farther north, at the same time, the 26th and 22nd perceived Germans coming up from the valley down which Brind's Road dipped. The southern wing of the attack was instantly met by the fire of Lieutenant Cherry's machine-guns, as well as by that of the 25th and 27th, and



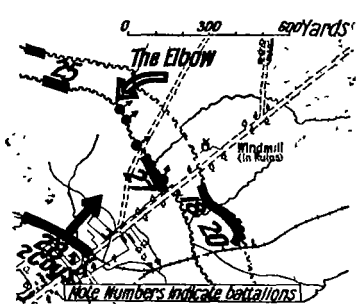
the Germans, who were bravely led by an officer waving a revolver, not yet recognising the direction from which the fire came, began to "bunch," offering an ideal target to the machine-guns. After losing heavily they dropped into shell-holes, but continued to advance by rushes, and, though firing had become general, pressed on to the unoccupied part of O.G.2 and thence along an old communication trench towards O.G.1, perilously close on the flank of Cherry's guns. Chance had brought them to the gap between the 27th and 25th, where they were four to one, but faced by a handful of fine men under a particularly dashing officer. On the night of July 28th Cherry had made the repulse of the infantry the occasion for advancing his guns until they nearly came to serious trouble. The true opportunity for his battery had now arrived. The enemy was pressing a section of O.G.1 held only by a machine-gun's crew and two men of the 27th, and was actually bombing the gun. Its operator, Lance-Corporal Hunter,¹¹⁷ though wounded in the hand by one of these bombs, continued to fire until another burst

¹¹⁶ "Summer" time. The true time was 3 a.m.

¹¹⁷ Lieut. H. O. C. Hunter, M.M.; 7th M.G. Coy. Farmer; of Mullumbimby, N.S.W.; b. Wembley, Eng., 21 Apr., 1894.

smashed the gun.¹¹⁸ Cherry, however, thwarted the move by shifting another gun to a position from which it caught these Germans from the flank and rear, and the enemy thrust in this quarter came to a stop.

Meanwhile news of the attack had reached the headquarters of the 25th at Tramway Trench. Major Leane, the commander of the 28th, being present and having three companies in that trench as supports, left the dugout and, seeing fighting in progress on the horizon, at once ordered Captain Foss¹¹⁹ to lead two companies forward. Foss advanced immediately with his men extended, but the enemy had by that time sunk into shell-holes, where he was being sniped by the infantry and bombed by guns of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery. With the arrival of Foss the Germans were far outnumbered, and those near O.G.1, seeing the advance, at once surrendered.¹²⁰



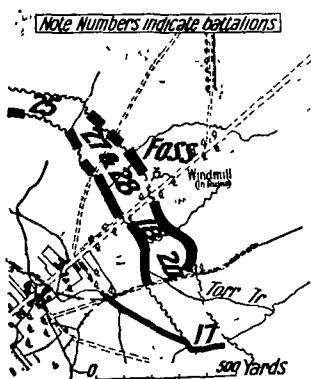
Finding that O.G.2 near the windmill had not yet been occupied, Foss led forward in that direction a small party of the 27th and 28th. Farther north also, observing that some of the defeated Germans were still occupying that trench or shell-holes near it, several Australian officers independently

¹¹⁸ Shortage of ammunition proved a difficulty, but Cherry had filled German machine-gun belts with ammunition taken from the wounded, and Sergeant E. F. Armit (of Townsville, Q'land) used these with success. Cherry afterwards reported that Corporal L. J. Felstead's had been the first gun to open, and that Privates A. J. Sells (of Charleville, Q'land) and J. L. Bowman (of Brisbane), after being half-buried, worked their gun until they were killed.

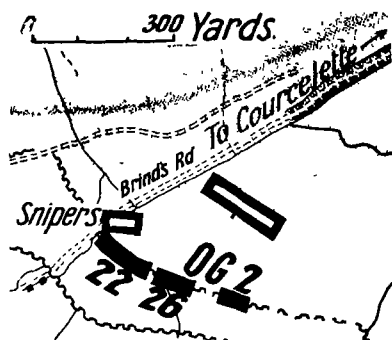
¹¹⁹ The same who had led the first Australian trench raid at Armentières.

¹²⁰ The fight was marked by an incident of a sort that was not frequent in this war. Cherry and an officer who was leading the German attack in that neighbourhood were shooting at one another from neighbouring shell-holes, each endeavouring to dodge the other's shots. It happened that they rose together and fired simultaneously, the German hitting Cherry's helmet, but being mortally wounded by him. The Australian presently went over to his dying opponent; as he bent down, the German took some letters from his pockets, and in good English asked him to promise that, after submitting the letters to the censor, he would post them. On receiving this promise, the German handed them over, saying as he did so "And so it ends."

led out parties from O.G.1 to attack them,¹²¹ whereupon a considerable number surrendered.¹²² Foss then stationed a small mixed post with a Lewis gun in O.G.2 near the windmill, and both he and Lieutenant King¹²³ sent back to battalion headquarters asking for more men to do the necessary digging. The capture of O.G.2 had thus been completed, but south of The Elbow it was occupied only lightly by mixed posts of the 27th and 28th.



Meanwhile a northern wing of the counter-attack had directed itself against the 22nd and 26th Battalions, about 150 Germans coming up in an extended line from the valley in front of Courcelette. The men of those battalions scrambled on to the parapet—no firestep having been made and the trench being now deep—and fired at them. Standing thus their attention fixed on the advancing line, the troops on the left were not at first aware that they were being sniped with deadly effect by a handful of Germans lying in shell-holes about forty yards in advance of O.G.2 where Brind's Road ran through. It happened that Captain Curnow saw a well-known man of his



¹²¹ Lieutenant King of the 28th, who had been sent forward at the same time as Foss, but some distance to the north of the latter, led one party. Capt. S. H. Adams of the 4th Pioneers, who, with such of his own men and of the infantry as were round him, had organised the defence of part of the O.G. Lines, led another small party.

¹²² A number of these prisoners, when being sent to the rear, were unfortunately fired on and killed—according to one account, by their own artillery, according to another, by Australians who had mistaken the movement for a counter-attack.

¹²³ Capt. H. C. King, M.C.; 28th Bn. Warehouseman; of Claremont, W. Aust.; b. Guildford, W. Aust., Oct., 1895. Died of wounds, 7 April, 1918.

company, Private Vienna,¹²⁴ formerly a football supporter of Geelong, killed by one of these snipers. Exclaiming "I'll get the chap who did that," and drawing his revolver on the German, this beloved leader too was shot dead. The incident added to the fury of the fight. Under the fire poured upon them the Germans broke when 200 yards away, and rushed back towards Courcelette. Shortly afterwards they appeared to be led forward again, but quickly sank into shell-holes, and the only movement subsequently seen in this quarter was that of individual men occasionally crawling about the crater-field. But the Germans near Brind's Road were within bombing range and were not so easily defeated. Their grenades scattered some Victorians digging near the flank; but a private of the 22nd, named O'Neill,¹²⁵ collected a party to bomb them back. Finding that the enemy nest was farther than they themselves could throw, the men raised a call for "Omeo," a youngster—Lance-Corporal Weston¹²⁶—from the township of that name in Victoria, and a thrower of repute. He came along, glanced at the enemy position, decided that he could not reach it from the trench, and jumped upon the parados. He was leaning back to hurl his grenade when a sniper's bullet hit him in the face, knocking out an eye. Still clutching the live bomb, with the eye hanging on his cheek, he fell forward into the trench among half-a-dozen men. "For God's sake, George, take this bomb," he said to O'Neill. "The pin's out!" He then fainted, but not before O'Neill had seized the missile and hurled it safely clear of the trench.

According to German accounts, this counter-attack would seem to have been preceded by an earlier effort made by the support company of the III/162nd. This attempt appears to have faded before it came under the observation of the Australians, unless it included the bombing attacks made during the night near Brind's Road against the left of the 22nd Battalion. Two companies of the II/162nd, lying at Courcelette in support of the III Battalion, were not immediately sent forward; and it was these, together with two of the I/162nd—hurriedly brought up from Warlencourt—which made the counter-attack at dawn on August 5. They may have been supported by some action on the part of the 9th Jäger Reserve Battalion and

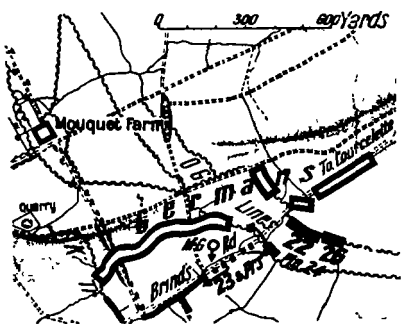
¹²⁴ Pte. E. Vienna (No. 268; 22nd Bn). Labourer; of Geelong, Vic.; b. Geelong, 1875. Killed in action, 5 Aug., 1916.

¹²⁵ L/Cpl. G. J. O'Neill, D.C.M. (No. 223; 22nd Bn). Tally clerk; of Kyneton, Vic.; b. Cork, Ireland, 14 Jan., 1883.

¹²⁶ L/Cpl. N. D. Weston, D.C.M. (No. 1635; 22nd Bn). Bushman and stockrider; of Omeo, Vic.; b. Omeo, 17 Nov., 1896.

the attached troops of the II/86th R.I.R. to the north, and of the 84th to the south. German records state that this counter-attack was preceded by bombardment but failed entirely and with severe loss.

Nevertheless at this stage the situation on the left was a rather anxious one for the Australians. The 23rd and Pioneers forming the flank along Brind's Road found machine-gun fire enfilading their new trench and were forced to withdraw, although they covered the abandoned sap with two



Lewis guns.¹²⁷ An appeal was sent to the commander of the 22nd to secure the flank. He had at dawn sent back the reinforcing troops of the 24th, in order to avoid overcrowding the O.G. Lines; but they were recalled at this stage in order to secure the left, a platoon under Lieutenant Christian¹²⁸ being sent northwards along O.G.I., in which it established itself at some distance north of Brind's Road. As the offensive was almost immediately to turn northwards, information—both as to the situation of the Australians holding this flank and as to the strength of the enemy facing them—was urgently needed, but was not to hand. Accordingly later in the day Captain Nicholas,¹²⁹ a young officer of the 24th, made his way along Brind's Road with Lieutenant Hughes,¹³⁰ securing touch with the troops in O.G.I. When returning, Nicholas not only located the German machine-gun post that had caused so much trouble on this flank, but captured the German party and came in with their gun on his shoulder. "Just as well," he said, "to make

¹²⁷ A trench-mortar under Corporal B. H. Cavanagh (of Brimpaen district, Vic.) also covered this flank. Its position was known to be a dangerous one, but Cavanagh who applied for the task, kept the gun in action after all his team had been hit, until he himself was seriously wounded.

¹²⁸ Lieut. N. R. Christian, 24th Bn. Commercial traveller, of Malvern, Vic.; b. Prahran, Vic., 1 July, 1891. Died, 5 Nov., 1938.

¹²⁹ Major G. M. Nicholas, D.S.O.; 24th Bn. School teacher; of Melbourne and Trafalgar, Vic.; b. Coleraine, Vic., 2 March, 1887. Killed in action, 14 Nov., 1916.

¹³⁰ Lieut. A. Hughes, M.C.; 22nd Bn. School teacher; of Broomfield and Ballarat, Vic.; b. Allendale, Vic., 25 Oct., 1885.

