

DURHAM
AT **WAR**



**MY EXPERIENCES & IMPRESSIONS SINCE THE
DECLARATION OF WAR (volume 1)
by Hubert Horatio Shirley Morant**

The Story of the 10th Battalion Durham Light Infantry
in the First World War

by its commanding officer, Lieutenant-Colonel Morant

PART 10: Pages 145-169

August – September 1916

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All other arrangements eg. Trench
Gutters (Medium & Stakes) will
be made direct by you with
the officers concerned.

J Wood Rf
Comd 4th Inf Bde

27/8/16

145

Lt Col Morant
 Commanding DLI

The failure of the attack ^{on the German Post} this morning to materialize may easily produce a critical situation so far as ~~future~~ contemplated plans for future operations are concerned.

I attribute this failure largely to ^{your} extreme slowness & hesitation in making up your mind as to the method of dealing with the situation.

Should the Germans be still in the wood by tomorrow morning - I shall be under the necessity of employing another Battalion of this Brigade to turn them out - in which case I shall be reluctantly compelled to report the facts ^{in writing} to the Major. Genl Commanding the Division for such action as he may consider necessary. I have already spoken

146

to the M.G.C. this morning
 on the subject of what I
 conceive to be lack of ^{self} confidence
 and undue hesitation on your
 part in appreciating & dealing
 with a fairly simple situation.
 I would also bring to your
 notice that it has been reported
 to me that certain orders I
 gave you regarding the sending
 out of patrols up COCOA LANE
 towards BEER TRENCH & just
 beyond latter were apparently
 not strictly complied with
 by your Battalion last night 26/27/16

J. Wood R.G.
 Commanding Bde
 27/8/16

11.9.43rd Bde

1. Regret to report that the attack on 5.18 9.8. did not develop this morning.

I had informed the attacking parties that in accordance with the scheme for attack there would be Medium Stokes T.M. Bombardment commencing at 4 A.M. lasting till 4.55 A.M. - followed by 5 minutes Rapid Stokes bombardment prior to assault. As no such bombardment was apparent - the attacking troops did not assault.

2. No Medium Motors appear to have been in position - the officer did not report to me this morning as ordered & the Motors did not fire.

3. Lt. Lewison - Stokes M.O. - appears not to have arrived at his position until 4.20 A.M. The Captain of One Gun

148

informed me this morning that he only had orders to fire from 4.55 AM to 5. A.M. The T.M.O states each of his 2 Guns fired 25 rounds during the supposed One hour bombardment of which 5 minutes was to be at the rate of 30 rounds per minute.

However many rounds were fired they were not noticeable and the Enemy did not offer to retaliate. As a matter of fact the Guns were not registered on the objective so were not firing at it.

4. I am making an attack this evening at 5 P.M. without previous bombardment & hope the R.W.F. will cooperate. J.H.S. Mount
 Later - The R.W.F. will cooperate J.H.S. Mount
 + the time is being fixed earlier. J.H.S.

149

H. O. Lord Bde

1. In reply to your letter dated 27th inst
ref attack on S.18.6.97 - my report
I hope explains the reason of its unfort-
unate failure, the essence of the plan
being the Trench Mortar bombardment this
not having taken place I think the
officer actually commanding the attack
was justified in his action.
2. The orders given by you to the Trench
Mortars - Medium & Stokes - were not
carried out.
3. My new plan is to dispense entirely
with the Trench Mortars as I have
failed to obtain the assistance
I might expect from them, I have
been into the matter at some length
with them.
4. My plan therefore is to attempt to
rush the Trenches by surprise.

150

The ~~attack~~ assault and Art & Grenade
Barrages being carried out simult-
aneously.

5. I have already arranged re Artillery
+ cooperation with 7th Division.

6. I have not seen the Medium T.M.O.
though you ordered him to report
to me.

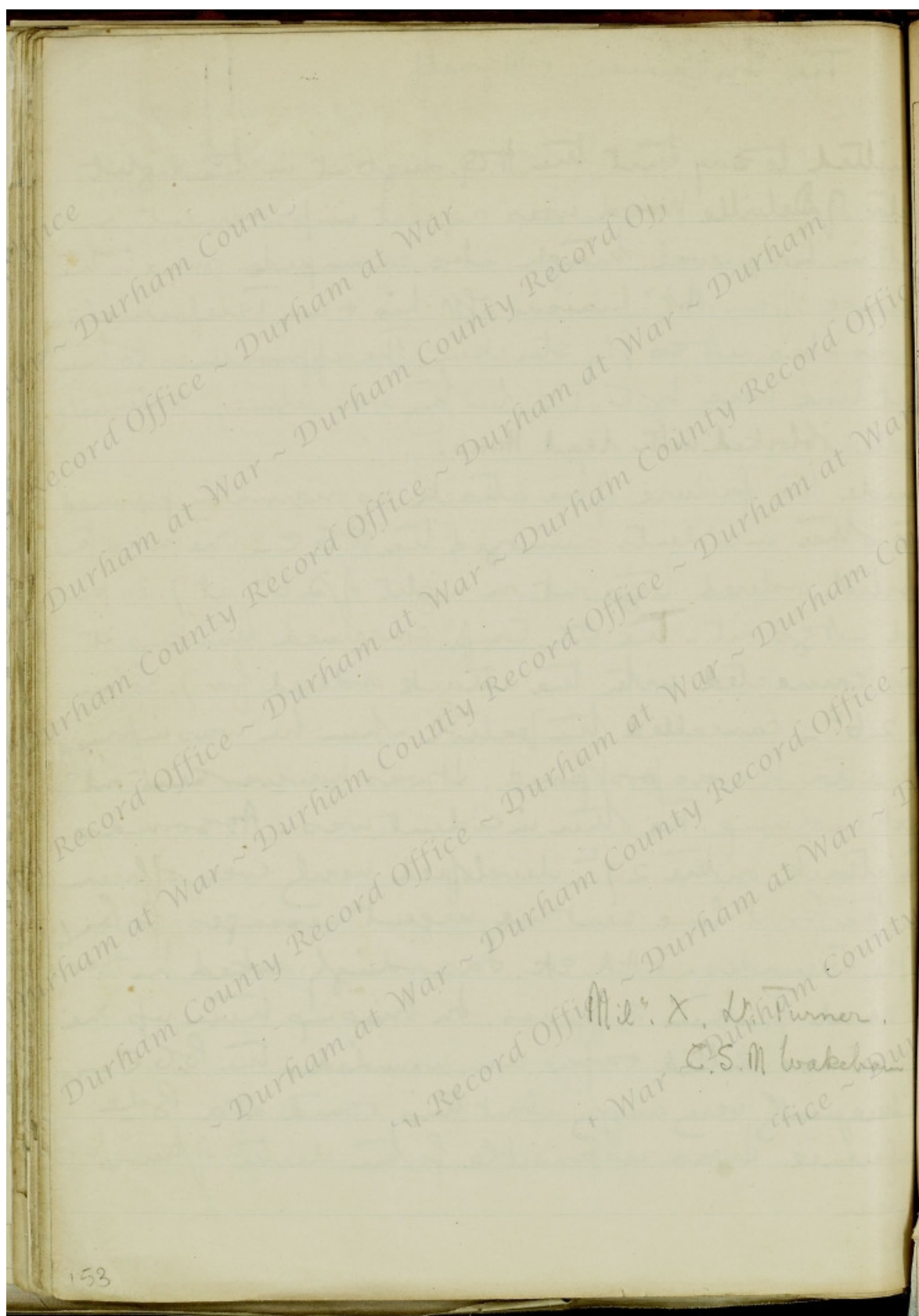
27.8.16.

H. T. S. Mount Blair
W/D. 2.1.

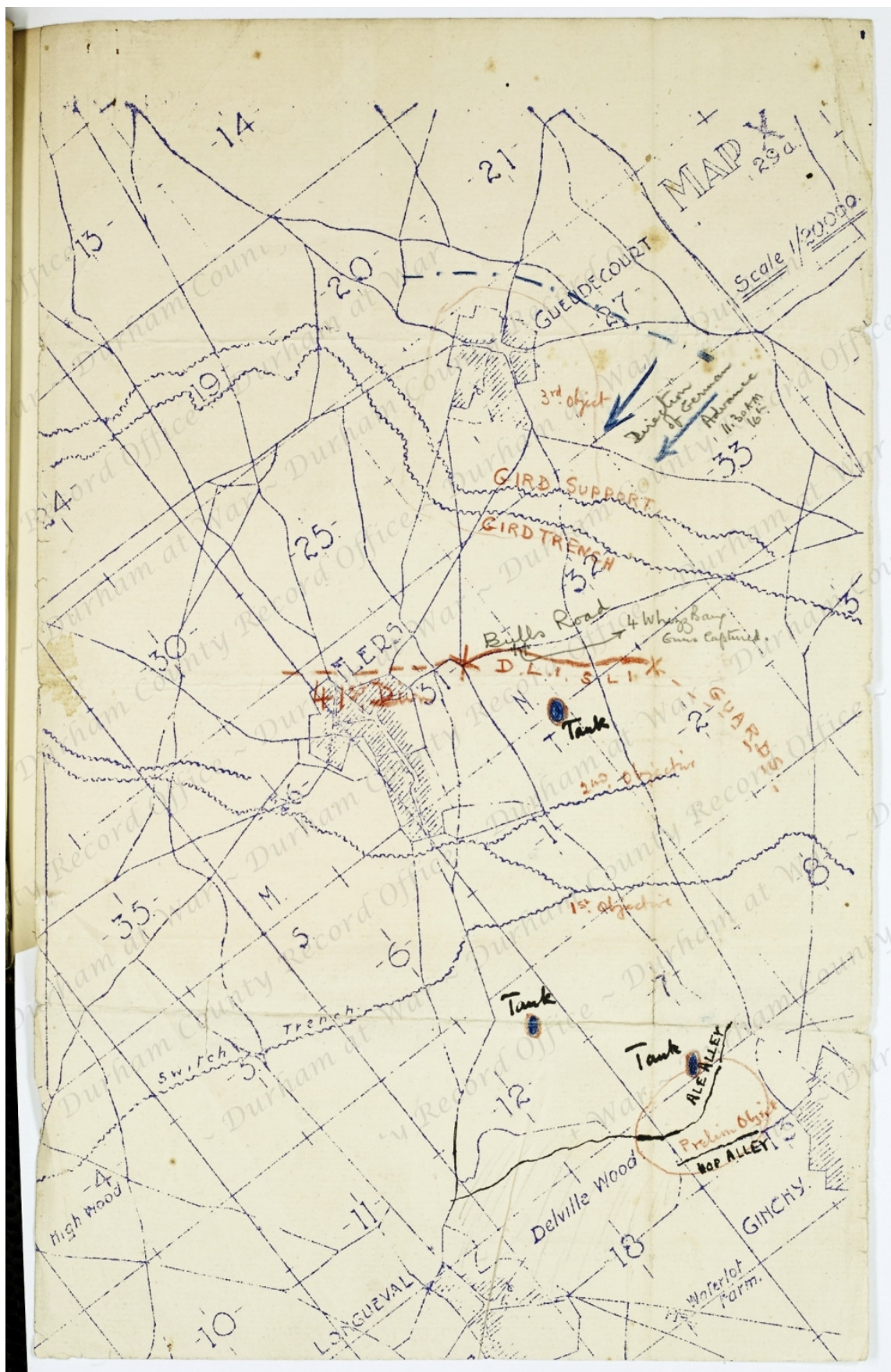
The Brigadier & Myself.

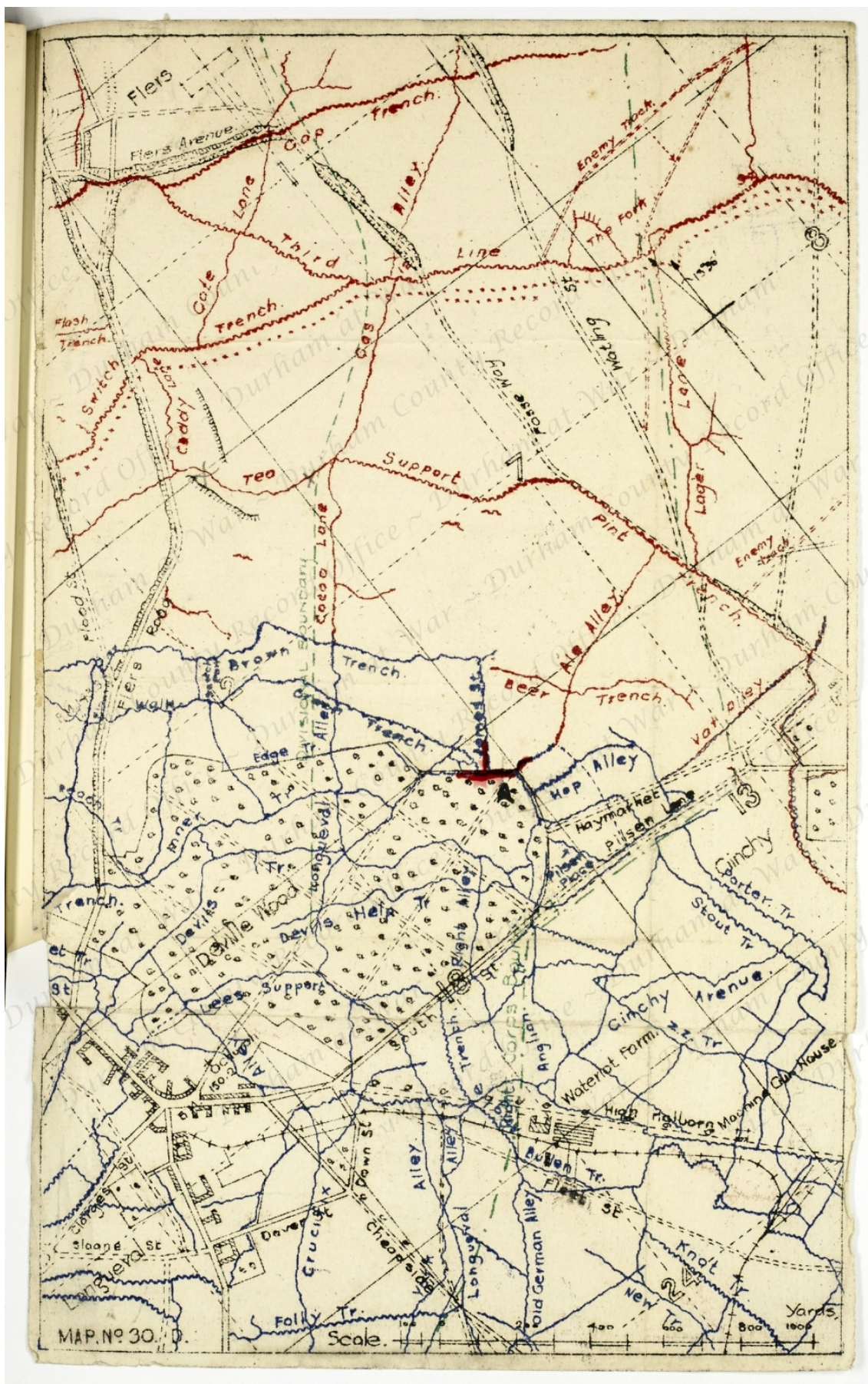
mitted to say that the H.Q. dugout in the right sector of Delville Wood was a great improvement on that in Langueval though also cramped. owing to the absence of an Art? Liaison Off. his + my Telephonists - it was also not so fly stricken. The approaches to the front line were by C.T.'s but they were almost continually belted & blocked with dead Huns.

Beside the failure of the attack as originally planned two other incidents annoyed the B.G.C. - One was that a patrol ordered to go out on night of 26th at 7.30 pm did not go out. The O.C. Comp? concerned thinking it was connected with the attack ordered for 7.30 pm on 26th - cancelled the patrol when he was informed the attack was postponed. It was however sent out next morning. The other incident was - As soon as the attack on the 27th developed nearly every officer in the front line sent me urgent messages for bombs, rifle grenades - S.A.A. etc. I accordingly asked the Bde to send further supplies. In bringing them up one officer was killed & a few men wounded. The B.G.C. was subsequently very angry about this & said at a Bde conference I was responsible for the death of this officer.









"A" Form. Army Form C. 2121.

MESSAGES AND SIGNALS No. of Message.....

Prefix.....m.	Code.....m.	Words	Charge	This message is on a/c of:	Recd. at.....m.
Office of Origin and Service Instructions.					
		Sent		Service.	Date
		A.....m.			From
		To.....			By
		By.....		(Signature of "Franking Officer.")	

TO	SPED	SPOT	SPIN	SPUR	
	SPY				

* Sender's Number	Day of Month	In reply to Number	AAA
13M 25	16		

The	Orders	have	been	received
that	to	43 rd L/3 rd	unfaced	
by	two	Battalions	4 th	24 th
the	will	resume	to	attack
this	evening	aaa	creeping	forward
up to	off	GIRD	track	at
6.55	p.m.	aaa	at	the
hour	all	units	of	to
4.3 rd	2 nd Bde	will	advance	and
endeavour	to	capture	the	with
up	GIRD	support	leaving	nothing
aaa	There	positions	GIRD	to
be	at	once	consolidated	aaa
The	two	Battalions	42 nd L/3 rd	
attached	43 rd B	will	off carry out	
the	attack	at	GUEUDECOURT	

From			
Place			
Time			

The above may be forwarded as now corrected. (2)

Censor. Signature of Addressor or person authorised to telegraph in his name.

* This line should be erased if not required.

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"A" Form.

MESSAGES AND SIGNALS

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Office of Origin and Service Instructions.					
		Sent		Service.	Date.....
		At.....m.			From.....
		To.....		(Signature of "Franking Officer.")	By.....
		By.....			

TO {				

* Sender's Number	Day of Month	In reply to Number	A A A
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aaa	They	will	move	up
for	SWITCH	LINE	at	such
an	hour	so	as	to
arrive	in	GIRD	support	at
7.25 pm	aaa	at	7.35 pm	
the	luggage	on	GUEUDECOURT	
will	left	and	the	infantry
will	assault	aaa	Officers	patrols
will	be	pushed	well	ahead
of	Battalion	of	40th Bde	to
ascertain	whether	GIRD	Support	has
the	captured	aaa		it
has	been	unsuccessful	these two	
Battalions	will	establish	themselves on	
BULLS	road	and	ambushes	aaa
Situation	reports	are	to	be
at	once	forwarded	to	the

From	Bryade.	The		
Place				
Time				

The above may be forwarded as now corrected.

(2)

Censor.

Signature of Addressor or person authorised to telegraph in his name.

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[illegible]

H.Q. 4th 3rd Bde

I beg to forward an account of the operations of 15/16th and 16/17th as far as concerns my Batta.

1. About 12 noon 15th inst I moved off in accordance with your orders from my trenches in S 23 to take up positions on right of FLERS-Longueval Road about TEA Support. I therefore advanced in Artillery formation (of platoons) straight through DELVILLE WOOD, which was being heavily shelled at the time, to S 12 & 10.7. With the exception of 8 men killed by one shell we suffered practically no casualties en route. I put two Companies in shell holes approximately along line of TEA Support and 2 Cos + H Q in Brown Trench. We were subjected to some shelling as Batteries of 7th Division were digging in between our two positions and they were heavily shelled. One Company Commander one Comp^y Serg^t Major + others were killed in consequence. We were in touch with S L, on our right + there were portions of other Units on our left. (4th 1st Div)

160

We remained in these positions until about 11.30 p.m. when orders to relieve 42nd Bde in the front line were received.

2. About 12 midnight (15/16th) I moved off in a NNE direction in close Artillery Formation to find the front line. We suffered a few casualties en route from 77 M/M. We struck the front line as it happened exactly in the centre of what was to be our Sector - though it was impossible to get information as to its whereabouts on the way up.

3. The situation was as follows:

A party of 10-12 Royal Fusiliers (41st Div) and a similar party of 61 Shropshire L.I under 2/Lieut Rhodes were holding BULLS ROAD from about N 31 d 7.9 to N 31 d 10.7. The Battⁿ 41st Div on their left was not in touch but was digging in on a line some 300^x further back - so the left of our Sector was in the air.

A t N 31. d 10.7 in Bull's Road were 4 German 77 M/M Guns - the officers belonging to which had advanced and surrendered, - I believe to Captⁿ Robinson's & Rhodes' party during the afternoon. Our line from this point to the right

had been thrown back & Bulls Road from the position of the Guns to the right was not held. Our line ^{which} had been well dug and held by Oxford & Bucks L.I. ran back in a S.S.E. direction to the GINCHY - GUEUDE COURT ^{Sunken} road which it met at about N 32 c. 4.0. The trench was not continuous and the most disconnected portion about 80' long adjoining the above mentioned sunken road was taken over by b/Som. L.I. The portion of Bulls Road from N 31 d. 10.7 to X Roads N 32 c. central was suspected to be occupied by the enemy - however a patrol sent out along it after the relief reported it clear.

4. The officers in command in front line seemed to me to have done excellent work and all regretted that owing to lack of men in front they had not been able to push on to GUEUDE COURT which they were of opinion could have been taken without much difficulty on the afternoon of 15th. Capt. Robinson - Royal Fus. - had been knocked out by a clod of clay on the back and had a Shrapnel bullet in his shoulder - yet he caught up the front line later and carried on work of consolidation of Bulls Road - and after relief he went back to explain the situation to his Brigade

162

and endeavoured to get the Unit of 4^{1st} Divⁿ which was digging in in rear of Bulls Road to come up into line with us on that road - which was carried out later + touch with 4^{1st} Divⁿ was therefore established entirely through his efforts.

Lieut Rhodes Shrops. L. 1 with his little party of men had also done excellent work in barricading etc BULLS ROAD under enfilade M. Gun fire from our right. He was ^{very highly spoken of by Capt. Robinson.} The Oxford & Bucks L. 1 had done good digging work + repelled a counter attack by about 150 Germans - from their right front.

I take the liberty of mentioning these actions as little is often known as to what has actually been done by those in the front line.

5. I held the line therefore from about N. 31. d 9.5 to N. 31. 10. 7 to N. 32 c. 3. 2 with 3 Coys with one company in Support about 50 yards back about N. 32. c. 2. 2 where my H. Q. was.

6. Night of 15/16th was very quiet and about dawn parties of Germans were visible entering + leaving GUEUDECOURT also on right left of Guendecourt - Guichy

Sunken Road in the vicinity of Grid Trench. It appeared as though they intended to counter attack. A splendid view of the slope down to Grid Trench and GUEUDECOURT was obtainable from our position as also of the slope up to ridge N 21 - 28 and LES BOEUF'S. GRID TRENCH was also plainly visible especially about N 32 b + 33 a.

One trench however was only visible to me. I took this to be Grid Trench - where GIRD Support was on the ground I could not make out.

7. Orders for Attack were duly received about 4.30 A.M. The frontage allotted to my Battⁿ was 600 yards i.e. between X Roads N. 31 b. 4.0 and X Roads N. 32 C 5. b. I ordered my left & right flanks to rest on the roads leading from the above mentioned X Roads to Gueudecourt respectively.

3 Coys to advance in two Waves in front line - 1 Coy in one wave in Support. The bld C L 1. to be in Reserve. According to orders this Battⁿ was to occupy my front line when the attacking troops left it. As a matter of fact this did not occur - I was never in touch with this Battⁿ until night fall.

8. My objectives were (i). Gird Support
(ii). Guendecourt and to consolidate a line beyond it.

Gird Support was 850^x - 900^x distant -
Line to be consolidated beyond Guendecourt
2000^x distant.

9. Our Bombardment began as soon as
daylight - but the area to be bombarded
seemed so extensive that the bombard-
ment appeared very thin more especially
on the right of the Sunken Road (Ginchy-
- Guendecourt). One could see the
enemy walking about during it quite
unconcernedly. As the time drew near
for the assault I anxiously awaited the "creeping
Barrage" in order to ensure that the
assaulting troops "hugged it". The Barrage
however merely continued on the objective &
did not "creep" so there was no chance of
"hugging it" in the advance. I do not think
any shell fell during the whole bombard-
ment within 600^x of our jumping off line.
From dawn to Zero we were able to
sit or walk about outside our trenches
entirely unmolested by the enemy.

10. At Zero the Trenches advanced as ordered
and immediately came under Machine
Gun fire from front right flank as well as
Field Gun fire.

165

M-Guns on the right were probably in Grid Trench or Shell holes about N. 32. b and d. Those firing from in front might have been anywhere - in Grid Trench - Gueudecourt or Shell holes.

After the troops had advanced about 400^x were crossing a very slight ridge this fire became very effective and as far as I could see the advance came to an end. men dropped into shell holes and for the most part stayed there.

Some say they got up to the wire of a German Trench - others that they entered a German Trench & bombed dug-outs - but I am inclined to think this was not either of the main Trenches of the objective - though it is quite possible it may have been.

11. A Company or Half-Comp^y of B/D.C.L. I soon after our advance began, advanced through a barrage of 77 MM to the line of Bulls Road and at any rate one Platoon was soon after very gallantly led forward by the Platoon Comm^d at the double. Whether this platoon ever reached our front line - I am not sure. but when last I saw it there were only some half dozen men still following their leaders the remainder falling by the way here & there as if hit by the deadly M-Gun fire on them. When I saw this Platoon Officer a few hours later he was severely wounded about the face & ears. 166

12. Gradually Officers Men who had been hit attempted to make their way back followed by M. Gun fire Whizz Bangs. It was impossible to find out what was the furthest point reached as no one knew Gird Trench from any other trench of which I believe there were several. By degrees other men came back - but the majority held on till they were shelled out by our own Bombardment in the evening. C. Snaps under C.S.M. Wakeham held on till the evening advance reached the
13. Gradually things quieted down and about 11.30 A.M. parties of Germans about the size of a Platoon were plainly visible advancing down the slope from the direction of LE TRANSLOY - except that there was only one line of these parties (in file) it appeared as if a counterattack was meditated. Our Artillery, however, saw them and barraged them but they continued their advance in an orderly manner and entered Gird Trench after which one saw no more of them. One at least of our Vickers Guns which had advanced with the Batt^y also engaged them.

14. About 5.45 pm I received orders to renew the attack. I at once went to Bulls Road where I had already sent Lt. Clappen. Signal officer. to reorganise what men there were there. and found he had been killed. I also found about 100 men but no officers & only one Sergeant. I warned these men to be ready to renew the attack at 6.45 pm & also warned the remaining runners, signaller, servants etc at H.Q. & the only Officers present Lieut Stewart (Adj't) & Lieut Todd (Bomb Officer).
15. Our bombardment on this occasion was heavier especially on the left of the sunken road but it was not intense enough on the right. Our 18 Pdrs appeared to be negligible but the Heavies did some fine work. though they naturally forced our men already holding out in front to withdraw & I doubt if these men advanced again. As regards the "creeping barrage" this was very ill defined, the heavies dropping short ones now & then only. It was difficult to advance until it had finished as short ones came periodically. Just as one thought the barrage was lengthening another short one would come.

168

16. As soon as we commenced to advance we came under M.G. fire from the front and after reaching about the same point as was gained in the morning the attack again came to a stand-still.

There was no one on my left. (I understand the 4th Div on our left was not taking part in the Guards on our right). I had barely 100 men to attack with and no one in support. The line gradually withdrew under cover of darkness and consolidated along the line of BULLS RD. The Germans made no reply whatever to our bombardment & no sort of counter-attack - and the remainder of the night was spent quietly in consolidating & collecting wounded - for which the bearers & stretchers were altogether inadequate.

17. On two occasions after dark our men came in contact with German sentries. On one of these in answer to a question by one of our Sergeants (Donnelly) "Are you the Somersets?" - the reply was a bullet through the arm.

18. Our Casualties were Officers killed 7 - Wounded 10 and O.R. 430 (estimated). (Actually - later - 380).

19. 9.14.

(actually 380).

J.H.S. Morant

10.12.1914