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 3: Pages 51-61 July - August 1915

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July. Polo, Salmon & Champagne. 27

During this "rest" we were also employed on fortifying a line of Farm houses - West of Vlamertinghe & South of the main road. We also sent a few parties into Ypres by night for the construction of a Redoubt behind the "White Chateau". The 2nd Bn were now in Huts about 2 miles North of our Camp & we arranged a Polo Match with them. Our team was Braithwaite (Kd) - Wyllie (Kd) - Huthwaite (Wd) & Self (Wd) Their's - Bowers (Kd) - Turner (Wd) - Shea (Kd) & Briggs (Wd). We went on playing indefinitely & stopped when the score was 4-3 against us - so I don't consider we were fairly beaten. Bowers & Turner came to dine with us afterwards & dined so well that they had to sleep where they dined. Huthwaite had been into Boulogne the day previous, & brought back Salmon & Champagne which came in well for our dinner party. Huthwaite & I dined with 2nd Batt the next night to a big programme of inter-Regt Competitions was arranged - however owing to the exigencies of the service the sports never took place. About this time poor Coddington was killed instantaneously by a Shell - a piece of which passed clean through his head from side to side & dropped him stone dead as he was talking to his Subalterns.

On the 18th July we moved up to the front again.

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July. 2nd Tour in Trenches 28

We spent the first four days in Reserve in the Ramparts - During this time the 3rd Div blew up mine at Hooge occupied the Crater - The explosion could be felt by us in Ypres over 2 miles away. Heavy bombardments followed the din of our guns alone was terrific - situated as they were close to us in the Ramparts. The transport had several rough passages & Cherry was slightly wounded returning through Ypres at night - tho' we said he had merely fallen off his horse. On the 22nd July we relieved the Somersets in Railway Wood - a preferable Sector to Y Wood.
H.Q. was in the French General's Dug Out - which seemed pretty secure as though they would hit it 3 or 4 times in rapid succession with Whizz Bangs - none ever came in. This was a daily performance.
It had been reported from G.H.Q. that the Germans intended to attack the Salient on the 26th July.
On the 25th a German Aeroplane - the 3rd attacked by Hawker V.C. - was set alight - turned turtle just over our heads - planed down bottom upwards into our lines near Zouave Wood - the pilot though uninjured - refused to surrender had to be shot.
Rogers who was reconnoitring from R.E. Wood at this moment reported that the Germans in their Trenches

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I believe our men were perfectly correct as a few months later there was considerable mining activity on both sides exactly in this area & several craters were blown.

put their heads up to look at it that the trenches seemed comparatively densely packed. Next morning a Gunner reported & stated that the German Trenches were bridged – so there were all appearances of the reported intended attack coming off. It was rather anxious all day about it & moved up a Platoon from G. H.Q. Line but we were relieved in peace by the Oxfords that night. During this tour the Casualties were 2 Offrs ?

A report that mining was heard near the barricade on the Rg. appeared unfounded.
We marched back to billets or rather bivouacs West of Vlamertinghe North of the Road (Vlam – Pop).
Keir, Maj Genl., Commanding VIth Corps visited me at my H.Q. in Rg. Wood with Genl. Cooper during this Tour – They did not go round front line trenches.
We were not to rest for long. for on the 29th July at 3 A.M we received orders to be ready to move at half an hour's notice. The Germans had attacked the Crater Trenches at Hooge with diguid Fire in the Early morning & 7th R.B & K.R.R. had retired in places 400 – 500x to the Edge of Zouave Sanctuary Wood. This was the 1st Brigade's Sector (Brig Genl. Nugent).

y. Hooge – 3rd Tour. 30.

The two Batt^ns of the 4 18th Bde who had only just been relieved that night were in Reserve near Vlamertinghe were summoned & the D.C.L.I were moved up to trenches West of Ypres in Reserve. A Counter Attack was planned for the afternoon by these Batt^ns – the D.C.L.I being moved up during the afternoon & held in reserve. They suffered a good deal on the way up & Major Jones-Parry was killed as they came out of the Lille Gate of Ypres. Major Barnet was in command. About 11.45 A.M just as the diviers had been ordered up I received orders to march into Ypres. I asked the Brigade Major if we might eat our diviers first – he replied "No. It is improbable that the Germans will wait until you have eaten your diviers"!!

Shortly after marching off I received a message to the effect our Bombardment was to commence at 2 p.m so that I should be in Ypres by that time if possible. As it was about 7 miles to march in heavy marching order this was impossible though I hurried – probably too much – as I fancy there was a good deal of straggling – we did not reach the Ramparts until nearly 2.30 p.m the bombardment having been in progress sometime though I do not think the German bombardment had actually begun. It came on heavily shortly afterwards.

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An Account of the Hooge Affair from "The Spectator"

THE HONOUR OF THE BRIGADE. (4 1st)

THE battalion had had a fortnight of it, a fortnight of hard work and short rations, of sleepless vigil and continual danger. They had been holding trenches newly won from the Germans. When they took them over they were utterly unsafe. They had been battered to pieces by artillery; they were choked with burst sandbags and dead men; there was no barbed wire; they faced the wrong way; there were still communication trenches leading straight to the enemy. The battalion had had to remake the trenches under fire. They had had to push out barbed wire and build barriers across the communication trenches. All the time they had had to be on the watch. The Germans were sore at having lost the trenches, and had given them no rest. Their mortars had rained bombs night and day. Parties of bombers had made continual rushes down the old communication trenches, or crept silently up to the parapet through the long grass and dropped bombs among the workers. Sleep had been impossible. All night the men had had to stand to their arms ready to repel an attack, or work at the more dangerous jobs such as the barbed wire, which could only be attempted under cover of darkness. All day they had been dodging bombs, and doing the safer work of making latrines, filling sandbags for the night, thickening the parapet, burying the dead, and building dug-outs. At first they had hardly received any rations at all, the communication with the rear had been so precarious. Later the rations had arrived with greater regularity; but even so the shortage, especially of water, had been terrible. For several days one mess-tin of water had had to satisfy half-a-dozen men for a whole day. They had not grumbled. They had realized that it was inevitable, and that the post was a post of honour. They had set their teeth and toiled grimly, doggedly, sucking the pebble which alone can help to keep at bay the demon Thirst. They had done well, and they knew it. The Colonel had said as much, and he was not the man to waste words. They had left the trench as safe as it

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This an account of what had happened previous to our arrival on the scene on night of 29th July.

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could be made. And now they had been relieved. They were out of danger, slogging painfully along the road to the rest camp. They were sick with sleepiness. Their shoulders ached under their heavy packs, their feet were sore; their clothes, which they had not changed for a fortnight, were filthy and lousy. They no longer attempted to march in step or to hold themselves erect. Each man limped along as best he could. They were dead tired, but they were not dejected. They were going to rest; they were going to sleep long and soundly, undisturbed by bombs. They were going to drink their fill of good hot tea and thin Belgian beer. They were going to get stews of fresh meat instead of the eternal Chicago "bully." They were going to have a hot bath, and be served out with clean shirts and socks. They were far from dejected. The thought of all these good things to come gleamed in their tired eyes as they marched, and also the thought that they had done well, and had upheld the honour of the New Army, the brigade, and the proud regiment whose name they bore.

A few even began to talk. "Say, mate," remarked one, "'ow'd a good ole feather-bed do now?"—"Ah! and a nice steak an' chips when you got up in the morning."—"Ah! and wot's wrong with a pint o' good British beer to wash it dahn wiv?"—"And the old woman a-bringing yer a cup o' tea in the morning to yer bed."—"And a nice fire in the kitchen while you reads your paper."—"Gahn! Wot's the good of talking like that? 'Ow many of us d'you think will ever see 'ome again?"—"Well, mate, there's no 'arm in wishing, and they do say as we shall all 'ave a week's 'oliday arter the brigade's come aht of the trenches next time."

Soon the talk died down. The chill air of the hour before dawn exerted its proverbial power of depression. The men felt cold and clammy, they had an acrid taste in their mouths, their spirits seemed to fall to zero. They dragged their feet along the cobbled road with a savage, sullen look on their faces. The last stage of exhaustion was almost reached. A young officer, who had been taught that the time to enforce discipline is when the men are tired, started to shout at them: "Keep up there! Pick up the step! Left—left—left, right, left." The men's faces darkened a shade. A few muttered curses were heard. For the most part they ignored him. The Captain, an old campaigner, called him off curtly.

At last they reached the field where they were to bivouac. The dawn was already breaking, and the air beginning to warm. The battalion formed up in column of companies, four long double lines. Arms were piled and the men marched clear. Then they lay down as they were in rows upon the grass, and the sun broke over a field of sleeping men.

Two hours passed. Away in the distance could be heard the incessant rattle of musketry, mingled with the roar of cannon. No one heeded it. A motor-cycle appeared at express speed. The Colonel was roused, the company commanders sent for. The men were wakened up. Down the lines the message passed: "Stack valises by platoons, and get ready to march off in fighting order; the Germans have broken through." The men were too dazed to talk. Mechanically they packed their great-coats into their valises and stacked them. The Germans broken through! All their work wasted! It was incredible. Water-bottles were filled, extra ammunition served out, in silence. The battalion fell in, and marched off along the same weary road by which they had come. Two hours' sleep, no breakfast, no drink, no wash. The men were dejected now.

The road was full of troops. Columns of infantry slogged along at the side. Guns and ammunition-wagons thundered down the paved centre. Motor despatch riders flew past with fresh orders for those in rear. The men sucked their pebbles in grim silence. It was no time for grumbling. This meant business. They forgot their fatigue, their thirst, their hunger. Their minds were full of the folk at home whom they might not see again, and of the struggle that lay before them. So they marched, silently, and with frequent halts, most of the morning. At length they left the road, and took to the fields. They were going back whence they had come, by a circuitous route. Shrapnel burst overhead. As they neared the firing line they met streams of wounded returning from the scene of action. The company commanders took charge. One company rested to let another pass, and the men exchanged greetings. Men spoke to each other who only knew each other by sight. An officer caught the eye of a corporal and they both smiled, and felt that there was some curious link between them, hitherto unguessed.

A Captain said a few words to his men during a halt. Some trenches had been lost. It was their brigade that had lost them. For the honour of the brigade, of the New Army, they must try to retake them. The men listened in silence; but their faces were set. They were content. The honour of the brigade demanded it. The Captain had said so, and they trusted him. They set off again, in single file. There was a cry. Some one had stopped a bullet. Don't look round; he will be looked after. It may be your turn next.

They lay down behind a bank in a wood. Before them raged a storm. Bullets fell like hail. Branches were carried away, great tree-trunks shattered and split. Shells shrieked through the air and burst in all directions. The storm raged without any abatement. The whistle would blow. Then the first platoon would advance. Half a minute later the second would go forward, followed at the same interval by the third and fourth. A man went into hysterics, a pitiable object. His neighbour contemplated him with a sort of uncomprehending wonder. He was perfectly, fatuously cool. Something had stopped inside him.

A whistle blew. The first platoon scrambled to their feet and advanced at the double. What happened no one saw. They disappeared. The second line followed, and the third and fourth. Surely no one could live in that hell. No one hesitated. They went forward mechanically, as men in a dream. It was so mad, so unreal. Soon they would awake . . .

It appeared that there was a trench at the edge of the wood. Half-a-dozen men found themselves alone in the open ground before the German wire. They lay down. No one was coming on. Where was every one? They crawled cautiously back to the trench at the edge of the wood and climbed in. One or two were there already. Two or three wounded men limped in from behind, and sank on the floor of the trench. The storm raged on; but the attack was over. These were what was left of two companies. All stain on the honour of the brigade had been wiped out—in blood.

There were three men in a bay of the trench. One was hit in the leg, and sat on the floor cutting away his trousers so as to apply a field bandage. One knelt down behind the parapet with a look of dumb stupor on his face. The third, a boy of about seventeen from a London slum, peered over the parapet at intervals. Suddenly he disappeared over the top. He had discovered two wounded men in a shell-hole just in front, and was hoisting them painfully into the safety of the trench. By a miracle not one of the three was hit. A message was passed up the trench: "Hold on at all costs till relieved." A council of war was held. Should they fire or lie low? Better lie low, and only fire in case of attack. They were safe from attack as long as the Bosches kept firing. Some one produced a tin of meat and a full water-bottle. The tin of meat was divided up, and a shell bursting just in rear covered everything with dirt and made it uneatable. The water was set aside for the wounded. The rest sucked their pebbles in stoical silence.

Supports began to trickle in, and the wounded were painfully removed from the narrow trench to some dug-outs in rear. Two of them were badly hit, crying out incessantly for water, or to shift their position. One was unconscious and groaning. From the wood came frenzied shouts from some one who had gone mad. The more slightly wounded tried to look after the others; but soon the water was exhausted, and all that they could do was to promise that as soon as darkness fell help would come.

Darkness fell. The battalion had been relieved; but the better part of it lay out in the wood, and in the open before the wood, dead or dying. The wood was full of groaning. Four stretcher-bearers came and took away one man, an officer. The rest waited in vain. An hour passed, and no one else came. The men who were badly hit began to despair. They would die before help came. For Christ's sake get some water. There was none to be had.

A man wounded in the leg found that he could crawl on all fours. He started to look for help. He crawled painfully along the path through the wood. It was choked with corpses. He crawled over them as best he could. Once he found a full water-bottle, which he gave to a sentry to send back to his mates. At last he was picked up, and taken to the doctor, while others went to look for his mates.

The doctor was in a field. Rows of wounded lay there waiting for stretcher-bearers to come and take them to the ambulances. As many as could went on, those wounded in the leg with their

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arms on the shoulders of those whose legs were whole. They limped painfully along the interminable road till they came to the ambulance. Then their troubles were over. A rapid drive brought them to the dressing station. There they were given cocoa, inoculated for tetanus, their wounds washed and bound up. Another drive took them to the camp by the railway. Next morning they were put in the train, and at length reached the hospital. There at last they got the longed-for bath and the clean clothes and—joy of joys!—were put to sleep unlimited sleep in a real bed with clean white sheets. They were at peace. But out in the open space between the trenches lay some they had known and loved, unburied. And others lay beneath wooden crosses behind the wood. Yet it was well. The brigade was saved. Its honour was vindicated. Though its men might be fresh from home and untried in war, they would not fail. The brigade had had its baptism of blood, and its self-confidence was established for all time."

A STUDENT IN ARMS.

CLOSE QUARTERS.

ONE must be tidy in a small house. That is one of the constant irritations which attend small quarters. On the same principle, one must try to keep one's ideas tidy if one has a small mind. It is very hard luck that we cannot all have large ones. On the other hand, there is a peculiar kind of comfort only to be found in little rooms, something apart from luxury, yet even further removed from hardship. Also the peace which dwells in a small and well-arranged mind dwells nowhere else. It is not self-satisfaction, but is still further removed from mental strain. Now by small quarters we are not meaning cells or pigsties. We mean something large enough for it to be possible to eliminate the sordid element. And by a small mind we do not mean a little rubbish-shoot, full of cast-off prejudices, stale spites, and dead letters. We mean a decent receptacle, the dimensions of which are known to its owner, which will hold a good deal if neatly packed, but which cannot be stuffed at random. Limits have advantages, even while we admit that space has *the* advantage.

It is a great thing for young people to "live in a large way." The effect of space upon the spirit is difficult to exaggerate. For one thing, plenty of room makes exclusiveness unnecessary, especially where books are concerned. Rubbish is not rubbish if it does not assert its presence, and rubbishy literature has a place in the life of the educated, but not a front place. The sort of novels that we all like to read when we have a cold have not a right to standing-room in small quarters. Dozens of books upon a single subject are also in the way. They bore their owner and give a false impression to his friends. A large number of volumes of theology, for instance, have a very disagreeable effect in a small room, and so have too many books on India or books in foreign languages. Of course, if a man is getting up a subject, at least half of his book-assistants "live out." The lending library has revolutionized private libraries. It is the books which "live in" that must be very carefully selected—unless we have space to accommodate all and sundry. A small, well-chosen library is apt to consist rather of the books we feel we ought to like than those we do like; and moments come when we long for rubbish, and because we have none we cannot read at all. Apart from books which help us in our work, there are more frivolous guest-books, which we like to have to spend a few days with us. They were created to live this sort of life, and very few copies of them have any home anywhere; but one has to be careful even among guests whom one admits into small quarters. They often get upon our nerves before we have the energy to pack them off to their more permanent address. The same principle applies in the matter of association. It is embittering to live among those with whom one is out of sympathy, or even exclusively among those with whom one is in intellectual disagreement. On the other hand, it is "over-sweetening," if one may use such an expression, to live only among those who think as we think. Life among our co-believers and those whom we admire and warmly like may seem, when it is impossible, to be almost paradisiacal; but when we come to lead it we are apt to find ourselves in a fool's paradise.

All the same, there is nothing so foolish as to make life in a way an imitation of life in a large way. Books and p whom we only half understand, or who are not worth u standing, are not a necessity to any one. Still, it is ple just to see their frontispieces and turn over their leaves, there is a good deal to be gained by it.

Another thing which must be accommodated to the size house is our manners. They should be—as a rule they less spontaneous among those who are "cooped up toget A great many people who quarrel in small quarters w have got on very well in large ones. There is much that w think which it is better not to say; there is very much, if w to be shut up closely with the person to whom we should to speak our minds. Marriage is a very different thing palace and in a small flat; so are parental relationships; friendship. Small quarters do in a measure make spontan impossible. The discipline is perhaps wholesome. Probably most unselfish manners—though not the most natural—the most controlled, if not the most noble, tempers are prod under this system of intensive culture. At its best, howe life in a small way, life, we mean, lived in a narrow sp may be a more admirable thing than it often becomes u freer conditions, only we must make up our minds for those who have what we call the highest standards is not free.

Conceit is not a very common vice. It is very difficult judge of, and turns up where we least expect to find it, and we get suspicious about it and think it is almost univer Most men and women do not, when they think soberly, ex gerate their own mental capacity. They criticize what t could not mend, no doubt. The man who at the present mom would not give advice to a Cabinet Minister, or even to the Council, is not really interested in the war. But advice, whet offered to an individual or corporation, or even to Provide is often only a way of displaying a keen interest. It does mean that we seriously think we know best. If we were s denly put in a position to act, we should not take our o advice, or not without thinking the question out again. instance, it is a sheer impossibility to be much interested any young person and not offer him or her advice; but for that a sense of inferiority in the presence of the younger gene tion is one of the commonest signs of age. It is a warning t we are losing our youth, which often precedes grey hairs, which is recognized and accepted by the majority of men a women.

Very few of us think ourselves very wise or exagger in any way our mental capacity; but we do forget h necessary it is to keep any but a very great mind tidy. We the whole place be littered up with our fads, though we v well know that our mental premises are not large enough permit that these useless articles should lie about without d order. It is true that we value them. We may even thi that they are the chips and sawdust of pure truth. All t more should we remember to keep them in a cupboard wh the unwary visitor cannot put his foot into them. Again, will not fold up our more eccentric convictions and show the only to those who ask to see them. Even those rickety co clusions which we know rest upon next to nothing we will n throw away. Then our jokes—those, we mean, which have in general use—surely they might have a neat corn assigned to them, so as to be less *en évidence*. And some of our treasured experiences which are getting the worse for wear might as well be shelved. We might make a clearance among the flat contradictions which are always clashing against one another, the hard-and-fast rules which act as stumbling-blocks, and the theories which won't hold water. In great minds there is space for all these things—they hardly show—but in a small one they oust what is really valuable, and make a man unable to lay his hand at a moment's notice upon what he wants. If only we would do this, we should add to our reputation among our friends, for the apparent size of a room—or a mind—is immeasurably increased by order and arrangement. Sometimes we think that some great experience has enlarged a man's mind All things are possible, and spiritual miracles, though they happen, are rare. As a rule, however, we might as well think that his new coat has added a cubit to his stature. A great experience takes a great place in a man's thoughts. It may have very likely forced him to clear away the rubbish that choked his mind—that is all.

* This is not intended as a record of fact; but it is sufficiently true to life to be realistic. Perhaps many will say: "He is describing ——; but he is wrong about ——." The writer is not describing anything but the sort of thing that quite likely might happen, and quite likely has happened. Many of the incidents described actually occurred at one time and another; but the framework is imaginary.

THE HERMITAGE,
HEXHAM-ON-TYNE.

29. 10. 28

Dear Edmonds

As you invite remarks on the Offl. History I beg to make the following ref Hooge: p 105-106. I arrived with my Batt.n 10/D.L.I at Nugent's H.Q as per Sketch attached about 11 P.M on 30th July to relieve Units 41st Bde in Zouave Wood. I put my boys into some sort of "trenches" as per Sketch - one coy being in Res in Sanctuary Wood. The 6/D.C.L.I were already in the Wood (Zouave) disposed as per Sketch. No other Unit 43rd Bde was in or near the front - but I suppose there was a Batt.n or two somewhere between the front + Ypres. I believe 41st Bde was in Command until mid-day 31st. The first I heard of 43rd Bde being in Command was about 8 p.m 31st Div.n rang up to say our Bde Commander was lost and that Colonel Bailey Kings Liverpool Div.n Pioneers had taken over temp.y Comd Soon after relief on night of 30/31st I.E about 12.30 or 1 a.m intense shelling of Zouave Wood commenced + continued till dawn. Some men of D.C.L.I dribbled back and on

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asking what they were doing - they replied to me "The Germans was too many for us and had liquid fire too". This I have always considered was bunkum only an excuse to get away from the shelling. No other officer or man of mine of any other Unit reported any attack of any Kind. The Germans in their communiqué said WE (i.e. English) attacked. I am convinced neither side did. At dawn on 31st Div.n asked me on phone if we still held front Edge Zouave Wood - I replied I was not sure but would find out & counter attack if necessary. I sent for D Co.y from Sanctuary Wood & sent them forward to the N.E. corner of N apex of Zouave Wood they found the bit of trench along the NE edge of wood adjoining my C Comp.y evacuated by D.C.L.I - so my D Co.y merely occupied it & remained there as its permanent garrison. No offensive action of any kind was taken in the Zouave wood area after 3oth by 4 3rd Bde after relief of 4 1st Bde on 31st 2 Comp.s King's Liverpool Regt. Divl Pioneers were sent up to me as reinforcements. I put them in Sanctuary Wood. of Zouave Wood

During the night 31/1st Aug shelling even more intense than the previous night began at 9 p.m. till 1 a.m. 56(3/2)

The shelling of Zouave Wood was obviously counter preparation against a possible counter attack by us.
but no attack took place followed.
On 1st Aug 6/K.O.Y.L.I. relieved 6/D.C.L.I. and one Comp^{y}. 6/Som.L.I relieved my A Coy in Zouave Wood. On 2nd Aug remainder 6/Som.L.I relieved the rest of my Batt^{n} 10/D.L.I & we went into Reserve in Sanctuary Wood with one Comp^{y}. at "Yeomanry Post". From the above you will understand that ~~I think~~ the statement on top of p 10b "the two battalions in Zouave Wood being driven to the Southern Edge" - is absolutely ~~wrong~~ mistaken as nothing of the kind took place - except the temporary evacuation of a small bit of trench by D.C.L.I at the apex of Zouave Wood in the early hours of 31st July which was reoccupied at dawn.

(remarks sent to Off^{l} History originally)

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Aug. Hooge. 31

I attended at Div! H.Q. (in the Ramparts) where the Staff seemed a good deal agitated - the counter-attack, as we learnt later, had been a complete fiasco & cost us dearly for nothing. Our bombardment had been entirely ineffective & no progress whatever could be made against the German Machine Guns. I learnt afterwards that our Guns had never registered on these new German positions.

Well we were ordered to leave the Lille Gate at 8.30 p.m. & to proceed to the scene of action. 2 Guides were provided & we marched up by road all the way without incident. On arrival I was sent for to Bde H.Q. (Genl Nugent) which was in a Supporting p.n between Zouave - Sanctuary Wood. The G.O.C. said - though he had strongly opposed it - he was ordered to be prepared to make another attack at dawn. He therefore ordered me to take my Batt.n to the Point on the Map marked X - It was then 11 P.M. & quite dark - I had never seen this Sector before - knew nothing of the position of the Trenches - Enemy's or our own - I should have to get the Batt.n to this point - make my plan & organize the attack (explain the situation) etc etc in the dark in a very short space of time i.e. between 11 p.m & 2.30 A.M.

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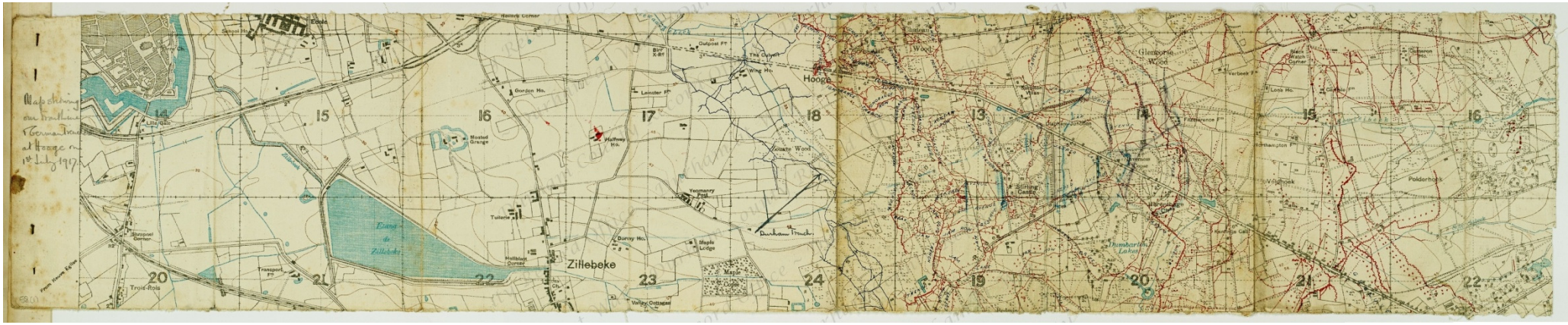

Aug. Hooge. 32

Whether I should have ever got detailed orders as to the plan of attack, I do not know, but I am thankful to say it was countermanded by Telephone - almost at once. The Artillery preparation, having been futile by day, was not likely to be much better by night - whereas the enemy position after 12 hours would be stronger - whilst my men had had little to eat & been on the go all day from 3. A.M. I am certain the result of the attack would have merely been a Colossal Slaughter.
The attack being off I was given very vague orders as to the trenches I was to occupy or as to who occupied adjoining trenches.
Anyhow some sort of relief of the R.B. (Maitland's) was carried out by A. B & C Companies - D Co. being very awkwardly placed in reserve in dug-outs in Sanctuary Wood.
Zouave Wood and the trenches round near its northern edge - also the North Edge of Sanctuary Wood - were a mass of Corpses of Rifle Bde & K.R.R. Many wounded both Officers & Men were left lying where they fell - The 4th Bde were in fact practically wiped out and demoralized.
The D.C.L.I under Barnet - held the right & the

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In the German Communiqué it was stated that we attacked but were repulsed!

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Aug. Hooge. 33

left of Zouave Wood but they also were in a shaken state - the whole situation & surroundings were unpleasant - taken over as it was in the dark.

At about midnight - or shortly after - a terrific bombardment began. Who began it I do not know but both sides were soon at it hard. Shells streamed into Zouave Wood. My H.Q. at the end of a strip projecting from this wood - as also Sanctuary Wood were comparatively immune from shells - but rifle & M. Gun fire played on both.

We thought the Boches were attacking & they thought we were - but in fact neither side did. During the bombardment various N.C.O's left their trenches & appeared at H.Q. on bogus pretexts - & many of the D.C.L.I holding the front line withdrew some of whom were fired on by our M. Guns at H.Q as they retired - Others I interrogated - said the Germans were too many for them & had liquid fire. I imagined the front line had been taken - i.e. the Edge of the Wood - there is no doubt it was evacuated. As dawn was approaching the bombardment ceased. Div. H.Q. called me up to ask if we still held the front Edge - I replied I thought we did not. They implored me to get it back - I said I would try.

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