



## 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

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## Sept 29th 1915.

Dear Celonel.

We have just come out after the Straaf. Wyllie was wounded in the head just before we went up. We were in L dug-outs & he went to tell the Battery Commander about a signel that had been reported. The 42nd owing to having 2R.B.Batt's were srlected for the attack & made a mess of it as you see from the papers. They got there alright 2 lines of trenches i.e.up to Bellewarde lake, but did not get their Bombs up & were not in close enough touch with the 9th K.R.R. their sur porting batt: so that they could not push up more troops to hold the line before the Bosche (reported Prussian Guard) had stepped out of their train & counter attacked. Every man with bombs this tactically was the feature of the Straaf, this counter attack was completly successful. The 3rd Div: had failed to make any headway whatever on the Chateau which was packed with M. . The disposition of our troops was 9th R.B. Sunken Rd to H19.0x & Bucks H19 to H16, Shropshires H16 to H14, then the 3rd Div:. Well to continue, the R.B's blew up the redoubt opposite Sunken Rd but were driven out, the Ox & Bucks \*\*\* also retired from Bellewarde lake, this left the Shropshires (who did very well & might just have turned the scale) with both flanks in the air. The Germans immediately bombed into them from both sides& few got back so that we finshed off as we started. During all this the 9th K. R.R's had moved up into the firing line but not until much too late to be pushed forward into the captured trenches. Somersets from G.H.Q. to Rly Wood, ourselves from L dug-outs to G.H.Q., then at night we went up & with the Somersets consolidated our old positions which were flat. We have had several compliments concerning the work done in the 3 days we were there. Wounded were coming in & being brought in all night. They suffered very heavily. One of our new officers was slightly wounded in G.H.Q. Jordon coming up the Sunken Rd & Stobart badly shocked. Poor Parke who we had lent to the 9th R. B. to lead their bombers as their officer was wounded the day before, was last seen wounded in the crateri.e. the old German redoubt. Such very bad luck as he was just off to be A.D.C. to Nugent now G.O.C. Ulster Division. I gather the authorities are not on the whole displeased as our attack was meant to draw the German troops in which it was completely successful as these big fellows came up by train & counter attacked in mass.

The artillery preparations had been very thorough lasting about 8 days. All their trenches had been blown to pieces. An extraordinary incident happened the 2nd day we were in, a wounded R.B. started howling in delirium just 20 yds from the crater & 60 yds from our Sunken Rd Barri ier in the middle of the afternoon. Two Bosches came out of the crater in full view to attend to him. Our men clap ed & cheered them this frightened them away however. After a bit the R.G.A. Trench Mortar Officer Shouted to the Besche Peace for 5 minutes the Besche said Yes & this efficer climbed up on the parapet with a stretcher & said Whe's coming. Dixon our company runner jumped up & eff they went to within 10 yds of the Besche, saluted twice with great cesemony, Dixon took his coat off quite calmly, put the man on the stretcher made him comfortable & returned to our trenches. One of our new efficers Herner then went back & they got another wounded man. They then gave 3 cheers for the Bosche which was duly answered & all was normal again. Etc.etc. (signed) Yrs sincerely J B Resher.

COPY. Dear Colonel. probably you will gathered from the meager reports in the papers what has beengoing on here - but you may like to have some details of events. Of course the 25th was the day of the general offensive but for a week before that we had rather stirring times & new experiences. One of them - the least enviable that has yet come our way-was being shelled fiercely as we went up by train, packed in open trucks without sides- though by luck we got off with 40 casualties thanks to stopping the train & dispersing. Going through the town nowadays is a great risk as strafing of it is continuous. The artillery preparations for the divisional show was I believe wonderful & lasted for several days with definite daily programmes of targets. They didn't knock out the M.G's in the farm however! From the 20th to the 23rd we were in reserved spent most of the time in the L's. They put a battery actually in the same field so it wasn't a quiet time as the din was terrific & the enemy found them out. My company was then putk in the white chateau where we made accommadation for the whole battalion as this was to be our battle station. By some error we were all sent back to V the night of the 23rd to bivouac (pouring rain & no accomadation). On the night before the day of action we got an hour's notice to get back to the chateau where all arrived safely. Meanwhile the 42nd were making the really wonderful preparations for an assault! Bomb stores & S.A.A. stores were made all along the front line & battle H.Q. for the Bde were dug in the H 180 sap. The saps were to be the main accomadation for the assault & other lines were dug near them & cover ed over with brushwood, bridges being put over them. We did some of this work. At 3.50 on the 25th the preliminary bombardment started & lasted until 4.20 . From the chateau I witnessed the show - it was really a most tremendous affair & most effective. At 3.15 the mine in H 21 went up turning the redoubt into a vast crater, 60 yds square a most prodigious hole.

I believe it killed more of our own side than the enemy; s. At 4.20 3 bn's assaulted in fine style & carried the whole front, the K.S.L taking five lines, the O&B 3, the R.B. 2 & the crater. The enemy's shell fire was terrific & along our front there is a zone of mangled dead cut off before they could get clear. The K.R.R. then reinforced the rifles. No one knows the true sequel. They hung on till 8 & then frittered back, very few arrived .- about a hundred or so of each regiment. Pumphrey has a story of every bosche carrying bombs but it seems rather to have been a question of lack of supports. The front is very long & the enemy had full warning it seems... The Somersets in G.H.Q. were hurried up at 8 & took ever the L sector.we going to F.13 & G.H.Q. The shelling was frightful but we lost very few considering. Gradually things quieted down as the 6th bn' in the show we expected to hacounterattack but nothing of this sort happened after all. At 7 p.m. we relieved the R. sector with 3 companies. The most appalling relief I've ever experienced. In pitch darkness & pouring rain, with whizbang storms, & an irritable enemy. There was not much left of the front line, heaps of sandbags crowded with remants of 4 units. After 2 hrs I got my men into H 19, H 18, & S 19 & we spent the night getting things square.

We anwhile the Bosche was bembing himself back into his own lines. At 9.30 p. Meanwhile the Bosche was bembing himself back into his own lines. At 9.30 p. Meanwhile the Bosche was bembing himself back into his own lines. At 9.30 p. Meanwhile the Bosche was bembing himself back into his own lines. Meanwhile the Bosche was bembing himself back into his own the order to anhe occupied the crater. (Heaven's knews why we did not get the order to anticipate him ). There were not many wounded left ,-only about 40 in my
trenches & these were away in 24hrs - the arrangements in this respect were

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wonderful, about 1599 passing down T in the course of the day.

At dawn one could see the situation - one vast herd of dead in heaps and rows between the lines and the gaunt cliffs of the crater towering over the grim
  All day on the 26th we worked at the trenches and spent the night getting in
  the wounded. They sniped very effectively in the clear meenlight from the
  crater but all were fetched in, in a sorry state ... Suddenly at midnight the
  Boche attacked on our right (where the - division had fared similarly with
  our division) & we had for an hour a regular "Hooge" bombardment. I had been
 out to the crater half an hour before & seem them busy sandbagging the interior so knew we had nothing to fear at our end, the Boche trenches being in too frightful a state for him to mean business. The last two wounded were lying on the parapet but one dould S B's there in clear meenlight.

The brigade I hear get the wind up, hearing the din but our fellows were quite bored. Most extradinary of all - during this really heavy shelling, the front
  line being gruned with clear hits many times and blown flat. I had not one
  single casualty?
  One man was lifted right over the parapet but jumped back with a smile. And
  one of the wounded (in a parlous state) was completely buried for 10 mgs.by
 thougalt of a 101 crump and the being unearthed lit a eigarette.
 By the time the 41st relieved us on the night of the 20th the trenches were
 worth calling such again. Windy
 They came in in a frightfully state as the last disaster was caused by the
 enfilade Flammen werfer from a crater!
 As for our efficers Wyllie was hit & slightly concussed - a most grievous less
 but he's doing well I hear One of the draft efficers was hit. Stebart mertared again and shocked, Jerdan rather seriously injured & dear old Parke missing.
 We lent 32 of our best bembers to the assaulting ferces and Parke went with
them ... He came to see us the evening before after a weeks training on facsimile trenches to the enemy's trenches - and knew he was going to certain death
 though he was the same as ever ... He was last seen in the crater, so there is
a faint hope. Some say he was wounded.

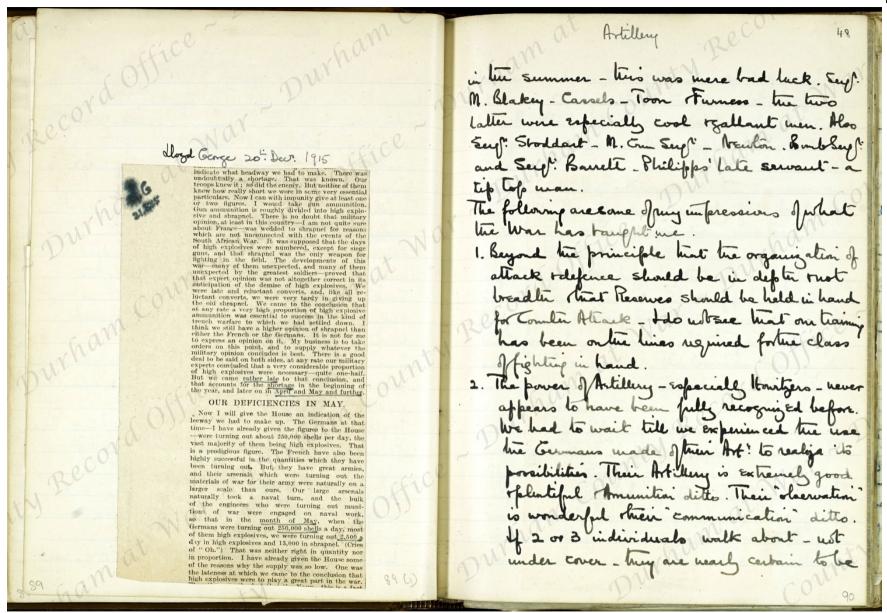
Now we belong to the 4/75 t. & with those & Col. Rawlins bn run the line. It means
On the whole, as usual we missed the charge & came in for the crumping and
digging! So here we stay for the winter
I suppose the losses were justified by the armys successes as a whole, everyone
one is quite cheery about the show.
One strange incident.
The day before we were relieved we reported a relief by the enemy. That merning
two Germans S B's clambered out of the orater in bread daylight to succour
the two of our wounded there. Our men clapped and thinking themselves shot at
they retired. Immediately Hernerf one of my officers shouted in German for "five minst peace" & an enemy officer looked over and assigned assent. This
officer and Dixon then fetched in the two wounded from the foot of the crater and saluting, thanked the enemy for there courtesy' About 20 of them looked
over at the ceremony. They were shelling ws all the time & 4 mins: after we
were sniping and mortering the crater again as usual.
(later)
We had lent 32 of our best bembers to the R B'S because they had been too casual
t appears they led the whele assault on the left, the rifle bembers doing the
  rming & they the threwing. After the first line had been taken the carriers
  enemy here in deep dugouts underground connected by passages.
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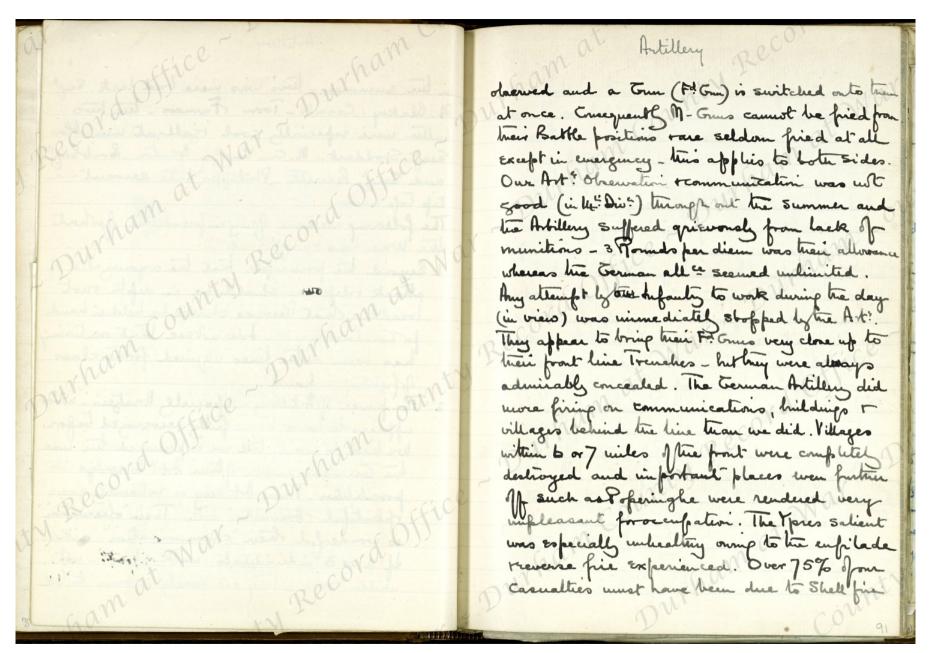
They hung on till noon & were then practically alone. Parke was seen in the second line cheering them on. He himself led the show Carmichael followered up but soon fell. We have had 48 hours at ... in the rain & are now up againin supporting on the left of the town, getting herribly crumped thanks to the batteries all around A most unpleasant journey here last night. The news from the south keeps coming in better and better though I fear the weather wills scupper the whole thing. Poor Parke was to be A. D. C to General Nugent this week. That brigade is not popular with the D. L. Iat present

le com.	Dev. Medical Board - Aly Decr. 46.
They hung on till moon & were then practically alone. Parke we second line cheering them on. He himself led the show Carnicha up out soon fell.	Royald - but did wheet me with the 200 Dear. They gave
We have had 43 hours at in the rain & are now mp againin sup left of the town, getting herribly crumped thanks to the batt A mest unpleasant journey here last night.	me one winter extra and toffered to do dighe Dut"
The news from the south keeps coming in better and better them weather will scupper the whole thing. Poor Parke was to be defensed lugent this week. That brigade is not popular with the	After my departure on the 14th Aug - St. John was left in Command he was a Sule" at the beginning of the
any Anione mane of min tet of all a On rain our	War and in about quantities had been promoted!
of all to the to the same and the same of	Tempo! Major after 15 years service. The Batt went back to R? wood again for a could
Day see seems of a real test and the seems of the seems o	do days after 2 or 3 in the Ramparto. Later they
point (state Aroltes and before with the set of the point of the set of the s	On the 25th Seft: - the day of the big push the
ON THE CASE OF THE PROPERTY OF	4200 ble attacked hu Bellewarde ridge - tre Som- erset L. I were in reserve in G. H. q - we in White
the grand and to end you it lies gains a end and	Chalean the Dug Onlo. Hoont 8 A.M. Somersets moved
and the - originate of the end of conformation of the state of the sta	the front line the same wight.
which will be the of the state of the	Nater we weren 14 days in Traiches at St. Eli, a
Totale out the total tent of the state out could be stated out the state of the state out the state	Then we had a long rest west of Popering the
De Company of the state of the	were unspected by tumer - sent a detachment
Nar (Of)	we true had a true in the old line - were link to
at 1 cord	the 18th Bode - and finall took over part of the N.E. Sector near tat Wieltige. This was found to be
le com	Dulys the following

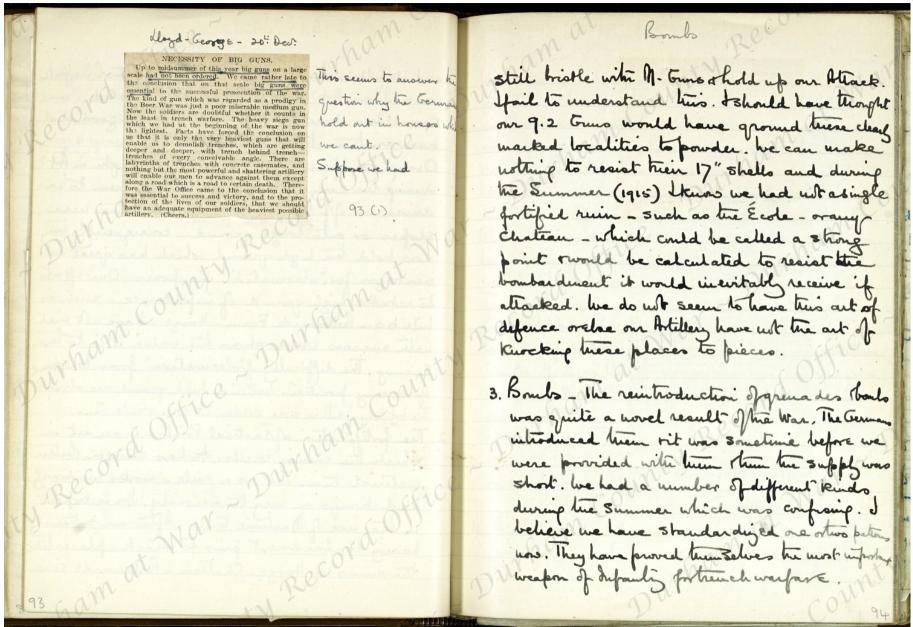
Strength of Bath by Soupanies oct 1915. "Q" Coy 250 O.R. distributed as follows. Officers 3. , officer on Bombing Course 11 Sick in Rest Camp 1 The Engineering Course. 98 On Command and 27 On Regth Employ. 114 On Varacle Officers 5 B. Coy 247. OR Distorbuted as follows. 1 Officer Bde. M. See. 5 Sich in Rest Camp. A Course of Engraceoring 25 Regth Curploy.
173 Du Parade Officers L 251 OR Olistabuted as follows. Officer. Bde Mr. Sec. 8 Leek in rest Camp. 33 On Command and Courses of instruction 24 Regtt Employ 186 Du Parade 2. Coy. 251 OR. distributed as follows Officers 3. Afrew Course of Toby Morter 7 Sick in Rest Carings 44 On Courses of instructions 27. Regth Employ 173 On Parade Total Strengthe 25. Officers, 6003. Total No of Drafts that have joined Casualties Umong Offices Ranks Casuather awing Officers Killed un action Killed in action Died of Wounds 17 "Maliral Causes 3. Wounded Shock 395. Evacuated Shock 35 Deed of Wounds. Two anded Sick. 4 That 25

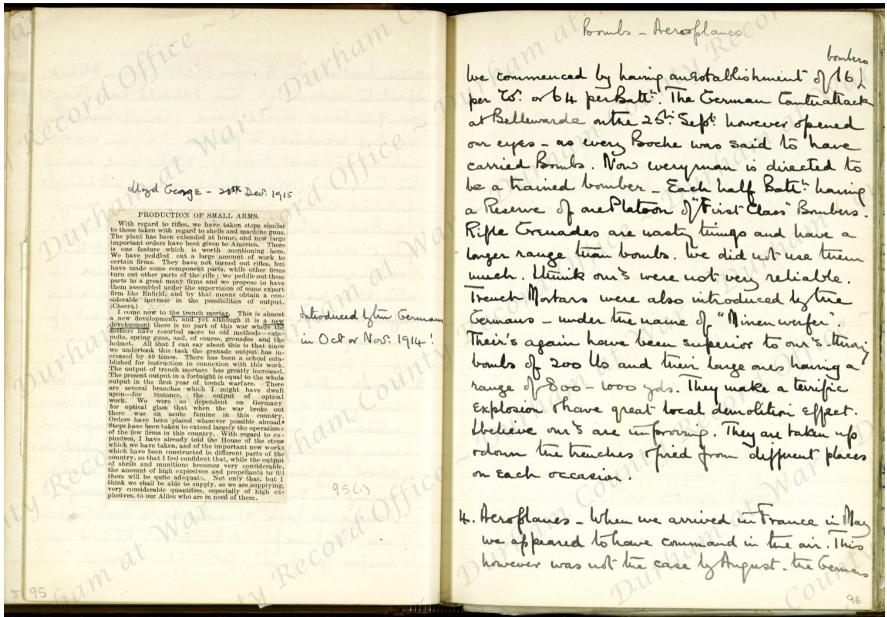
Aug - Dec. quiet Sector as regards Shell frie being M. Com rufte file. The trenches were worth I way from the Germans aces - Collapsed bad omi passable Books waln proof Capes warequerously served at by the Gov. - V evence of a Batt became to be judged I reuch test cases an taken away. Itmeent orders my absence he following officers were wounded delin several of new joined ones Officer is still "Missing" Dorrell - Fitzerald - Kelham otwo others who joined later were also Corshocked we lost a member of our best N. T. O'S \_ Earl





Ata - Fortification and it follows that - owing to the comparative of an Art? Fire for the reasons stated alter during the summer tuan treis's . The 14. Dies was said to have lot 14,000 in part of the war. igh ground hold we high ground which to retake high ground of importan . The defficulty of olsewa pp on very tenacionsty. I prior to altae Hooge - Chaleau - Belleward & Farm





Heroplanes - Attack unp produced a powerful armoured double enqued line - which outpaced our & was were heard armed. Our Machines, however, did blant work. They are unrahuable f were it wit forthern weshould know wollie the back of the German front line. Hs it have Excellent raccurate photos takets le ches for anni able for Spolle Our Arrinen Say tray lines. This is west were place - as any hostile arrivan cont see thousands of us in burnacs a our lines. 5. Allack. Its a rule attacks on a small proved fubile. They was to line or seize some work the lit " assau be the last's

98

## Attack

This we used to be taught must be carried out by a line 5 orb deep - charging as hard as the men Enld go. Gent Sie Nreville dyffelten once Told no in Ireland. that the men ought to be able to change for 500 to 1000 as the Japanese were alleged to have done in Musso- Japanese war possible unless the Iranches assaulted have jected to such an inter I that the holders have we tically all killed - M. true destroyed our broken. The hafaulty then advance in 9 slow us attre Slope. Bombers proceed u Tranches at the flanks rerect barrica under allacks \_ or proceed to work up the tren The whole tump is worked lythe Clock. The Art. commance by the clock, surter of to fur is the home given Specia

Attack art of the enemy's hime has been un y-trouble will ensue The attack is hen submitted to a The Atillery are Ex The eveny 5 wire. The trenches captured - it is abolutely necessar start consolidating at once - which we verting the parafet - barricading commu - bring up up bombo - Amenitini - TM - Gree tain ust to be long delay sending up New preemer - as here is usually Sheapnell to prevent two soit is wit also to do. retaining the henches is sure to will depend upon the