

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 7: Pages 114-122

July - August 1916

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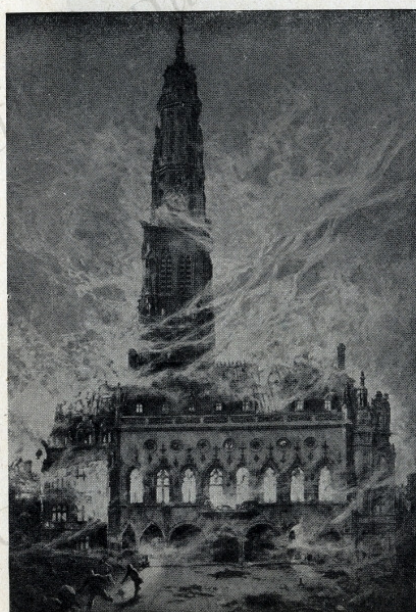


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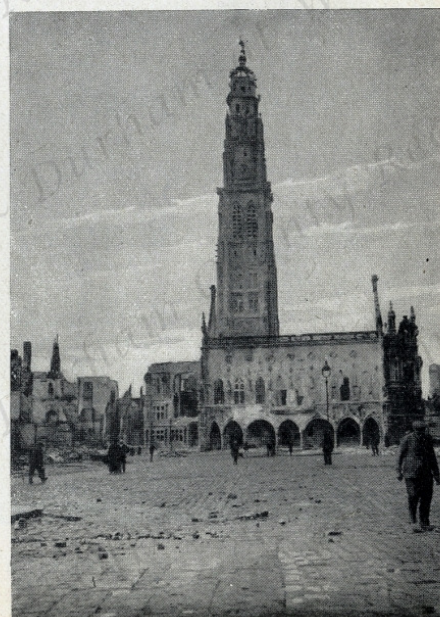
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Le Beffroi émergeant de la vague des toits.

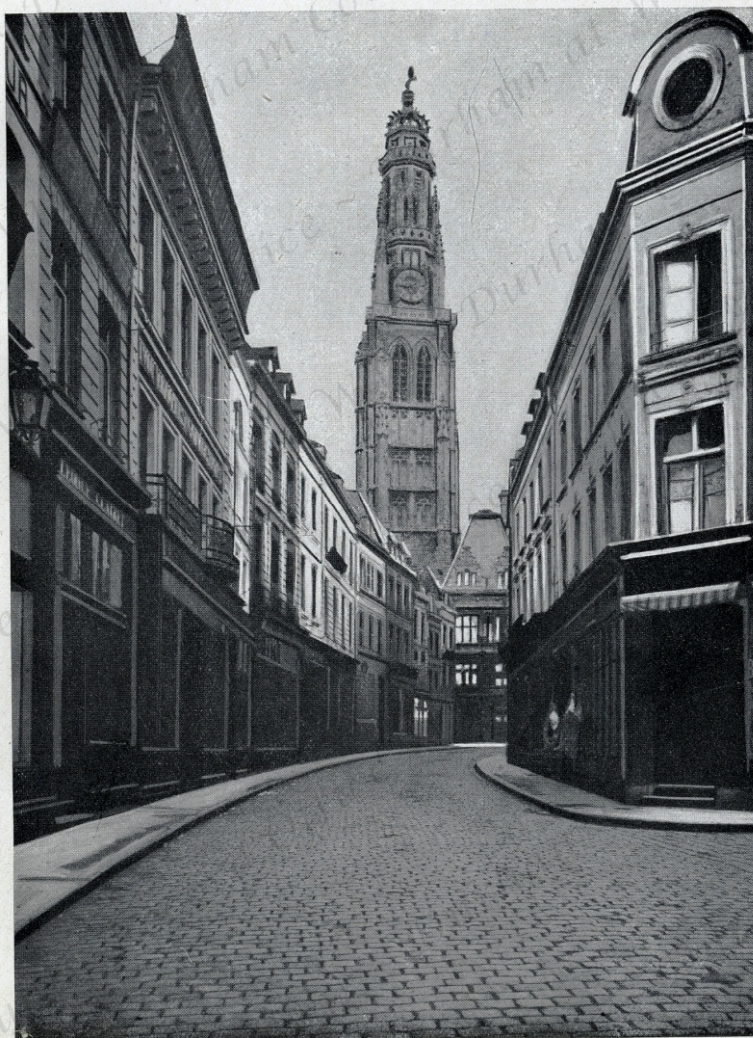


Communiqué par l'illustration.
L'incendie du Beffroi.



Le Beffroi et l'Hôtel-de-Ville
Après l'incendie.

— 51 — 114(3/1)



Le Beffroi vu par la rue Saint-Géry.



Les ruines du Belfroi.

114 - 53 -
C3135



Dans la cour d'honneur du Palais Saint-Vaast. Le lion qui surmontait le Beffroi.



Beffroi et Hôtel de Ville, avant la guerre.



Beffroi et Hôtel de Ville (côté de la Petite Place). Etat actuel.

— 57 —

114(3/5)



Avant la guerre.



Après les premiers
bombardements.



— 58 — 114 (3/6) Etat actuel.

Tour de l'ancien couvent
des Ursulines, transformé en
collège communal des filles.

Arras - July 1916.

R.S.M. Slater Ord. R. Sgt.
Capt. Adj. Stewart L.G.O. Pantor. Moyles D. Dodgson



114(1)

Major Hon. R. S. John H. H. S. M. Capt. C. E. Pumphrey M.C.
Pte Dixon.



114(2)

H.Q. - Runners. Splendid Men.

Arras J Sector.

We relieved the D.C.L.I. after about 10 days - the Y.L.I. held their Sector - in spite of being raided after a heavy trench mortaring - until the Division was relieved by the 215th Division about 29th July. The Craters in our front line were the distinctive feature of this Sector their consolidation was no easy matter. The whole of No Man's land was "close mined" and several impending mines had been located but none were blown during our tenure of the Sector. As regards the consolidation of these craters an incident between me & the Bde occurred. Reported on relieving the D.C.L.I. the unsatisfactory state of the trenches in the vicinity of the craters the insecurity of the Craters themselves. On taking over the D.C. D.C.L.I. informed me I shd. have to provide working parties for the R.E. who were consolidating them on a plan and that I had nothing to do with them except to provide the men. The Bde suddenly met me in the trenches & informed me I was responsible for the plan of defence. I replied that was the first I had heard of it - I presumed the R.E. were working on a plan approved by him that it was inconceivable that each C.O. on relieving should

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J. Sector - Identifications.

interfere with this plan according to his own ideas. The Boer was kind at this & walked off two angry to speak & actually ordered us to relieve the S.L.I. in the quiet sector held by the S.L.I. where there was nothing much to do! However these orders were unenforced. About the 29th July we were relieved by 21st Divn left Arras for the Somme. About the 1st July we had carried out wire cutting bombardments of the enemy to hold the enemy here whilst the offensive developed on the Somme. We had also been ordered to obtain an identification "at all costs". In consequence we sent out 8 officers & 64 O.R one night - in bright moonlight - but beyond suffering some 6 or 8 casualties no identification was obtained. We pretended to cut their wire with Artillery in order to catch them outside later repairing it - but when Pumphrey's patrol went out about 10 P.M. Some $\frac{1}{2}$ dozen Boches bombers were waiting for him in Roman's land & bombed his party with some effect. We now proceeded to march South to the Somme. The weather was very hot and during the first 2 or 3 marches very large numbers of men fell out.

Aug 31 1918
THE TIMES, THURSD

IN VIEW OF FLERS VILLAGE.

THE DELVILLE WOOD CLEARANCE.

GERMAN SURRENDERS.

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

BRITISH HEADQUARTERS, Aug. 29.

Operations of any importance are still difficult, for the wet weather continues, and this afternoon culminated in a tremendous thunderstorm which swept over part of the battle area.

No day, however, whatever the weather, passes without our making some progress, nor without a certain number of new prisoners being taken. In every affair, now, the number of prisoners exceeds the original estimates, which, at least, is testimony to their moderation. In the operation of clearing Delville Wood, for instance, I spoke in my dispatch of August 26 of the prisoners taken as about 200. It now appears that they were nearer 400. A lot of 160 captured in one part of the line failed to get into the original calculation, being assumed to be a duplication of the 200 caught at another part.

So freely have the enemy been surrendering in some of the recent engagements that a joke is going around to the effect that the Germans practise "surrender drill" in anticipation of our attacks. Not otherwise, it is claimed, could they attain to such uniformity in the alacrity with which they come out of the dug-outs, proffering all their valuables as the price of their lives.

It must not be supposed that this readiness to surrender makes the gallantry of our men any the less, or the fighting less severe. The German does not surrender until we are in his trenches. The artillery, the rifle and machine-gun fire have to be faced in every attack. It is when our men have broken through these and have rushed the trenches, when the bomb-and-bayonet stage is reached, that the enemy breaks down. He simply will not stand when it comes to bayonet fighting, or only does so on very rare occasions now.

FORMIDABLE OBSTACLES CARRIED.

The clearing of Delville Wood has already been described at some length in the dispatch just referred to. Not only, however, were the prisoners twice as numerous as was supposed, but it seems in all ways to have been a conspicuously successful piece of work.

The enemy in holding the fringes of the wood had made himself three lines of trenches, all protected with their usual strong points, and, whatever other qualities the German may possess or lack, his industry in digging is monumental. The foremost trench, well within the wood, was very formidable, well made, and strongly held, and the hideous condition of the wood itself, with its litter of broken tree-trunks making endless barricades, its shell-torn earth, all holes and hummocks, and the dreadful numbers of dead bodies, made approach to the trench an arduous and terrible business. The second trench along the very edge of the wood was shallow and lightly held. The third, in the open beyond, again was formidable. Though it lacked the deep dug-outs which need long time for their making, ingenious use had been made of the dug-outs and positions of batteries of artillery which had formerly occupied the ground, these being strung together by the trench.

In spite of all obstacles, the attack was completely successful. The most formidable position appears to have been a strong point with machine-guns at the extreme eastern angle of the wood. It delayed the attack there for some time, but when it was finally taken by bombing at short range a garrison of over 50 men fell into our hands.

While it held out the machine-guns here could rake the trenches which the centre of our line had already rushed and occupied. An officer, with a handful of men, seems to have acted with great gallantry in hastily throwing up a parapet or breastwork under very severe fire, which sheltered the trench and enabled our men to hold it.

The delay at this point, however, held up the troops on the left from advancing for a time, and while waiting their time to go on they suffered, from the artillery barrage, heavier casualties than other troops engaged in the action. Nowhere, however, were our losses comparable with those of the enemy. One portion of our line took 200 prisoners with a total casualty list, including the most lightly wounded, considerably less than this figure, and, besides the prisoners taken, they know that they killed (for they saw them) over 200 Germans. And this takes no account of the German wounded.

GERMANS TIED TO POSTS.

One of the extraordinary details reported by our men (and by officers of standing) is that they found in the enemy trenches the bodies of sentries tied to posts. One of these had had his head carried clean off by a shell. It is assumed that the tying of them was done as a measure of field punishment for some serious misdemeanour. But it is not nice to think of, even as a punishment.

As always, the officers are loud in praise of the behaviour of their men—of all of them. There is an heroic story of a sergeant who caught the enemy bombs and hurled them back again as if he were fielding and throwing at the wicket. He was wounded in the hand and went back for a bit; then came on again, and led a party in rushing a stretch of trench.

Our Lewis guns did most valuable work, being, as always, hurried well up in front. One Lewis gunner, fighting single-handed, with dead and wounded around him, had a duel with an enemy machine-gun, and killed the crew, so that the enemy gun was silenced and then captured.

As always, also, enthusiastic praise is given to our stretcher-bearers and officers and men of the R.A.M.C., some of whom worked under fire for 20 hours without a rest of any kind.

Apart from the mere fact of its success, the clearing of the wood and the gaining of the ground were a matter of no small military importance. From our advanced positions beyond the wood our men now look right down on the village of Flers. So from the left of High Wood we look down on Martinpuich and from the ground beyond Pozieres on Courcellette. All these places now lie, as it were, below our feet.

NEW PRO-ALLY CABINET IN PERSIA.

PETROGRAD, Aug. 30.—According to information received from Teheran, a new Persian Cabinet has been formed by Vossuk-ed-Dowleh, who becomes Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs. The remaining members of the new Government belong to the Moderates, who are friendly in feeling towards Russia and Great Britain.—*Reuter*.

March to Somme - Longueval

I have omitted to mention that partly in retaliation for our demonstrations against the enemy East of Arras - which included Gas Clouds and partly no doubt on account of our offensive further South the enemy bombarded Arras a good deal more than usual. One particularly unpleasant night we spent at the Hotel de l'Univers - the enemy shelling the Town promiscuously all night - several S.G.'s falling close to the Hotel which had no good cellar.

We halted at Heuzecourt for about a week & did some useful Training - we used to parade at 4 A.M. and march about 3 Miles to a River where we bathed & also trained. From here we went on by rail to Maricourt and thence to Camp near Albert. We took over trenches in front of Longueval & partly in Delville Wood about the 12th Aug. A greater scene of desolation than this village & wood it would be impossible to imagine whilst our dead most of some fortnight or 3 weeks old lay thick on the ground. German dead there were but were by no means so numerous as our own. The smell from these corpses was hard



IN WHAT WAS DELVILLE WOOD! DIGGING A COMMUNICATION TRENCH.

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Whilst we were holding this sector an R.E. Off. who was helping out a trench in the wood discovered a man about three parts buried & still alive. He told our stretcher-bearers about him they dug him out and brought him to H.Q. He turned out to be a man of the Sherwood Foresters who had carried out an attack in the wood 4 or 5 days previously. The man who did not seem much the worse said he had eaten bits of pines but was annoyed at being abandoned by his comrades who had seen him buried & had promised to rescue him later but had not done so.

Longueval Delville Wood.

to bear. We relieved about 11 N. Fusiliers commanded by Harry Westmacott's brother. The H.Q. dug out was deep but small and infested with flies and fearfully hot. The candles were continually bending over from the heat & being put out by the concussion of shells. The walls & ceiling were black with flies. and the Runners, Signallers, servants etc had to live on the stairs and the congestion, flies, heat, smells, & shells made life almost unbearable. The vicinity of the dugout was almost continually shelled - there were no Comm. Trenches to the front line which itself was not continuous. One walked to one flank by a hollow road and on to the enemy heavily sniped - to the right flank one had to advance down a forward slope and returning up this my orderly was sniped & died in a few minutes. Next day Pumphrey who lived at H.Q. with Stewart (Adj't) & myself had his arm broken by a shell (it was amputated a few hours after). We occupied these trenches for 72 hours & handed over to the S.L.I. We had some 70 casualties during this time. We were then relieved and on 18th Aug the S.L.I. & D.C.L.I. attacked. The former outside

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'Fighting Pumphreys' Add a D.S.O.

By Daily Mail Reporter

THE "Fighting Pumphreys," of Belsay, Northumberland, have added a D.S.O. to the family collection of war decorations, which already includes a D.S.C., a M.C., and a mention in despatches.

News came last night to Captain C. E. W. Pumphrey that his 6ft. 1in. second son, Lieutenant Nigel Pumphrey, R.N., has been awarded the D.S.O. for his leadership of a flotilla of M.T.B.s during the attack on the escaping German warships Scharnhorst and Gneisenau.

Lieutenant-Commander Pumphrey is 31. He has already won the D.S.C. for a M.T.B. attack on a German convoy.

He has been thrice wounded in Channel actions, and has been mentioned in despatches.



HIS two other brothers—the eldest and the youngest—are both officers in the Royal Northumberland Fusiliers (the Fighting Fifth).

Both are now prisoners of war. Major Jonathan Pumphrey, who is 34, was in the thick of the battle for Crete, and was afterwards mentioned in despatches for conspicuous gallantry.

Second-Lieutenant Laurie Pumphrey, who is 25, fought in Libya until he was reported missing. Now he is a prisoner of the Italians.



CAPTAIN PUMPHREY served in France with the Durham Light Infantry in the last war and was badly wounded in the Battle of the Somme. His left arm was amputated, but he was awarded the Military Cross for gallantry. To-day he is ready to fight again as a member of the Home Guard. Mrs. Pumphrey is a voluntary Red Cross worker.