

## War Diary 3<sup>rd</sup> Grenadier Guards September 1916

(From <http://3rdgrenadierguardsww1.wordpress.com/home/september-1916/> )

### 14<sup>th</sup> September

A cold and windy day with showers. The necessary bombs, sandbags, tools (5 shovels to 3 spades), S.A.A and flares for use with contact patrol aeroplanes, were distributed. The mens packs, greatcoats and surplus kits, and the officers kits were sent to the Divisional Store near MEAULTE. The Battalion marched off by companies at 9.0 p.m. to take up position. This operation was favoured by a fine clear night with a moon. Companies moved up via TRONES WOOD, GUILLEMONT, and GINCHY. The assaulting place of the Brigade was clear of the village as the enemy had proved to be very quick in putting down a barrage on it. The right of the Brigade rested about 100 yards from GINCHY telegraph and the frontage occupied was about 500 yards. The Battalion was the right front battalion and was formed up in 4 waves, all men in single rank and companies in column of half companies ??? -No 4 Coy {14, 13 10, 9} No 3 Coy {16, 15 12, 11} No 2 Coy {9, 8 2, 1} No 1 Coy {11, 10 4, 3} H.Q. & Princes platoon

1 O.R. W'd 14th

This formation was in accordance with the training carried out and described elsewhere. There was 50 yards distance between platoons. The 1st Bn Coldstream Guards was on the left, the 1st Bn Scots Guards was immediately in rear of us. The Battalion reached the assaulting point without difficulty or interruption, only 1 man being slightly wounded. On the other hand there were no assaulting parallels dug and the Battalion had to dig some kind of assaulting trenches by linking up shell holes. Further owing to the necessity of being clear of GINCHY village the Brigade was not in immediate touch with the 1st Guards Brigade which was on the left and slightly in rear of us.

The men had not seen the ground in front of them in daylight and lastly because of the terrain it was necessary that direction should not be changed during the actual progress of the assault. In short as a position of assaulting it laboured under every disadvantage except that it was not shelled by the enemy.

### 15 September

Zero hour was timed for 6.20 a.m. and the Battalion was ready in position by about 3 a.m. The men slept therefore from 3 – 5.45 a.m. when they were given sandwiches and an issue of rum. During this time the "tanks", which were attached to the Division could be heard making their way up in rear of us. We were in immediate touch with 6th Division on our right. At 6.0 a.m. our heavy artillery fired about 40 rounds in quick succession. This of course woke up the enemy, who put down his usual barrage on GINCHY village (particularly the NE corner) and started shelling LEUZE WOOD and troops of the 6th Division who were still moving about in that neighbourhood. At 6.19 ½ a.m. the whole Brigade rose to it's feet and advanced. Our left front company was met by machine gun fire as soon as it got up and lost Capt MACKENZIE and Mr ASQUITH at once. 2/Lt H. Williams was wounded a few yards further on. The last remaining officer of that company also fell within 200 yards of our own trenches. Our rt front company however appeared to get off much more fortunately and did not seem to lose until a considerable way out.

Casualties  
Officers  
K or D of W 4  
Wounded 10  
Missing 40.R.  
K 31 (One was Henshaw)  
Wd 155  
Ms 209

Now owing to the causes which have been set down and owing to the fact that the 6th Division failed to advance and that the tanks were not forthcoming.

- (1) Our left flank was or rather appeared to be in the air as the 1st Brigade had started behind us.
- (2) Our right flank was completely exposed.
- (3) Owing to the closeness of the formation and the irregularity of the assaulting trenches all the waves tended to become mixed.
- (4) Owing to (1) and (2) the tendency was for the Brigade to split up right and left to cover its exposed flanks.

In addition to the above a German trench or rather a line of shell holes hastily organised and provided with M.G.s was encountered about 250 yards after leaving our own trenches. Every German in this trench was either shot or bayoneted but it helped to break up the regularity of the formation and impaired the cohesion of the assault.

The men however were not to be denied and though the right flank was raked by heavy machine gun fire in enfilade and though the wire and trench on that part of the front owing to impossibility of observation wire untouched by the Brigade continued to advance, but as a Brigade rather than as 4 battalions. The parties who were drawn to the left by the appallingly exposed flank found themselves among the 1st Brigade but did not suffer severely as the wire and trench there had been completely destroyed.

It was on the right flank that our chief casualties were incurred. They included the Commanding Officer Lt. Col. B.N.S. Brooke D.S.O. and most of the officers except Capt GORDON & HOPLEY.

After reaching the first objective – the German line running through T.8.a.b.2.d it was found that there was a gap between the left parties and the right which was occupied by the enemy who began to enfilade the trench with M.G.s and shell fire.

Composite bombing parties however dislodged them and the whole first objective was in our hands. Our right flank was however completely exposed as the troops on our right were only a short distance, if any, in front of GINCHY TELEGRAPH.

On the right therefore it was impossible to push on but more in the centre in composite party of men of the 2nd Gds Brigade under MAJOR ROCKE went forward and established themselves just short of the second line in T.9.b but as that party was only 100 strong and had two open flanks it was impossible to assault the second line. It appeared that LES BOEUFs would have fallen into our hands without opposition or at any rate with only ill-organised resistance if more troops could have been packed on. This was not done doubtless owing to the threat to the right flank of the Division – a threat which would have become more acute with every additional yard forward.

The position was therefore consolidated but the advanced party under Major ROCKE after withholding one counter attack had both flanks enveloped and being attacked frontally had to fall back on to the first objective.

On the evening of the 15th therefore this Battalion held a small frontage on the right of the first objective. This flank was subjected to repeated bombing attacks and the Germans also attempted to work riflemen round it. Fire steps had to be dug in both sides of the trench and bombing parties organised to resist the enemy bombing down. Fighting on a small scale therefore continued throughout the night 15/16th and resulted in all counter attacks being repulsed. The enemy drove us back at one time about 70 yards but his success was momentary only and the ground was immediately re-taken and 1 machine gun captured.

## **16 September**

Nothing occurred except some somewhat severe shelling on the 16th and on the evening

of 16th/17th the Bn was relieved and marched into camp at the CITADEL.