

Messages 23rd July 1916

One collection downloaded from National Archives contains hundreds of short handwritten messages. Some use official signals forms and some are on plain or graph paper. They give a flavour of the hour to hour action. The following are examples from the 23rd July 1916, where the battle did not go according to plan.

1. Before zero hour:

"Infantry should be warned that they should not to be within 150 yards of the objective at 5 minutes before zero.

At 3 minutes before zero the artillery will change to Pecussin Shrapnel. During these 3 minutes the infantry can approach to within about 75 yards of the objective with safety."

2. 2.35 am [to] Officer Commanding 7 N Lincs:

"Extend your Coy along the trench in which you now are: be prepared to hold this trench."

3. 3.10 am:

"Have ascertained that my Battn has not in any place got to the first objective and only a few detached parties have made any appreciable advance AAA Am sending orders for them to withdraw to the line of the road to reorganise."

4. 3.30 am:

"Got over first objective but owing to CAMERONS on my left retiring, some of my men have returned. Things seem rather in a muddle. Enemy's fire dying down. Hope to get battalion forward to second objective. Have sent back and asked for heavy barrage to be kept up on MARTIN-PUTCH."

5. 4.00 am:

Pigeons have arrived though light too dark at present.

I have 4 brigade orderlies.

Have you received a message forwarded on by mwe to you from Col Winzen?

A message from Torani, copy attached.

A brigade message from Staff * about dumping ammunition with us.

6. passed on 3.35 message from Torani (see [war diary entry](#)):

"We attacked and got within 30 yards from German lines. We suffered heavy casualties and after 3 or 4 attempts to take the line still suffering heavy casualties we withdrew to original positions to reorganise. Capt Thompson Lt Hoyle killed. Have been slightly hit myself. What shall I do?

Sgd LL Toranis 2Lt

OC D Coy

3.15am"

7. 3.55 to OC D Coy [Torani] from C.O.:

"You have done very well. Get remainder of your Coy back into our front lines, reorganise the men and consolidate the line."

8. 6.05 am to 56 Inf Bde:

"We have now no men in front of old line. Front line is being consolidated and communications trench dug to S.8.b.6.8. One section 81st Field Coy RE are assisting.

Estimated casualties now

7 officers

150 other ranks

Strength of battalion is now about 260."

9. 6.10 am to Colonel:

"The question of the number of wounded is serious. The HUN AID POST is crowded and some very serious cases.

I have asked for another doctor. We want more RAMC bearers and stretchers.

Wibberley has just turned up at Aid Post 6.10 am. He is arranging for stretcher bearers. I still have some water.

(Signed) HOLT

10. 7.34am. From 56 Brigade to all units:

"Divisional commander wishes you to express to your battalion his gratification of the gallant attempt made last night to capture the enemy line. The failure of the attack was due to no fault of theirs."