

Copy of letter from Captain H.P.Greaves (Commdg. 178th L.T.  
Mortar Battery) to Br.-General T.W.Stansfield.

4 Gordon Street,  
Burton-on-Trent.

5. 2. 19.

My dear General Stansfield,

I was very pleased to receive your kind and interesting letter of the 2nd inst. and in accordance with your wish I am giving you below a brief and private a/c of the events (as I remember them) of the 21st.

5 a.m. Myton and myself were awakened by the Boche barrage. I immediately gave the "alert". By 6 a.m. my dug-out was completely blown in at the entrance and it took us over 2 hours to dig ourselves out. Judd and Smith-Masters were both down my dug-out at this time. I then went on top - sent down 2 runners to Lieut. Harris (who was on Rly. Reserve) to get definite news as all telephone communication was cut. Our sunken road was very heavily shelled with 5.9's and gas shells. About 9.30 a.m. wounded started to arrive from the front, with garbled a/c's of what was happening. Later 2/Lieut. Hill was brought to my H.Q. badly wounded in the leg and foot. Of his two gun teams, several men had been killed - one gun destroyed by direct hit, and the other he blew up himself. 3 of Harris's guns in Rly. Reserve did some good shooting. When it became evident that "Rly. Reserve" had "gone under", I offered myself, Myton, and some 12 men to Col. Gadd, and of course he accepted us, and put Major Trench and myself in charge of the Sunken road. Shortly after, Trench was killed, only a few yards away from me, in gallantly leading a bombing raid. I immediately reported this fact to Col. Gadd and also told him our flanks were being encircled rapidly. I then tried to carry on in the Sunken Rd, and managed to organize a few firing bays, and for a time we kept the Boche off, although he still crept round our flanks (he came in crowds down the Noreuil Valley). I was then hit in the left thigh by a lump of shrapnel but as it was not very serious I kept on and brought the one Stokes gun I had with me at H.Q. into action. Meanwhile I told Myton to take  $\frac{1}{2}$  dozen men (it was all I could spare) and try and guard my right flank (Noreuil Valley). That was the last I saw of Myton and he certainly received no orders from me to go back. Previous to this, thinking we were in for a "thick time" I ordered L/Cpl. Fretwell to take my Stationery box and papers to Bde. H.Q. and report there. I believe he got through alright.

The Boche then started to enfilade the Sunken Rd. with a machine gun from my right. I managed to knock out this M.G. with our last Stokes gun, but lost several men in doing so. By this time our numbers were getting thin, and I deemed it advisable to again acquaint Col. Gadd of the situation, which was then desperate. I therefore went down his dug-out and reported to him and he told me to try and get the men back to the next defence system. I went on top again, and managed to get a few men back. The Boche was rapidly encircling us. He again enfiladed our Sunken Rd. with machine guns, and unfortunately I ran out of Stokes shells, so we destroyed the gun. A few minutes later I was hit by a m.g. bullet through the head, and when the Boche got me I was unconscious (or thereabouts).

I believe Judd (padre) was killed, and Smith-Masters was taken prisoner. Both my subalterns, Hill and Harris, were wounded and taken prisoner. I cannot speak too highly of the courage and coolness displayed by Major Trench.

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I am, Sir,

Yours very sincerely,

(sgd) H.P.Greaves.

(Capt. Commdg. 178th L.T.Mortar Batt)