

Copy of letter from Lt.-Col.H.R.GADD (commdg. 2/5 Sherwood Foresters) to Br.-General T.W.Stansfield.

Hertford.

19th December 1918.

Dear General,

I returned from Germany early last week and very pleased was I to do so. I met Hodgson yesterday and he told me you were still commdg. the 178th I.B. and so I hasten to let you know what happened on March 21st. I am not quite certain of all the times etc. as my memory got very bad in Germany.

About 5 a.m. the German barrage and bombardment started and they filled the Sunken road with gas shells at the same time. There was little doubt that this was the preliminary of the big show, and I posted my Intelligence Officer where he could see most of our front telling him to look out for the S.O.S. As you know it was very misty and the S.O.S. was never seen, in fact there was no indication when the enemy attacked. Soon after 9 a.m. the enemy was first seen in masses moving on the ridge S. of Moreuil in the 6th Div. area. We took them on with 2 L.G.'s but they were a long way off. About the same time the Bde. signallers intercepted a message on the Power Buzzer from Hodgkin (Lt.-Col. commdg. 2/6 Sherwood Foresters) saying his front line had been penetrated. Between 10 and 11 a.m. my front Coys. became engaged, not by a large attack from the front but by the enemy working up the valleys on either side, especially the Moreuil side. They also came down Sydney Street. These coys. put up a good fight I think as I had messages from them during the fighting, but the end in each case was the same. They were attacked from the rear and front and bombed up from the flanks. I had no news from my coy. in Moreuil Switch, but judging from the shell fire I think they had little chance, and probably went the way of the 6th and 7th Battns. Meanwhile I had moved my Reserve Coy., sending some to garrison Moreuil Switch near the Sunken Road, and the others along the Sunken Road. We commanded the Moreuil Valley on the right and I had the valley on the left watched by patrols.

After about 11 o'clock everything became very quiet and we spent the time organizing the defence of the Sunken Road. There was a lot of sniping and now French was hit for the second time in the head, after which he soon died. In spite of everything I was feeling very optimistic, thinking we had stopped the advance. There was, however, a continual enemy movement in the 6th Div. area. The enemy could be seen digging in on the ridge near Toller's (Lt.-Col., commdg. 2/7th Sherwood Foresters) H.Q., which strengthened the idea that he had been stopped. Our left seemed pretty quiet.

About 1 p.m. I got your message saying that the Lincolns were occupying the trench about 400 yards to our rear, and the runner who brought the message said he had seen them there.

Shortly after this I became aware that the enemy had got Ecourt, although they had had it apparently for some time. I ought to have found this out sooner.

This news, and the fact that the movement on the right continued, made me decide to go back to the trench 400 yards to the rear, now occupied by the Lincolns. I ordered men to get back in small groups, and about 2 p.m. started back with Andrews, but ran slap into about 200 Bosche's coming straight up from the rear, and we were caught. I believe the Lincoln's had been mopped up about 2 hours before, anyhow I saw them as prisoners afterwards.

So ended the 21st March as far as the 2/5th was concerned. How much we didn't stop the advance I don't know, but I think we succeeded in spreading our departure over a considerable time. I was sorry to lose Trench, he was doing very brave things at the time, organizing the defences etc.

There are a few more details I could give and I should like to see you when you are home.

Yours sincerely,

(sgd) H.R.Gadd.

(commdg. 2/5th Sherwood Foresters)