

1/5th Battalion, The Sherwood Foresters.

Statements of men who reached the German Front Line.

"A" Company.

No. 3028 Private A. Daykin states:-

"In company with L/Cpl Brudenell and several others of the 3rd wave I got into the German Front Line fairly easily, I used my bombs against some of the enemy, who were behind the parapets. They replied, and I was forced to retire to a shell hole about 7 yards from the German parapet, as there were a large number of them. As we came up to the trench, the Germans removed a M. G. which was in position beside an O. P., but replaced it about two hours later, and kept it in this position for the remainder of the day."

No. 4005 Private W. Edge states:-

"I was with the clearing party which followed the 4th wave. We had great difficulty in getting up because of oblique M. G. fire. The enemy appeared to be in very large numbers, and we were unable to go further than the German first line. We stayed until dusk, when large parties of the enemy proceeded to bomb their way along the trench, and we were forced to retire as there were so few of us, one of whom, a Sergeant of the Robin Hoods, was wounded as soon as they got within bombing distance."

No. 2567, Private F. BATES states:-

"I went over with the clearing party, ^{4th wave} but became detached from them because of the wire in front of our advanced trench. I got into the German trench, down about 7 steps. I noticed it was very dry, being drained by a number of little sapsdown the slope. In one corner of the traverse was a deep dug-out, under the parapet, reached by about 15 steps. A dead German lay at the top, and a rifle and bayonet were sticking up a little way down, as though someone was holding it, but as it was dark I could not see more than half the rifle. I immediately slung 7 bombs into the dug-out, and on looking again noticed that a door at the bottom had been closed. I waited a few minutes for any signs of movement, and then a German appeared from the next traverse with five bombs in his arms. He went back immediately he saw me, and we had a short duel, in which I threw three bombs. I did not wait to see the result, but went into the traverse behind me, and came across another German without equipment. I threw a bomb at him, and he put up his arms and yelled. I then got over the parapet and into a shell hole between the enemy's wire and his trench, where I lay till darkness. After a short time in the shell hole, the trench appeared to be well manned, as I got several glimpses of caps - red band on blue-grey. After sunset, two wiring parties of the enemy came out, wearing spiked helmets apparently covered with grey cloth."

No. 1564, Corporal E. MILNER states:-

"I went across with the first wave. The traverse was manned by from 8 to 12 Germans. Two or three bays of the

2.

trench were covered, giving it the appearance of a dug-out. I noticed that the uniforms were not alike, some being blue, while the others were the ordinary blue grey. The men were unarmed at the time I approached, but darted into dugouts after they were fired on. I went across the covered trench towards the second line, as ordered, but after going a few yards a bomb was thrown from the rear, apparently by a German from the dug-out, and I was wounded by the flying pieces, so I was forced to return, especially as I was alone, and unsupported. I killed two Germans in the front line."

No. 4541, Private G. TREECE states.-

"I noticed that the majority of the 1st wave including myself arrived at the German wire safely. I found plenty of gaps in their wire, several men got fast on their wire and were hit by Machine Gun fire whilst trying to get over uncut wire. On arriving at the German front line I found the trench manned by 8 to 12 Germans, I fired on them and they scattered. I noticed a dugout under the parapet. I got over the front line and proceeded toward the second; after I had gone a few yards a shell burst near me smashing my rifle into 3 pieces. Through being unarmed I retired and got into a shell hole between our advanced trench and the German wire, At about 9-30pm a party of Germans (about 30 men) got over the parapet and proceeded to bomb shell holes containing wounded, myself and all who were able then rushed back to our trench.

1st wave
NO. 2078, Private S. HANDFORD states.-

"I reached the German first line fairly easily. I noticed the enemy's wire was broken only in one place. The trench was empty, but the enemy were waiting in their dug-outs with bombs. These dug-outs had two entrances to them. My party opened fire on the Germans as soon as we saw them in the dug-outs, and they replied heavily with bombs. I used my rifle until it was smashed. I was then forced to retire, which I did to a shell hole between the German parapet and their wire. I cannot say clearly what happened to the rest of the party, except that 2nd Lieut. H. H. LILLY and Private WRIGHT rushed round to the other side of the dug-out, and I lost sight of them, and did not see them again. While I was in the shell hole, I noticed parties of Germans bombing other shell holes at dusk."

No. 3865, Private R. H. BROWN states.-

"I went across with the first wave, and on arrival at the German front line, I found no Germans inside so I crossed the first line over what appeared to be a covered in bay with entrances at either side. I fired at the body of German who was struggling to get inside the dug-out. After I had crossed the front line I looked to right and left and found that I was not in touch with either side so I retired to a shell hole between our advanced trench and the German wire. I lay for several hours there and then eventually crept back to our lines."

4th wave
No. 2123, Private E. G. HEMM states.-

"2nd Lieut. E. C. VILLA called me as I was approaching the German front line and asked me if I had my bombs. I stayed with him while he threw the bombs. The Germans were bombing on the right. I got into the trench and found a barricade on either side of me at about 10 or 12 yards distance, this part of the trench was not manned. Over the barricade on the left were four

3.

Germans who were firing 2 Machine Guns, which appeared to be British Lewis Guns. I found myself alone and the Germans on the right commenced to ~~the~~ bomb the trench which I was in. I got out ~~of~~ the trench and got into a shell hole about 5 yards from the German parapet. I looked round and saw the Commanding Officer making his way toward 'D' Company, and the Adjutant in a shell hole next to me. A few minutes later the Adjutant called to the men near by to make another attack, but he was hit almost as soon as he got up. The German appeared to be wearing hats like the Royal Marines. I afterwards retired to our lines."

"C" Company.-

No. 1949, Lance Corporal C. T. BOOTT states.-

"At the place I got into the German line, the trench had been very badly shelled and was only 2' deep. I saw nobody and so came back."

No. 4100, Private J. JEFFCOATE states.-

"I lost direction and got into the German trench with the 7th Battalion. The trench had been shelled and was about 5' deep. I saw several Germans lying about dead and several more were coming out of a sap which appeared to go towards the 2nd German line. A barricade had been made across the trench close to the sap. I heard two Machine Guns firing from the other side of the barricade."

No. 1818, Private T. GARBUTT states.-

"I arrived close to the German line and saw a party of Germans throwing bombs over the parapet. Half of these bombs did not go off, and I threw some of these back. All the German wire here was smashed up."

No. 1995, Private T. JACKSON states.-

"The Germans were standing shoulder to shoulder firing over their parapet when I arrived at the trench."

No. 2312, Private C. MASSEY states.-

"The trench was about 6' deep where I got in and very muddy. This was on the left. I saw the 3rd wave (12 platoon) and 1 Lewis Gun go over the front line towards the 2nd line. They then disappeared in the smoke."

No. 2438, Private E. EDWARDS states.-

"I also saw the 3rd wave go over the German front line towards the 2nd line".

4.

DC
3 wave
 No. 3013, Corporal P. J. MURPHY states.-

"My platoon spent the night in our front line. About 7-25am 2nd Lieut W. G. W. BARBER gave No. 15 platoon to order to fix bayonets. Smoke bombs were thrown by one of the LINCOLNS. About 3 minutes afterwards 2nd Lieut BARBER gave us the order to advance. We all mounted the parapet by steps previously cut and proceeded to our advanced trench, where we were stopped by 2nd Lieut. DORNTON who said we were $\frac{3}{4}$ minute too soon. We stayed here with No. 13 platoon until 2nd Lieut DORNTON gave the order to advance. As I advanced I found that the men on my right were bearing to the right, so I doubled across to them to change their direction, and succeeded in doing so in the case of all men in view. The smoke now became so dense that I lost touch with my platoon, but soon found 2nd Lieut DORNTON and accompanied him up to the German wire. Here Captain NAYLOR, 2nd Lieut. BARBER, 2nd Lieut R. B. CECIL and No. 4478, Private T. ATTENBOROUGH joined us and together we passed through the wire and into the German trench, Captain NAYLOR leading. We found about nine of the enemy in the bay we entered, five firing wildly from the fire platform, while the others were at the bottom of the trench. The enemy bore the number 91 on shoulder straps, wore respirators but had no equipment on and their bayonets were not fixed. Captain NAYLOR shot one of the Germans on the fire platform whereupon the remainder dashed in the direction of a dug-out situated under the parapet. Dashing after them I bayoneted the last two while the remainder of the enemy were shot down by our party on the dug-out steps. Having cleared the bay Captain NAYLOR ordered us on to the parapet ready to proceed to the second line, but having mounted we found ourselves absolutely unsupported and dropped back into the trench. Corporal HARRISON with two men now joined us and I directed him to proceed up the trench to the left. 2nd Lieut CECIL and myself with Private ATTENBOROUGH went into the next bay on our right where we encountered an enemy bombing party. We held our ground until our bombs were exhausted, when we withdrew to the bay which we first entered. As we reached this 2nd Lieut CECIL was killed by a German bomb. We found Captain NAYLOR, 2nd Lieut BARBER and 2nd Lieut DORNTON here. A German ran up along the parapet from the left. Captain NAYLOR shouted "That man - shoot him", but we were too late for as we raised our rifles the German dropped his bomb and jumped into far end of next bay. We were now subjected to bombing from both flanks, and having exhausted our own bombs we replied with German "potato-mashers". We held the bay while the store of bombs lasted after which their attack became intense and Captain NAYLOR, 2nd Lieuts BARBER and DORNTON were wounded. We now left the trench but Captain NAYLOR returned to their parapet and I returned and joined him. We were immediately subjected to Machine Gun fire and were compelled to retire through the wire and take cover in a shell hole. After resting a minute or two we went out to collect a party but could find only dead and wounded, so we made our way back to our advanced trench. Here we found only wounded and were joined by No. 2408, Corporal POWDITCH of the Lewis Gun Section, who was wounded. Captain NAYLOR now sent me with a message to the Commanding Officer which I delivered to Major CHECKLAND at Headquarters.

No. 4478, Private T. ATTENBOROUGH corroborates the above statement until the party left the German trench, and then.-

"I was leaving the German trench when I saw Captain NAYLOR and Corporal MURPHY returning to the German parapet. Cpl. MURPHY shouted to me so I lay down and waited until I saw Captain

5.

NAYLOR again retire when I made the best of my way back to our advanced line. Here I bandaged a wounded man of the STAFFORDS then moved along to the left, passing many wounded, until I joined Captain NAYLOR.

Joint statement by No. 1605, Private W. PARKIN and No. 2165, Private E. SMITH.- (3rd Wave)

"We went over with the 3rd wave at 2nd Lieut BARBER's order and met against the German barbed wire, through which we passed easily. We entered the German front trench but found no enemy in the bay so we climbed up on to the parapet with the intention of going to the second line. Finding ourselves alone we returned to the front line trench, but again encountered no enemy. We found this trench to be untouched by Artillery. We left this trench to try and find some of our Company but were subjected to heavy Machine Gun and "Whizzbang" fire and could only find wounded amongst whom was Coy. Sgt. Mjr. GOODWIN. This Warrant Officer had received several wounds and was sniped while bandaging a man whom Smith recognized as Private LANE of the Lewis Gun Section. Sergeant BOSWELL of 'A' Company joined us in this shell hole and at dusk we made our way back to our own lines".

Grenade Section.

No. 1515, Private G. KERRY states.-

"I went over just behind the 1st wave. The first wave suffered very heavily, and all the survivors of the Grenade Section became isolated. I entered the German trench and found about ten of the enemy in the bay. These fled and I followed them to the end of the bay throwing bombs. Not receiving any support I withdrew from the trench and took cover in a shell hole about 10 yards from enemy parapet. 2nd Lieut A. H. PETTY fell near this hole wounded, and I drew him into cover and bandaged his wound. At dusk the enemy commenced bombing, and I retaliated with the remainder of my bombs, and then made the best of my way back to our own lines at 2nd Lieut PETTY's order and delivered a note from this Officer to Lieut. HOWARD.

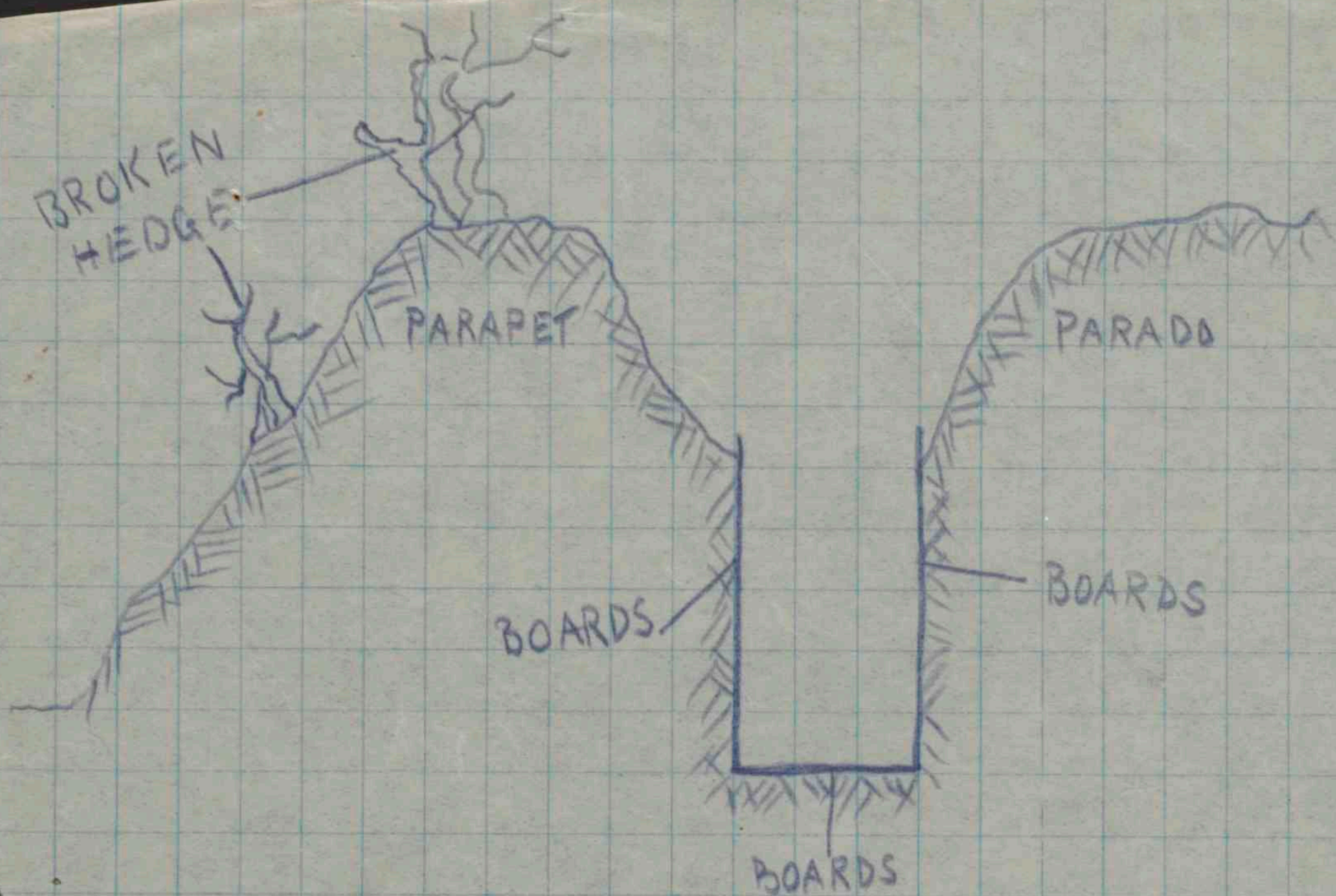
Fifth wave. (Headquarters)

No. 764, Regtl. Sgt. Major B. A. MADDOCK states.-

"I moved out of Battalion Head Quarter Dug out with the Commanding Officer and Adjutant and all H. Q. Details following about 7-0am on the morning on the 1st July and moved up to the front line trench a little later and jumped over the parapet about a quarter of an hour ~~later~~ after the smoke cloud started roughly about 7-40am and followed the 4th wave. The Commanding Officer went first followed by the Adjutant, I myself following him. As soon as both Commanding Officer and Adjutant were over I lost sight of them in the smoke and have never seen either of them since. The shell fire on our trenches ~~were~~ was heavy and the front line trench was strewn with dead and wounded men. I proceeded across towards the German trench alone seeing no one except our wounded and dead on the way. I had no difficulty in passing through their barbed wire, as it was very well cut at the

6.

point I passed through. I scrambled up the German parapet and jumped straight into the middle of about a dozen Germans. I bayoneted the nearest one and the remainder overpowered me, kicked me and generally knocked me about, afterwards putting me in a dug-out. These men had no rifles or equipment but had a large pile of bombs (potato masher) which they were slinging over toward their wire. The trench was about 10 or 12 feet deep in very good condition considering the terrific bombardment we had given them and was bone dry, although our own were fairly muddy. I distinctly heard bombing and firing going on beyond the front line which proved that some men must have gone on beyond the German front line. I sat very quietly in the bottom of the dugout and had been there perhaps an hour when I heard the Germans in the trench start shouting and they rushed down the dug out steps and began carrying bombs up above. They ordered me in French to carry also so I took up one load and took my chance to hop over the parapet back again out of their trench when the last German had gone below. I ran along southwards under their parapet about 20 yards distance and lay down. I discovered that the cause of their evident fright was another smoke cloud in our own lines, but I saw that the wind had changed since our original cloud and was taking it back over our own trenches instead of over towards the German trench. I heard the Germans bomb up their front line trench a little later and then they sniped all out wounded who lay out in front. Some who lay between the wire and their parapet they bombed to death. I remained under their parapet until 11 pm that night when I started to crawl home. I reached their wire about daybreak and crawled into a shell hole where I stayed the next day. About 10-30pm I was about to crawl off home when I saw a German searching shell holes with a rifle and he came slowly towards my hole. I threw a piece of hard earth at him hitting him in the face and I then made a bolt for liberty, and reached our own lines in safety about 12-30am on the 3rd instant. I rejoined the Battalion on it's arrival in this Village." (See Sketch attached)



ROUGH SCALE

1 square = 1 foot.

Barnard's B.S.M.