

SECRET.



REPORT ON OPERATIONS by 7th SHERWOOD FORESTERS
on NIGHTS 17/18th & 18/19th MAY.

On the afternoon of the 17th inst. wire was cut by LEFT GROUP Artillery and arrangements were made to keep the gaps open by Lewis Gun fire and occasional bursts of shrapnel.

At 10 pm the fire ceased and a patrol was sent out to examine and report on the gaps. (The patrol report is attached) This patrol observed a large hostile wiring party wiring the gaps with a covering party in front. This was reported to the Artillery who applied fire at 11.45 pm.

Some of the first shells fell amongst the wiring party and from the shouts it is believed casualties were caused.

A second patrol was sent out and it was found that the gaps had been mended.

The working party did not come out again.

On receiving the second patrol report at about 1.20 am. it was decided to cancel the operation.

On the afternoon of the 18th inst. the wire was again cut by Artillery and the gaps kept open by Lewis Gun fire.

During the night the enemy showed great activity.

At 1.27 am. (19th inst.) a party of about 10 to 15 of the enemy attacked one of our Posts at N.l.a.51.72.

After a bombing fight, in which at first our men gave ground slightly, the enemy were driven off.

It is thought casualties were inflicted.

About 1.55. am. several parties of the enemy were seen by our Posts on either side of the Old German front line about N.l.a.58. Lewis Gun and Rifle fire was opened and the enemy driven back. One man is known to have been shot but got away.

Between 2.30 am and 4 am the enemy was very active in No Mans Land.

(Greater precautions were taken to keep the enemy's wire under fire during the night. More frequent bursts of shrapnel were arranged for and 3 Vickers & 3 Lewis Guns were employed to sweep the enemy's wire. Lifts in the Artillery & cessation of Machine Gun fire had to be arranged in order to allow patrols to reconnoitre for gaps)

At 10 pm a patrol was sent out to examine the gap at the junction of NETLEY & NASH but could not get very near as the enemy had a covering & wiring party out mending the gap.

Another patrol went out at 12.15 am. to report on the wire at about N.l.a.28.10. They also reported that the enemy were wiring up two gaps and had a covering party out.

On receiving these reports the Artillery were asked to quicken up and to shorten 50 yards. This had the desired effect as confusion was heard in the enemy's lines, apparently caused by casualties.

Owing to the contours of the ground it was difficult if not impossible for the Machine Guns to sweep the German wire South of NETLEY Trench.

It was decided to take out the ammonal tubes and explode them at ZERO.

By 1.30 am.

By 1.30 a.m., a tape had been laid and the raiders had started to form up on it.

At 1.35 a.m., the party with the ammonal tubes left our lines and proceeded towards the German wire.

About 1.45 a.m., the party on the tape saw some 15 to 20 men double towards the German lines. About the same time the ammonal tube party was bombed by a German patrol, evidently the same party. The Officer in charge exchanged shots with them and almost immediately shouts were heard from the German lines. As the tube party neared the hostile wire a sharp word of command was heard, rapid rifle fire was opened from a position between the German trench and their wire; golden rain lights were sent up. The ammonal tube party lay down and waited.

Between 1.55 a.m., and 1.57 a.m., the enemy put up a very heavy barrage of shells, trench mortars and rifle grenades on 'No Man's Land' and on our trenches. Rifle and machine gun fire were also very heavy.

The raiders waited for our barrage to open with the intention of advancing further under it. After our barrage started, rifle fire decreased, but machine guns and trench mortars continued a barrage on 'No Man's Land' which was fairly intense.

About 2.10 a.m., it was reported to O.C. Raid that it had not been possible to explode the ammonal tubes in the enemy wire and as he had received a number of casualties he decided to withdraw. The return to our line was carried out in good order and everyone accounted for with the exception of 2 men. These two were not reported missing until it was too light to look for them.

The casualties suffered during the night's operations amounted to :-

KILLED.	2 other ranks	7th Batt.S.F.
WOUNDED	17 "	" " " " "
"	2 "	" 465 Field Coy.R.E.
MISSING, BELIEVED KILLED.	2 o.ranks.	7th Batt.S.F.

About 4.30 a.m., yesterday, the enemy are reported to have been seen carrying wounded from NASH ALLEY to NELSON TRENCH.

20/5/17.

Lieut-Colonel.
Commanding 139th Infantry Brigade.

PATROL REPORT.

17th/18th MAY, 1917.

Composition of party giving unit and name of Leader.	Task	Time and point of departure	Report shewing route traversed. Intelligence gained and offensive action taken.	Time and place of return.
2/Lt.L.C.BROWNE 2/Lt.G.GRIFFEN 5 other ranks 7th Batt.S.F.	To visit the German wire and find out if gaps had been cut by our Artillery and T.Mortars	10.5 pm. N.1.a.65.05.	The patrol proceeded in an Easterly direction and almost at once heard sounds of work in the German lines. We went forward to about N.1.a.81.18 and then crept cautiously till we could see that there was a large party wiring from about N.1.a.90.40 to N.1.b.02.10. They had a covering party out in front numbering about 20. We returned and made a report.	11.15 p.m. N.10.65.05.
		12.15 am N.1.a.65.05	The patrol went out again from the same place and got out before our guns had fired their last burst of shrapnel. We made for a point about N.1.a.98.10 and as we got near considerable activity started on the right. The enemy was nervous and sent up a large quantity of lights. By these we were able to see that no gap was there. A Machine Gun was firing persistently from about N.1.a.84.70 sweeping 'No Man's Land' very low. We crawled towards the left but had to go very cautiously owing to the number of lights and the Machine Gun. We returned to report at 1.10 a.m., via point N.1.a.65.05.	

/sd/ L.C.BROWNE. 2/Lt.
7th Batt. Sherwood Foresters.