

8th Battalion
8th October

After a march of over 7 miles across country the 8th Somersets arrived in position, but on the way up the attack had been postponed until 8.30, and the formations of the Battalion changed, so that the Lincolns were on the right and the Somersets on the left. The Middlesex were then on the western edges of the Wood, south of the Chateau Briseux. It was dusk when the Battalions reached their assembly positions and there were no opportunities of making a reconnaissance of the ground over which the attack was to be made.

At Zero both the Lincolns and Somersets advanced gallantly to the attack. But some of the Divisional gunners were short shooting and for a while the barrage could not be followed until these guns lengthened their range. As soon as the guns permitted, the advance was continued and a line taken up on the high ground east of the Esnes-Guillemin road. A farm on the Battalion front, from which machine-gun fire spitted viciously as the Somerset men were advancing, was mopped up at about 1 a.m. on 9th.

9th October

At 11.30 p.m. the Battalion was ordered to continue the advance at 5.30 a.m. on 9th October under a barrage. The objective was Haucourt and the high ground south of the village. These orders necessitated the immediate assembly of all Companies along the line of a sunken road east of the Esnes-Guillemin road. Almost dead-beat after the miles they had advanced during the day, the men had to be shaken out of their slumbers, and it was 5 a.m. before all Companies, B on the right, A in the centre, and D on the left with C in close support, were assembled ready to move off twenty minutes later at Zero hour.

Under cover of the barrage the advance started punctually, a company of Middlesex coming up on the right of the Somersets and the New Zealanders advancing on the left of the 8th Battalion.

There was no opposition and Haucourt was entered and captured, though the Somersets were delayed for half an hour 150 yards from the eastern outskirts of the village on account of short shooting by the Divisional guns. With positions changing so rapidly, when the guns like the infantry were continually on the move forward, short shooting was practically unavoidable. The Battalion line was then established in a sunken road east of Haucourt, and shortly afterwards the 112th Brigade passed through the 63rd Brigade to exploit the success as far as Caudry.

Haucourt, Caudry! Strange indeed that Somerset men should come to these places again after four years of the most terrible and bloody warfare the world had ever known. From their sunken road east of Haucourt the 8th Somersets had Ligny on their right front and Fontaine au Pire on their left: Caudry was in front. All these places were known to the 1st Somerset Light Infantry in August 1914. It was at the Carrieres, a bare thousand yards away on the left from where the 8th Somersets were now, that the 1st Battalion in the Battle of Le Cateau, 26th August 1914, first exchanged rifle shots with the enemy. Then the Bosche, in the first flush of victory, was sweeping on, driving all before him back upon Paris. Now he, in turn, was

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