

in dire peril, clinging desperately wherever he could to whatever positions offered, in the vain hope of stemming the tide which threatened to overwhelm him as it swept him back the way he had come. Not one of those gallant fellows of the old 1st Battalion in 1914 retired beaten and demoralized as did the Germans before the 8th Battalion, and all along the line in front of the Allied Armies in October 1918. It was through Ligny that the 1st Somersets in 1914 set out on the retreat to the Marne.

8th Battalion
9th October

1st Battalion

After Haucourt had been occupied by the 8th Somersets, Colonel Sheringham moved his Battalion Headquarters into the village, and there the cooks were brought up and a hot meal served out to the men at about 4.30 p.m.

8th Battalion

At 6.30 the next morning (10th) Companies assembled in the road running north-west from Ligny, and at about 8.15 a.m. moved forward north of the village but directly east until they reached the railway south-east of Caudry, which they crossed and then halted. The retiring enemy had blown great holes in, and otherwise rendered impassable, all roads, and the track had to be reconstructed before the Battalion transport could be brought up.

10th October

At 10 a.m. the Battalion again advanced and occupied some German practice trenches just east of Caudry. At 12.15 A Company was sent on as advanced guard, the remaining Companies following at 1 p.m. to Petit Caudry, where the Battalion was concentrated. A Company, however, still advanced and, passing Clermont Chateau, reached the road junction immediately south of Viesly. During a conference of Company Commanders, held at Petit Caudry at 2 p.m., orders were received for the Somersets to pass through the 112th Brigade and attack the ridge running south from Briastre, the Lincolns on the right and the Somersets on the left.

The attack began at about 5 p.m. B Company of the Somersets was on the right, D in the centre, A on the left, and C was in reserve.

In spite of heavy machine-gun and artillery fire the advance went on towards the high ground whence the Bosche machine gunners, in posts, raked the line of the Somerset men. In the latter stages of the War the enemy's machine gunners were the bravest troops in the German Army. With extraordinary tenacity they clung to every position, and when they were forced to retire, fell back, only to take up defensive positions from which they again opened fire on the advancing British troops. They were brave fellows those German machine gunners: they fought with their backs against the wall, often long after their artillery had deserted them and their infantry had fled.

The Somerset men reached the ridge and by individual section enterprise and initiative the hostile machine-gun posts were rushed and the garrisons either killed, taken prisoner or forced to retire. Having cleared the crest the leading wave was ordered to dig in at once on the reverse slope and put out observation posts on the forward slope.

The light was now waning, and the falling darkness mercifully hid the Somerset men from the enemy's guns: as a consequence serious casualties were avoided. On the left flank A Company was somewhat in the air, the New Zealanders not having advanced as far as the Somerset men. A platoon