

8th Battalion
10th October

of C Company, from reserve, was therefore sent out to the left to form a defensive flank as a temporary measure until the leading companies were reorganized in depth. This was done by about 8 p.m. and the platoon of C Company withdrawn. All three Companies of the Battalion were now in line, i.e. B, D and A, the left of the latter thrown back to join up with the New Zealanders.

When darkness had fallen all Companies sent out patrols to report any available crossings over the River Selle. They returned with the information that no crossings could be found, that the Selle was from twenty to thirty feet wide, and that there were no trees which could be felled for the construction of temporary bridges. But about 3 a.m. on 11th an officer of the 153rd Company, R.E., said that he would endeavour to erect some sort of bridge. B and C Companies of the 8th Somersets and one company of the Lincolns were then instructed to hold three platoons in readiness to cross the river if ordered to do so.

In the meantime a platoon of A Company, under 2/Lieut. H. Brooks, pushed on to reconnoitre Briastre, on the western banks of the Selle: the platoon met with no opposition and reached the middle of the village,¹ where they fell in with the New Zealanders. Soon after daylight several Germans were captured in the village; they had concealed themselves all night. This platoon of A Company, finding that another R.E. officer had just completed a bridge over the Selle, pushed across the river whilst Lieut. Brooks went back to bring up the remainder of his Company into the village. He also sent back a message to the Os.C., B and D Companies, and to the Lincolns, to send their platoons down the sunken road. Soon the Battalion had established its front on the eastern banks of the Selle, with the Lincolns on the right and the New Zealanders on the left.²

12th October

Finally on the night of 12th the line of the railway east of the Selle from Belle Vue southwards to about 700 yards north-west of Neuville, was held by the Somersets and Middlesex. During the night the 8th Battalion was relieved and moved back to Caudry in billets, where at last several days of rest and training were given the tired-out Somerset men. The 37th Division thus reached and occupied the line of the Selle River ready for the next advance.

¹ The Divisional boundary between the 37th Division and the New Zealand Division ran through the centre of Briastre.

² For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty during the operations between 9th-12th October Capt. C. H. Madden was awarded a bar to his M.C., 2/Lieut. H. Brooks the M.C., and Corp. G. F. Tucker and Pte. H. G. Muddle the D.C.M.

Horace Brooks, 8th Bn

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