

8th Battalion

Viterlan, one company on the railway south-east of Viterlan, one company round the Chapel in the south-east end of the village; 4th Middlesex—in Brigade Reserve. The 63rd Brigade had been so disposed in order to form a defensive flank on the right of the 37th Divisional front, and during the 24th and 25th patrols kept close touch with the flanking Division on the right, i.e. the 21st Division.

27th October

On the 27th a warning order was received that the Brigade would have to relieve the 112th Brigade in the front line on the night 27th/28th October. The relief took place and was completed by 10.40 p.m., the 8th Lincolns, on the right, holding a line from and including some orchards just north of Ghissignies to the Halt on the railway at the south-eastern end of the village; the 8th Somersets on the left, holding the line of the Sunken Road from the sunken cross-roads north of Ghissignies to immediately south-west of the grounds surrounding the Fmc. de Beart.

In these positions the 28th, 29th and 30th passed without incident, although active patrol work was carried out, resulting in the gain of much useful information concerning the enemy's method of holding the railway along the Brigade front.

On the night of 30th/31st, however, a successful raid (the last by the Battalion) was carried out by two platoons of the Somersets in conjunction with two platoons of the 1st New Zealand Rifle Brigade on the left. The positions raided were along the railway at a point just south of the south-west corner of the Drill Ground, south of Le Quesnoy.

The two platoons, under 2/Lieut. E. L. Carter¹ and 2/Lieut. D. A. Hill, formed up just clear of the orchards and advanced under an excellent barrage. The leading platoon, on reaching the railway, was to work north and south whilst the other platoon mopped up and reconnoitred the ground east of the railway.

It is not possible to give full details of this raid, but besides the two officers in command of the raid, the names of Corporals Head, Atherton, Cotton, Boskill, Calvert and Rudge are mentioned as having done good work. The result of this raid was that one prisoner was taken who provided the necessary identification, thirty to forty of the enemy were killed and several machine guns were destroyed, all at the surprisingly small loss of one officer and one other rank slightly wounded.

4th November

The 31st October passed quietly, though occasionally the enemy shelled the front line and Ghissignies. On the 1st November the 8th Somersets were withdrawn to Salesches in Brigade Reserve, where the Battalion remained until the morning of 4th.

Orders to continue the advance due east on the morning of 4th November were issued from 63rd Brigade Headquarters on the 2nd, but the attack was to be carried out by the 111th Brigade (37th Division) which was to capture the first two objectives: the 112th Brigade was then to pass through the 111th

¹ Subsequently awarded the M.C. for conspicuous gallantry and good leadership. L/Cpl. W. J. R. Atherton received the D.C.M. for similar conduct during the raid.

Horace Brooks 8th Bn