

and capture the remaining objectives. The 8th Battalion was, however, to be attached to the 112th Brigade for the operation. 8th Battalion
4th November

At 5.30 a.m. on 4th the attack began and apparently made good progress, for the Somersets were early on the move. At 6.30 a.m. the Battalion marched off from Ferme Bernier, Salesches, across country to the Louvignies-Futoy road, thence through an orchard to Haute Rive Farm, where Battalion Headquarters were established. A and B Companies then went forward to just west of Byau de Pont à Vache, D Company to an orchard west of A and B, and C Company to the neighbourhood of Fme. Croix Rouge.

Shortly after 9 a.m. Colonel Sheringham sent out an advanced party to see if it was possible to establish Battalion Headquarters at Pont à Vache. For nearly an hour he waited, but as no information came to hand he went forward himself. Passing C Company on the way at Croix Rouge he gave the O.C., Company, orders to go forward. He then found D Company and gave them orders to push forward patrols, keeping touch on the flanks with the 13th Royal Fusiliers. In the valley near Pont à Vache he found A and B Companies and there learned that the O.C., A Company (2/Lieut. H. W. Brooks), had been killed. From an orchard south-west of Jolimetz hostile machine-gun fire was intense and enemy snipers were very active restricting movement down into the valley. The O.C., B Company (Capt. O. Briggs), could not be found, but soon afterwards information came to hand that he also had been killed. Both Company Commanders had lost their lives whilst gallantly reconnoitring the country forward with a view to merging with the 1/1st Herts Regiment in a further attack.

No further advance was made until 1 p.m., when the C.O. ordered Companies to push out patrols in order to keep touch with the enemy. And at 2 p.m. the two leading Companies—A and B—were ordered to push forward in conjunction with the 1/1st Herts as soon as possible.

The Somersets, and the troops of the 112th Brigade to whom they were attached, were now almost at the extreme western edge of the Forêt de Mormal, the direction of the attack being due east on Pont sur Sambre, a small village east of the Forest. A report then came to hand (at 2.20 p.m.) that the enemy was retiring, and immediately Companies were told to push right on to Jolimetz and beyond. For over an hour no information reached Col. Sheringham of the situation of his Battalion until, at 3.40, the Supporting Company reported being in touch with B, the right attacking Company. Going up again to the front line, the C.O. found the larger portion of his leading Companies on the main road just west of the Forest, took them forward and started them through the wood. At 5 p.m. he received reports from A Company that they were well into the Forest, but were meeting heavy machine-gun fire on the right flank, having lost touch with B Company.

The Somersets were now engaged in fighting entirely novel to them. They had, of course, fought in woods along the old front lines, but they were woods only in name. Mormal, however, was a thick forest, and about 7.40 A reported that progress was difficult owing to the thickness of the under-