

outs and, mounting their machine guns and using their rifles, shot down the advancing British troops from behind; hundreds of men were lost in this way. Heavy casualties were also suffered by all battalions from enfilade machine-gun and rifle fire from both flanks. For the 29th Division, on the right, had failed to take Beaumont Hamel, while the 31st Division, on the left, who had to form a defensive flank through Serre, had similarly failed to reach and hold its objectives. Thus the 11th Brigade of the 4th Division was out in a salient with both flanks "in the air."

Only two officers (Capt. Harington and Lieut. Greatham) now remained with the Somerset men, who with other troops were holding a part of the Quadrilateral. But about 1.30 p.m. both these officers, having been wounded, went back to have their wounds dressed and the command of men of the Battalion in the Quadrilateral devolved upon C.S.M. Chappell.

On the first day of the Somme Battles 1916 the casualties amongst officers were truly terrible, and all up and down the line platoons, companies and even battalions (as with the Somerset L.I.), were temporarily commanded by N.C.O.'s. And how well these splendid fellows "carried on!" Under a galling fire R.S.M. Paul crossed No Man's Land leading the Brigade carriers. Another gallant N.C.O. and a private (Sergeant Imber and Pte. Hodges), in the face of rifle and machine-gun fire, signalled message after message from the German trenches back to the old British line, asking for grenades and the assistance of the guns.

About 4.30 p.m. Major Majendie arrived with reinforcement officers and took command of the Battalion which had been collected together in assembly trenches by R.S.M. Paul.¹

After dark troops of the 11th Brigade, holding portions of the German trenches, were relieved by Royal Irish Fusiliers and withdrew to the old British line and, at 10 p.m., the Brigade was ordered to return to Mailly Maillet as Divisional Reserve; the 10th and 12th Brigades to hold the front line.

This sums up very briefly the operations of the 1st Somerset L.I. on the first day of the Somme Battles.

Back in Mailly Maillet the 1st Battalion "called the roll"; it was a mournful task for death had laid a heavy hand upon the Somerset men. The C.O. and Adjutant (Lieut.-Col. J. A. Thicknesse and Capt. C. C. Ford) "were both killed before our trenches were passed," records the Diary. Fourteen other officers were also killed;² one was missing and nine were wounded, one of whom died of his wounds on 6th July.³ While, to the deep regret of all Somerset men, Brigadier-General C. B. Prowse (late of the 1st Battalion Somerset Light Infantry and G.O.C. 11th Inf. Bde.) was wounded and died

¹ It is assumed that a portion of the Battalion, under C.S.M. Chappell, was still in the Quadrilateral.

² Capts. R. J. R. Leacroft and G. H. Neville, Lieuts. E. C. MacBryan and V. A. Braithwaite, 2/Lieuts. G. P. C. Fair, J. A. Hellard, J. A. Johnson, A. V. C. Leche, R. E. Dunn, W. H. Treasure, F. A. Pearse, G. S. Winstanley, H. E. Whitgreaves and T. M. Doddington.

³ 2/Lieut. H. L. Colville.