

2 a.m., finding the front trenches unoccupied, but Caddie Support trench well held. The next day the 10th Welch in the right sector raided at 10 a.m. and found that the enemy had evacuated his front trenches, but was occupying Caesar's Support trench. These patrols and raids on the front of the 38th Division, together with similar action on the part of all the Divisions holding the line, made it evident that the enemy had definitely withdrawn from his foremost trenches. On 27th July our early morning air reconnaissance reported that he had evacuated his whole front system and strong patrols were ordered to go out on the front of the Guards and 38th Divisions to confirm this intelligence.

The 15th Welch on the front of the 114th Brigade, and the 15th R.W.F. on the front of the 113th Brigade, were accordingly ordered to send out two platoons each at 5.30 p.m. It was a very ticklish undertaking to advance in broad daylight without the cover of a creeping barrage, which would have brought from the enemy bombardment on the whole of the front.

It was with the greatest anxiety that the two platoons of the 15th Welch were observed to climb out of their trenches and working forward in sections through the mass of shell holes enter the enemy's battered first line without casualties. Again they advanced and got into Caesar and Caddie Support without opposition, but directly a further advance was attempted heavy machine gun fire broke out from Caesar and Caddie reserve trenches, the hostile artillery opened, and the platoons had to take cover till darkness enabled them to withdraw.

Our advance had been observed by enemy aeroplanes and at about 8.45 p.m. the enemy shelled our front and support lines very heavily.

The 15th Welch sent out two patrols during the night, finding the enemy third line to be lightly held and capturing a prisoner.

At 5.15 a.m. on the 28th July, our guns put down a practice barrage, which brought retaliation on the unfortunate 15th Welch, who during the past twelve hours had lost Lieutenant T. W. David, 2nd-Lieutenants V. G. Roberts and E. James, and 21 other ranks killed, and Lieutenant V. Howell, and 2nd-Lieutenants H. S. Pryce and R. C. Evans and 53 other ranks wounded, while 13 other ranks were missing.

On the front of the Guards Division the enemy was found to have evacuated his front system, and it was occupied by that Division, the difficult problem of the Guards having to cross the canal

on the first day of the battle being thus most satisfactorily solved.

Meanwhile, on the front of the Second Army, preparations were made to push forward our line on 31st July in connection with the great Third Battle of Ypres.

After the Battle of Messines, the 9th Welch enjoyed a short rest before again going into the trenches on 9th July, on the outskirts of Onraet Wood. Opposite their front was a small salient, in which was a collection of farm buildings, known as Junction Buildings, strongly held by the enemy with machine guns. On 14th July a company of the 8th Gloucesters, which had relieved the Welch, made an attack on this salient but without success, and with several casualties. "D" Company 9th Welch, was then ordered to try its luck on the 18th July, and at 3.30 a.m. on that date, two platoons stormed the Buildings but were ejected at 4.15 a.m., both platoon commanders (2nd-Lieutenants Salmon and V. Roberts) being killed, together with 14 other ranks, while 10 other ranks were wounded. It was a most formidable position, and it was not till the general attack on 31st July that the salient was captured with much difficulty by the 56th Brigade.

The "London Gazette" of 3rd June contained the following Honours:—

D.S.O.—Lieutenant-Colonel G. F. Brooke, 10th Welch; Lieutenant-Colonel J. Kennedy, M.C., D.C.M., 13th Welch; Lieutenant-Colonel F. W. Smith, 16th Welch, and Lieutenant-Colonel D. Grant-Dalton, 19th Welch.

D.C.M.—R.S.M. Clifford Lewis, 16th Welch.

In addition Brigadier-General T. O. Marden, C.M.G., received the French Legion of Honour (Officer), and Sergeant D. Williams (20388), 16th Welch, the French Croix de Guerre.

III.—THE BATTLE OF PILCKEM RIDGE.

31st JULY—2nd AUGUST.

The Battle of Pilckem Ridge is the official title given to the first phase of the Third Battle of Ypres. Offensive operations were limited to the capture of all the high ground overlooking Ypres to the east, and were entirely successful by the end of the first day—31st July—with the exception of the village of Westhoek on the front of the II Corps, and this was captured on 10th August. Heavy counter-attacks to recover St. Julien, Frezenberg, and the outskirts of Westhoek were made on 1st and 2nd August, but were repulsed after determined fighting.

The 38th Division attacked the Pilckem Ridge with the Guards Division on its left and the 51st Division on its right.