

## CHAPTER 27

### TURNING THE TABLES

In the whole war no other day saw as dramatic and startling a change as that which the Fourth Army achieved astride the Somme on August 8th, 1918. The whole aspect of affairs was altered. The British Armies which in March had been swept back from the outskirts of St. Quentin to those of Amiens, which in April had been fighting with their backs to the wall and had only just managed to deny to the Germans the vital positions of Amiens, Hazebrouck and the Scherpenberg hills, which during the summer months had asked no more than to maintain the new positions to which the great German onslaughts had thrust them back and to achieve occasional minor successes, local improvements which left the general position unchanged, now suddenly took the offensive on a considerable scale and with results surpassing the utmost the most sanguine had dared to hope for. By Ludendorff's own admission August 8th was "the black day of the war for the German armies," and in that day's victory The Queen's Own were well represented. Included in the Third Corps which formed the left of the attack were the Twelfth and Eighteenth Divisions and in consequence its 6th and 7th Battalions.

August 1918  
6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>  
Battalions

The Third Corps' contribution to General Rawlinson's victory has perhaps hardly received adequate recognition. Its attack did not finally secure more than its first objective, and on the evening of August 8th its line was well in rear of that reached by the Australians and Canadians South of the Somme, but its task of forming a defensive flank as the advance progressed was one of particular difficulty, a good deal more formidable in many ways than that of the troops

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on its right. The country North of the Somme was cut up by deep ravines which greatly hampered the tanks which were so conspicuously effective South of the river. Further, two days before the day fixed for the offensive a sudden attack delivered by a fresh division of Wurtembergers on the 54th Brigade astride the Bray-Corbie road had led to heavy fighting and some loss of ground: this had been partly recovered next day, but fighting was still going on at this point and consequently the plan of the attack was somewhat upset, while the uncertainty as to the exact position prevented the artillery from lending its usual effective support to the infantry who had to rely solely on their own rifles and bayonets.

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Battalions

August 6<sup>th</sup>

August 7<sup>th</sup>

Moreover, in justice to the Third Corps it must be remembered that while the Australian and Canadian divisions had been spared the brunt of the attacks of March and April, they had the great advantage of having been allowed to retain four battalions in their brigades and were in consequence considerably stronger than divisions from the Mother Country. Indeed one officer writes that he never saw the defects of the three-battalion brigade so apparent as in this battle. The achievement of the Third Corps was by no means the least creditable or substantial part of the battle of Amiens and both battalions of The Queen's Own took their full share in the fighting.

On August 8th actually only the 7th was actively engaged. The plan was that the Fifty-Eighth and Eighteenth Divisions should attack from the Somme Northward to just South of Morlancourt; opposite that village a gap of over 400 yards was left, beyond which the Twelfth Division was to engage one brigade, the 35th, in a subsidiary operation designed to encircle Morlancourt and compel its evacuation. The 37th

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See sketch 49

Brigade was in Divisional reserve so the 6th R.W.K. spent the day in readiness at Fravillers, and it was evening before it moved up to Marett Wood West of

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Morlancourt with orders to continue the attack next morning.

Far otherwise was it with the 7th, who had a day of desperate fighting. The 53rd Brigade was designed to pass through the troops detailed to capture the first objective of the Eighteenth Division, roughly the line from Malard Wood to Morlancourt, and to push on to Gressaire Wood, a mile-and-a-half further East. From that point a defensive flank was to be formed facing North and connecting up with the left of the Eighteenth Division's original line. The formation of this defensive flank was the special task of the 7th R.W.K., who had the 10th Essex on their right and on their left the 7th Queen's. Special efforts had been made to maintain secrecy: roads had been strewn with straw to muffle the noise of the transport and tanks, though it was hard to conceal the movement of these last, which made a roar which from the interior of a dugout sounded like the incessant roll and rumble of a heavy barrage.

The 7th was in its assembly position at 2 a.m. and at "zero," 4.30 a.m., moved forward in artillery formation astride the Bray-Corbie road. There was a thick mist which obscured all movement outside a fifty yards' radius, though it was no small compensation that it greatly handicapped the German machine-gunners, the ground was broken and much cut-up with trenches, and connection between the advanced companies and their supports was soon lost. However, direction was successfully maintained and Burke Trench, supposed to be the British front line, was reached up to time. Then, however, difficulties began. The Germans proved to be in great force, for the fog and the broken ground had hampered the tanks very much and The Queen's had had to fight hard even to clear what should have been their "jumping-off line." C Company therefore soon became involved in heavy fighting for Croydon and Cloncurry Trenches which had been lost on

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August 6th, and though they got on they were unable to keep up with the barrage. A, crossing to the South of the Bray-Corbie road, had hard fighting round a chimney called the Brick Beacon and were held up there for some time. By 7 a.m., however, they overcame this resistance and then pushed forward towards some aeroplane hangars about 1000 yards further on. There they reached after further fighting and then started to dig themselves in. Ultimately about 200 of the battalion established themselves there, mixed up with portions of the 8th Royal Berkshires and in touch with the 10th Essex South of the Bray-Corbie road, while a little later a communication trench on the left was successfully cleared of Germans by Lieut. H. J. M. Harris and touch was obtained with the troops further to the left.

While the rest of the battalion was thus establishing a good defensive flank on the left, B Company, skilfully led by Captain A. V. McDonald, had worked its way forward most successfully. Keeping close to the Bray-Corbie road the company actually caught up the barrage and, pushing on in a gap between A and C, kept with it as far as the final objective, suffering some casualties from machine-guns which, however, were speedily accounted for. On approaching the Brick-works N.W. of Gressaire Wood B swung South of the road, driving back a strong body of Germans just South of the Brickworks,

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7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

See sketch 48

August 8<sup>th</sup> 1918  
7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

who fell back into Gressaire Wood. The Brickworks proved to be held in force and a first effort to rush them was checked by machine-guns, but at that moment two tanks came lumbering up through the mist, and with their help the Brickworks were stormed and many prisoners taken. It was now about 7.15 a.m., and as the mist began clearing away it became evident that B Company's success in reaching the Brickworks had brought it far beyond the rest of its battalion.

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However, though fully 4,000 yards from the starting point and with both his flanks open (1), Captain McDonald dug in at once and for some time he maintained his ground despite increasing pressure. Further to the right, however, touch was obtained with a company of the 10th Essex due South of the Brickworks which had reached Gressaire Wood, the final objective, but had had to fall back. But the Germans were in force all round and counter-attacks from Gressaire Wood threatened to outflank and cut off the Essex, while they were also advancing against B Company and their enfilade fire was making communication with the troops in rear almost impossible. Accordingly, about 10 a.m. the Colonel of the Essex ordered a withdrawal to the position which the main body of the 7th were consolidating, the so-called "Green Line." This withdrawal was adroitly conducted by Captain McDonald, though the enemy were pressing hard and the task was one of considerable difficulty owing to a German barrage which reinforced their machine-gun fire. Indeed, encouraged by their success in driving back the advanced troops of the Eighteenth Division, the Germans counter-attacked vigorously the line to which these had fallen back. By this time, however, it had been made fairly secure, touch had been established with The Queen's on the left and, well supported by the artillery, the 7th dealt faithfully with these attempts and held tenaciously to their gains. (2)

August 8<sup>th</sup> 1918  
7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

If the Eighteenth and Fifty-Eighth Divisions had not secured their final objective, they had attained substantial success, while the Twelfth Division's subsidiary attack had established itself successfully on

(1) Sergt. Daniels, who carried out reconnaissance to the left, went over a mile without finding any other troops.

(2) This action brought a bar to their M.C. to both Captain McDonald and Lieut. Harris Pte. Stacey, a battalion runner, who had done conspicuous work in the March retreat, was again greatly to the fore and obtained a second bar to his M. M., and Sergt. Daniels, the Lewis gun N.C.O. of B Company was another who distinguished himself greatly.

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a line threatening Morlancourt from the Northwest. Moreover, the casualties inflicted on the Germans had been very heavy: the Third Corps had taken over 2,000 prisoners, and next day a renewed attack resulted in the capture of the whole of the previous day's second s objective. In this attack the 37th Brigade took part and the 6th R.W.K. got its chance.

August 1918  
6<sup>th</sup> Battalion

August 9<sup>th</sup>

See sketch 48

The line reached on the 8th ran North-East of Ville sur Ancre and was close up to the edge of Morlancourt: the battalion was on the left of the attack with The Queen's and Buffs beyond it, and assembled along the Morlancourt-Ville sur Ancre road. At 5.30 p.m. the attack was launched under a barrage and the battalion pushed forward, meeting most determined opposition. The hostile machine-guns were mostly concealed in the standing crops and in shell-holes, and for a moment the attack seemed bound to be held up. That this did not happen was due to the gallantry and devotion of Sergt. T. J. Harris, who rushed one of these guns at the head of his section and captured it. Twice again as

the advance proceeded the same thing happened; each time Sergt. Harris dashed forward against the obstructing machine-gun. In the first instance he was again successful, killing the whole team single-handed: the second time he was himself shot, but his example had inspired all those round him and the advance swept on. A posthumous V.C. fittingly recognized his splendid achievement. A conspicuous feature of the day was Colonel Dawson's leadership: he went into battle on horseback, exposing himself fearlessly and setting an example of calmness and courage which was most inspiring to his men. 2nd Lieut. H. J. Turner was also prominent in this advance. Machine-guns concealed in the low-lying ground near the river were inflicting casualties on his company, but he skilfully manoeuvred his men into a position from which they could take the enemy in flank and rear and so cleared them out of the

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way. 2nd Lieut. Upfold also twice successfully disposed of machine-guns which were holding up his platoon, by engaging them in front and thereby diverting the attention from parties who rushed them from the flank. Thus the battalion achieved an advance of over 2,000 yards, captured or destroyed over 20 machine-guns and four trench-mortars, made a substantial haul of prisoners and consolidated its final objective, which ran South-East from the Ancre just East of Dernancourt. In this Captain Henderson-Roe set a splendid example: his left arm was badly shattered early on, but he continued nevertheless to lead his company forward with marked skill and leadership and insisted on remaining at the front until the position had been consolidated. The battalion had somewhat outstripped those on its right, but next day the advance was resumed and a further substantial gain of ground secured, the line getting within a short distance of Meaulté. The attack had cost the 37th Brigade between 500 and 600 casualties, of which the battalion had suffered nearly 200; 2nd Lieuts. A. H. Brown and Walsh were killed with 24 men, 2 men were missing and 157 wounded, together with Captains Henderson-Roe and Tharp, Lieuts. Westendarp and Sweeny and 2nd Lieut. Bensley. (1) The 6th held the position it had captured until August 12<sup>th</sup>, when a relief allowed it to be drawn back into reserve. The next few days saw a temporary pause in the operations. By the evening of August 11th General Rawlinson's advance had been pushed to the limits of profitable exploitation: the enemy's resistance had stiffened, he had brought up reinforcements and was holding a strong line and all advantage of surprise was over. But Sir Douglas Haig's plans were largely based on utilizing this factor to the full and surprise could best be achieved by a sudden shift in the

August 9<sup>th</sup> 1918  
6<sup>th</sup> Battalion

August 10<sup>th</sup>

(1) Captain Henderson-Roe and 2nd Lieuts. Upfold and Turner received the M.C.

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point of attack directly the enemy's reserves had been drawn to the breach already effected. All was now in train for the Third Army to take up the attack and in the meantime the Fourth was to consolidate its gains, to press the enemy enough to fix his attention and to take advantage of local opportunities. To the Twelfth and Eighteenth Divisions, therefore, the middle of August was a time of suspended activity, though the latter division remained in front line, having relieved the Forty-Seventh opposite Albert, the 7th R.W.K. going into the support line on the new front on the night of

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7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

August 10th. Its casualties on August 8th had not been heavy considering the character of the fighting: Lieut. Hackforth-Jones (attached from the Gloucesters) and 2nd Lieut. H. J. Chapman had been killed with 13 men, 43 men were missing, Lieuts. A. V. D. Morley, Bergl and Bell, 2nd Lieuts. W. F. Chapman and Addison and 137 men wounded. These losses in officers were more than made good by new arrivals, though the gaps in the ranks had not been filled before the battalion went over the top again.

It was the Third Army who on August 21st started the second of Sir Douglas Haig's series of blows at the German line. The front to be attacked ran from the Ancre near Miraumont to Movenneville, a length of nine miles, and the day's operations aimed at gaining the line of the Arras-Albert railway. This was to be a preliminary to a simultaneous attack by the Third and Fourth Armies two days later, with a North and South line through Bapaume as immediate objective and turning the line of the Somme above Peronne as ultimate object.

The Fifth Division was by this time included in the Third Army. The 1st R.W.K. had had nearly three weeks out of the line when on August 20th it moved up to Gommecourt for the new attack. On the 21<sup>st</sup> it never reached the front line, for though its Division went through the Thirty-Seventh on the left of the

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Fourth Corps and captured Achiet le Petit, establishing a line just short of the railway, it did this with the 15th and 95th Brigades only and retained the 13th in reserve. The next day was spent in reorganizing and then on August 23rd the Third Army struck again with force and effect. This time the Fifth Division led the attack, but once again the 13th Brigade was in reserve and only when the right of the attack was held up in front of Irlles did the battalion get its chance. During the day it had moved up from Bucquoy towards Achiet le Petit in the wake of the 15th R. Warwickshires, and it was already 5 p.m. when it received orders to deploy South of Achiet le Petit. It was necessary to attack without a barrage on Irlles itself as it was uncertain whether British troops were not actually holding part of the village and the battalion, keeping close to the barrage as its orders prescribed, for the most part missed the village, but by capturing the high ground just South it was largely instrumental in enabling the 12th Gloucesters to make a second and successful attack on Irlles.

The advance was stoutly opposed: German machine-guns inflicted many casualties, and at one time large gaps had been made in the attacking line. Seeing these Lieut. Darlow, who was commanding the company in support, promptly pushed up reinforcements. Splendid service was done by Sergt. Gilbert, who changed his platoon's direction to clear a trench and dispose of a machine-gun which was enfilading the advance, by Corpl. Harris, who put a troublesome machine-gun out of action by rushing it from a flank, and by Pte. Biffen, who brought forward some men who had lost direction and filled a gap in the line with them: 2nd Lieut. Sansom, whose platoon was on the right flank, was also conspicuous; assisted by his runner he rushed and took a couple of machine-guns and his platoon cleared several sunken roads, capturing many prisoners and helping to secure the flank. Thus the

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objective was secured at the moderate cost of only 100 casualties, including Lieut. Steele killed and Captain Winn and 2nd Lieuts. Quigley, Collins, Glass and Cottrell wounded. The prisoners taken about equalled the casualties and the battalion, by

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1918  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

digging itself in very effectively, though with only entrenching implements. available, formed a strong defensive flank facing Miraumont, which was still in German hands. In organizing this flank Lieut. Milford did conspicuous service; his excellent handling of D Company during the attack had been largely responsible for the lightness of its casualty list, and his example and resolution inspired his men, exhausted by the long advance, to stick to the work of consolidation. While this work was in progress Pte. Larking did good work by going out single-handed and disposing of three troublesome snipers who were interfering with the work, besides surprising and killing the crew of a machine-gun, which he took. Moreover, the ground thus secured was of considerable tactical value, dominating Miraumont and the German positions to the East and South and affording an excellent "jumping off" ground for the next stage of the advance.

Next morning the New Zealanders passed through the 13th Brigade to continue the advance on Bapaume and the Forty-Second Division resumed the attack on Miraumont. In this the battalion co-operated, bringing Lewis-gun fire on the defenders of Miraumont and reporting to the artillery movements noticed about the place. Patrols were active in clearing up the ground crossed in the previous day's advance in which several prisoners were collected, especially when the Forty-Second Division's progress against Miraumont caught many Germans between it and the battalion. On this Lieut. Darlow took out a patrol and cleared up a gulley where there was a machine-gun which would have held up the advance. Another patrol under 2nd Lieut. Sansom made a notable haul, securing a 5.9-inch howitzer

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and four machine-guns, while Colonel Johnstone and his Intelligence Officer, 2nd Lieut. Marke, pushed out to the right and superintended the establishing of touch with the Forty-Second Division. A few more casualties were suffered during the day, mainly from machine gunfire from Loupart Wood, which was not cleared by the New Zealanders till fairly late in the day, Lieut. Milford and 2nd Lieut. Thorning both being wounded.

August 24<sup>th</sup>  
1918  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

August 25th saw the Fifth Division shifted to the left to relieve the Thirty-Seventh at Favreuil; the 13th Brigade moving into position East of that village and spending a night of pouring rain in the open ready to continue the advance. This resulted next day in the capture of Beugnatre by the K.O.S.B.'s and 14th R. Warwickshires, who consolidated a position North-East of that village which the battalion took over on the night of August 27th/28th. It had had about twenty casualties in the meantime, partly from shell-fire, partly from German "booby traps" which had taken in some of the more unwary.

See sketch 43

August 26<sup>th</sup>

By this time the German resistance had somewhat diminished in resolution and on the 28th the battalion was but little troubled by the enemy who merely indulged in some fairly innocuous shelling. Actually he was about to evacuate Bapaume, which the New Zealanders occupied early next day. To cover their left the battalion pushed forward patrols which had some sharp fighting, and then in the afternoon it received orders to assist in securing some high ground to the South-East which overlooked the railway and would afford a capital "jumping-off" ground for the next general advance.

August 29<sup>th</sup>

Considerable opposition was offered as usual machine-guns gave great trouble, and B and C Companies who were leading had many losses. Lieut. Darlow, who was directing the advance most skilfully, was killed, and 2nd Lieut. King was also hit, command of B Company thus devolving on Sergt. E. J. Smith,

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who rose to the occasion splendidly, re-organizing his men, leading them forward under heavy shellfire and selecting the line to be consolidated. His courage and leadership were thus largely responsible for the success of the attack.<sup>(1)</sup> Captain Fulcher, too, seeing the attack wavering, pushed up a platoon of his company, which was in support, in the nick of time to carry the advance successfully forward to the objective, while Pte. Cowell, a platoon runner, took command of his platoon on the fall of its sergeant, led it forward with great coolness and skill, using the one Lewis gun most successfully, established it on its proper objective, superintended consolidation, and got touch with the next battalion. 2nd Lieut. Purchase also displayed marked skill and leadership, capturing his objective with 30 prisoners and a couple of machine-guns with insignificant losses and accounting for many of the enemy. These results were achieved at a cost of only 40 casualties, and the operation constituted a most satisfactory finale to the battalion's share in the battle of Bapaume; that night the 95th Brigade relieved the 13th, which remained in reserve while the Division continued its advance beyond Beugny, the enemy now retreating rapidly.

August 1918  
1<sup>st</sup> Battalion

For the failure of the German resistance to stiffen as the Third Army's attack was pressed home the cooperation of the Fourth had been partly responsible. General Rawlinson's advance astride the Somme was a threat to the flank of the troops which they could not ignore, but it was only achieved after severe fighting, and both 6th and 7th R.W.K. encountered really stiff opposition. The Twelfth Division was now on the right of the Eighteenth, having come back to the line on August 12th and taken over the central section of the Third Corps front. Before the main attack of the Fourth Army could be delivered it was essential to clear Albert and accordingly on August 22nd, the day after General Byng's advance began, the Third Corps carried

6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>  
Battalions

(1) He subsequently received the D.C.M., as did Pte. Cowell also.

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out a skilfully planned enveloping movement which secured Albert and advanced the Fourth Army's left between the Somme and the Ancre well East of the Bray-Corbie road. In this the 53rd Brigade was held in Divisional reserve, so the 7th Battalion took no active part. The 6th also was not actively employed, the attack of the Twelfth Division being delivered by the 35th and 36th Brigades which after heavy fighting reached a position on the Bray-Albert road with the left in Meaulté and the 35th Brigade on the right, half-way to Bray. Cavalry attempted to exploit the success but were held up, and on the 23rd little progress was made. That evening the 37th Brigade was ordered forward to pass through the 35th Brigade shortly after midnight and continue the attack.

August 22<sup>nd</sup>  
1918  
6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>  
Battalions

But before this the 7th Battalion had come into action again. Though the Germans had been ousted from Albert they still held Tara and Usna Hills, East of that town, and it was essential to dislodge them. The task was allotted to the 53rd Brigade, reinforced by the 7th Queen's and assisted on its left by the 113th Brigade of the Thirty-Eighth Division which had passed through Albert behind the Eighteenth. "Zero" was fixed for 4.45 a.m. on the 23rd, and punctually to the minute the battalion pushed forward behind the barrage along the light railway which runs up the Tara Valley. The attack was an immediate success. The German resistance was promptly and effectively overcome, a gun and 350 prisoners were taken by the 53rd Brigade and by 6 a.m. the high ground overlooking Bécourt Wood had been secured. Captain Maltby distinguished himself greatly; he took command of the attackers, supervised the

August 23<sup>rd</sup>

7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

August 23<sup>rd</sup>

consolidation and himself reconnoitred the whole of the new front.

The capture of Tara and Usna Hills rendered an advance on La Boisselle possible, and early next morning the 8th R. Berkshires attacked this position, C and D Companies of the battalion advancing on their right

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to cover their flank. By using some old communication trenches these companies reached their objective with little loss, established a line of posts North and West of Bécourt Wood and followed this up later on by pushing a strong fighting patrol through the wood, clearing it up and linking up the 10th Essex on the right with the 8th R. Berkshires at La Boisselle. The Berkshires had been stoutly opposed but eventually cleared the great crater which had been blown in on July 1st 1916 and had been the key of the enemy's resistance. In reducing it they were greatly assisted by Captain Sutherst, who brought up his Trench Mortar Battery to the crater and handled it with conspicuous skill and success. That evening the 55th Brigade took over the line and the 7th went back to Albert for a brief rest. It had had three officers killed (Lieut. J. C. Cobb, and 2nd Lieuts. Watts and Desprez), five wounded (2nd Lieuts. Montague, Hodgkinson, Pigou, Fell and Claridge) and 142 other casualties, but its gains had been important enough to make this seem but a light price.

August 24<sup>th</sup>  
1918  
7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

The 6th had been no less hotly engaged on August 24th. Attacking at 1a.m. in conjunction with the 36th Brigade on its left it had encountered determined opposition. The ground was so broken as to give splendid cover to the machine-guns which soon brought the attack to a standstill short of its objective, though the left company of the battalion got as far forward as the road running South from Bécordel-Bécourt. A renewed attempt made about 1 p.m. with the aid of three "Whippet" tanks was no more successful, the tanks failing completely. However, the battalion hung on tenaciously to the advanced line reached till in the evening its endurance was rewarded by discovering that its opponents, shaken by the advance of the 36th Brigade to the North and of the Forty-Seventh Division nearer the Somme, had evacuated their position.

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The next two days saw a steady advance towards and past Fricourt and Mametz, somewhat delayed by fog. There was some hard fighting, though not for the 6th, which was only in support, but on August 27th it took the lead again, passing through the 36th Brigade and pushing forward from the Carnoy-Montauban road with the line Briqueterie-Maricourt as its objective. There was considerable resistance but the 37th Brigade fought its way forward steadily. At one moment the advance was held up by a machine-gun, but Lieut. Willoughby attacked it from the flank and bombed the crew, and, this obstacle disposed of, the advance went on, secured the Briqueterie with a couple of field guns after hard fighting, and even gained ground beyond it, the final line running North-East from Maricourt Wood to Favières Wood and thence North to join up with the Eighteenth Division.

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26<sup>th</sup> 1918  
6<sup>th</sup> Battalion

The last four days had brought that Division on to ground which will always be connected with its memory, even if the Eighteenth of August, 1918, contained but few survivors of its great fight for Trones Wood of July 1916. After only two days' rest the 53rd Brigade had moved on the evening of August 26th to a quarry in the dip between Montauban and the Bazentin ridge with orders to attack and clear Trones Wood.

7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

August 25<sup>th</sup> &  
26<sup>th</sup>

Longueval and Delville Wood were believed to be already in British hands and it was under this impression that the Brigade went forward about 5 a.m. next day, pushing East past the Northern apex of Bernafay Wood, then swinging round to its right to attack Trones and Bernafay Woods from the North. (1) The 7th put in A Company to clear Bernafay Wood while D advanced in the gap between that wood and Trones, which last the 8th R. Berkshires had to tackle. B had orders to establish itself on the

See sketch 22

August 27<sup>th</sup>

(1) This attack was to coincide with the Twelfth Division's advance to the line Briqueterie-Maricourt.

Longueval road a few hundred yards North of the N. W. corner of Bernafay Wood. It was about 6 a.m. when the Southward move began. A Company had a sharp fight but, well led by Lieut. H. J. M. Harris, in the end cleared Bernafay Wood and regained touch with D, whose advance had been more rapid; these two then started consolidating a line 300 yards South of the wood, though D's left was insecure as the Berkshires, delayed in their advance by machine-guns in Longueval and Delville Wood, which after all had not been taken, had not yet cleared Trones Wood. B Company also were held up by machine-gun fire from nests which the Berkshires had missed and suffered also from enfilade fire from the open left flank in the Longueval direction. They had to be held in support to the Berkshires, whose losses had been very heavy. Then at 8 a.m. came a vigorous counter-attack by a fresh battalion of the Prussian Guard. A Company held on most tenaciously, inspired by the splendid example set by Lieut. Harris. D, taken in flank from Trones Wood, gave ground but made a stand just West of the Wood. 2nd Lieut. Cullerne, who had already distinguished himself by following the barrage so closely that the enemy had no chance to reorganize as it lifted, was prominent in re-establishing the line, and 2nd Lieut. R. B. L. Hill rallied his platoon under heavy fire with much gallantry and determination and helped to beat back the attackers. It was some time before a counter-stroke could be organized, for units had become mixed up and losses had been heavy, but at 8 p.m. D and B Companies took part in a well-planned attack under the Colonel of the Berkshires, which swept the Germans back and succeeded in making good all the objectives of the morning. Many Germans were killed, over 40 machine-guns and 80 prisoners of the Francis Joseph Regiment of the Guard were taken, and Trones Wood, valuable for the excellent observation it gave

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1918  
7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

over the country to the Eastward, was firmly secured. Once again. the. 7th had cause to be proud of the name of Trones Wood.

Thus it was that when on August 28th the Twelfth Division advanced past Maricourt towards Hardecourt it was with A Company of the 7th, who had pushed forward posts towards Maltzhorn Farm, that they established touch. That night the 53rd Brigade were relieved by the 54th. The 7th's losses, 90 in all, including 2nd Lt Humpage wounded, had been remarkably light, but it was in sore need of drafts. A day later the 6th also went back to rest. It had been in the advance again but had had little fighting, a few prisoners were secured, but the line Maurepas - Savernake Wood (just South of Combles) was reached almost unopposed. That night the Forty-Seventh Division relieved the Twelfth. In the last five days the 6th R.W.K. had lost nearly another 200 (1) , but it had taken two field-guns, thirteen trench-mortars five grenade throwers and

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6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>  
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see sketch 48

August 29<sup>th</sup>

thirty-nine machine-guns in the month, and had in all advanced eleven miles, assaulting no less than seven times. It was a splendid record, the result of good leadership and dogged endurance.

The 7th were not to rest just yet. They had three days in reserve while the 54th Brigade pushed on to Combles and cleared it (August 31st) and the 55th made a most successful advance on the morning of September 1st over the high ground between Combles and St. Pierre Vaast Wood, and the Thirty-Eighth Division cleared Morval only to be checked before Sailly-Saillisel. That afternoon the battalion was lent to the 55th Brigade to capture Saillisel in order to assist the Thirty-Eighth Division, who were renewing their attack. In moving up in daylight from near Guillemont to Priez Farm the battalion ran big risks, for the

September 1<sup>st</sup>

(1) 2nd Lieut. Snelgrove and 28 men killed, Lieuts. H. D. P. Hall and Thurlow, 2nd Lieuts. Bassett, Cleverly, Gibson, Jenkins, Miller and Thompson wounded with 153 men, 12 men missing.

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enemy had excellent observation facilities, but it reached its assembly position North-East of Frégicourt with surprisingly little loss, though at 6.30 p.m., the hour originally chosen as “zero,” only B Company was in place and the attack had to be postponed till 7 p.m. Even then only D had got up to join B, but rather than lose the barrage these two companies attacked without waiting for the others.

September 1<sup>st</sup>  
1918  
7<sup>th</sup> Battalion

It encountered a good deal of opposition from machine-gunners and snipers but the attack went very well, a platoon of Welsh Fusiliers of the Thirty-Eighth Division joined in on the left, and Captain McDonald handled his men most skilfully, while the G.S.O.2 of the Division, Major Hopwood, conspicuous in his “red tabs,” joined in the advance with great coolness and daring. By 10 p.m. Saillisel had been cleared, over 30 prisoners had been taken and a good line established East of the village, though it was some time before the battalion could get touch with the Buffs nearer St. Pierre Vaast Wood, so that for a time the battalion was at the point of a salient, being well ahead of the Division on its left. This line was subjected to incessant shelling next day and German snipers were extremely active. The ground here had been reduced to a wilderness of devastation and shell-holes in the fighting of 1916, and the long grass which covered the waste gave cover to snipers, while the enemy had machine-gun posts on both flanks which proved very troublesome. However, the only counter-attack they tried—in the early morning just after “stand to” —was easily beaten off, the artillery co-operating most effectually, and after dark Captain McDonald pushed out patrols who discovered that the Germans were retiring. Profiting by the excellence of his reports the Brigadier took prompt advantage of the move and pushed troops forward in pursuit, the 7th remaining in support. Next evening the 55th Brigade—to which the 7th had been attached—was relieved by the Twelfth

September 2<sup>nd</sup>

September 3<sup>rd</sup>

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Division and went back to Montauban to have more of a real rest than it had enjoyed for weeks. It had earned it; for nearly a month it had been fighting almost remittingly and its victorious advance from the Ancre to the Tortille had covered nearly fifteen miles.

September 1918  
6<sup>th</sup> & 7<sup>th</sup>  
Battalions

By this time the battle which had started on August 23rd was reaching its close. The Third Corps' capture of the high ground between Bouchavesnes and Morval, coupled

with the success of the Australians at Mont St. Quentin and of the Third Army's advance past Bapaume, clinched the fate of Peronne and of the line of the Somme. More than that, there was nothing left for the Germans but to fall back to the Hindenburg Line, and as they withdrew, offering a stubborn rear-guard resistance, the First Army chimed in with its famous piercing of the formidable Drocourt - Quéant Line, one of the few major achievements of the year in which The Queen's Own did not figure. By September 4th the Germans were retiring all along the front, and during the next few days they were thrust back behind the shelter of the outposts of the Hindenburg Line.

Opposite the Third Corps these ran approximately along a line from West of Templeux le Guérard, between Ste. Emilie and Ronssoy and just West of Epéhy and Peizières. In the pursuit to this line and in the various minor operations undertaken to secure a satisfactory starting-off line for the main attack on it, the 7th R.W.K. had no part; the 6th, however, came in for a share. The Twelfth Division had come back into the line on September 4th, relieving the Eighteenth along the Tortille. On the 5th and 6th Nurlu was taken after heavy fighting by the 35th and 36th Brigades, who advanced to the line Lieramont-Sorel le Grand, the 37th Brigade moving forward behind them in reserve. On the morning of the 7th it passed through the outpost line to attack the spur running East of North from Guyencourt towards Heude-

6<sup>th</sup> Battalion

7<sup>th</sup> September

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court Station, the 6th R.W.K. being on the left. Sharp opposition was encountered and machine-gun fire held the advance up for a time. But this opposition was overcome and the battalion pushed on very rapidly, forcing the Germans to evacuate several positions. Finally all objectives were gained and touch was obtained with the Twenty-First Division on the left, the advance having covered more than two miles. Later on patrols secured Jacquenne Copse and ascertained that Peizières and Epéhy were strongly held. Next morning the Fifty-Eighth Division relieved the Twelfth and the 6th, who had lost four officers (Captain Clifford, Lieut. Willoughby and 2nd Lieuts. Bryan and Daniel) wounded with 68 men, besides another 24 men killed or missing, went back to Vaux Wood, the Division being now in Corps Reserve. Since August 8th the battalion's casualties had come to nearly 500, but in the last few days of August drafts amounting to 8 officers and 340 men had arrived so that its strength had been fairly well maintained. It had been a hard time but one of great success and distinction, and the troops had been mightily encouraged at driving the Germans before them until they were back almost to their starting-line of March 21st of bitter memory.

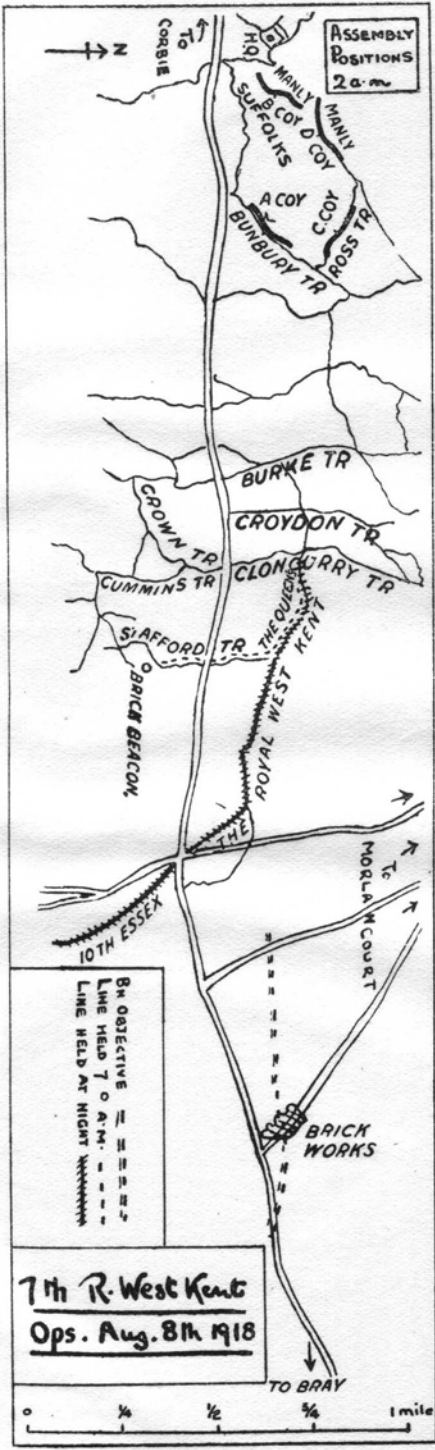
September 1918

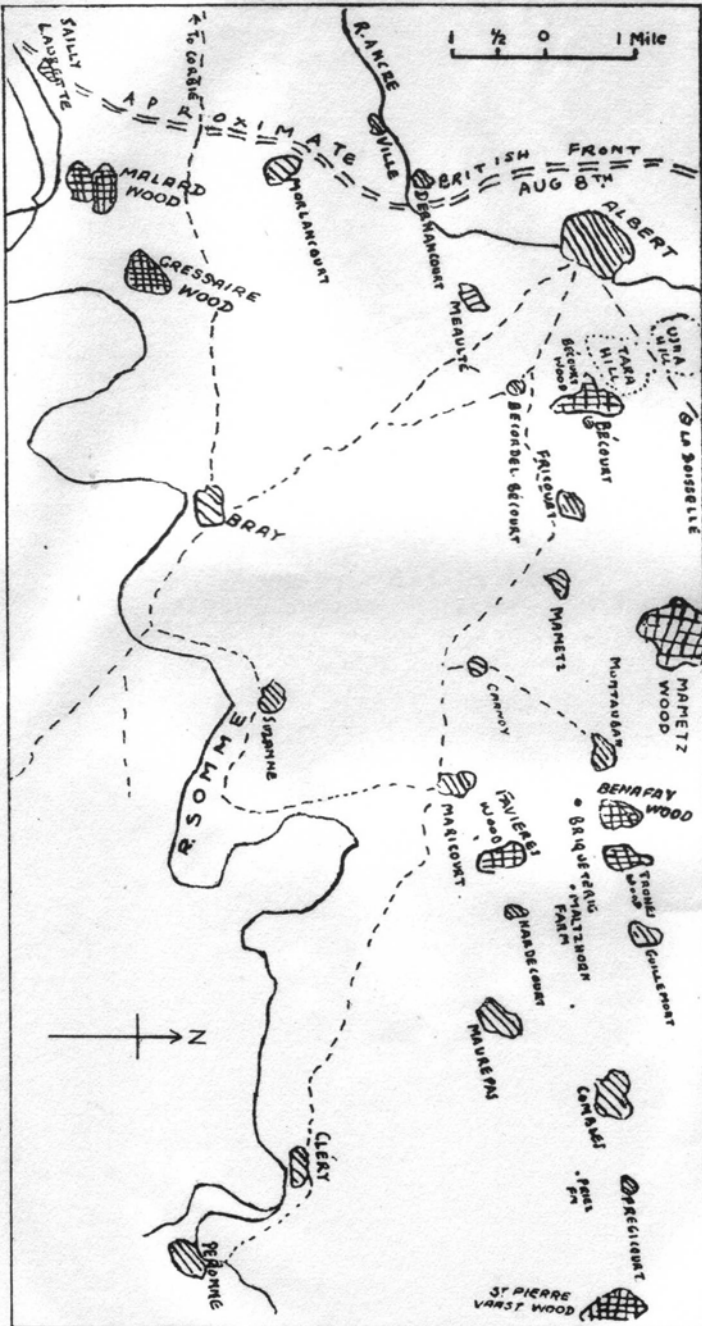
6<sup>th</sup> Battalion

September 8<sup>th</sup>

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TO ILLUSTRATE  
 OPERATIONS OF 6<sup>TH</sup> & 7<sup>TH</sup> R. W. K  
 AUGUST & SEPTEMBER 1918

TO ILLUSTRATE  
 OPERATIONS OF 1ST R.W.K.  
 AUGUST 1918.

