

PHOTO GALLERY: November 2010 DESPATCH

MANCHESTER REGIMENT ARCHIVE: Examples

MR1/2/1/8: Account of action by 2nd Battalion, April 1917

MANCHESTER REGIMENT
1917
7/4/15
COURTESY

MR1/2/1/8
220

2nd Battalion The Manchester Regiment.

1917.
On the morning of April 1st the 97th Brigade captured SAVY and in the afternoon the 96th Brigade took SAVY WOOD. We moved from BEAUVOIS to GERMAINE where we stopped a few hours and at 5-30pm the Battalion moved off to CHATEAU POMERY where we bivouacked for the night, and before dawn on April 2nd, formed up on our assembly position along the cutting and railway N. & N.E. of SAVY WOOD.

The Battalion was to attack and capture the villages of FRANCILLY and FRANCILLY-SELENCY and to consolidate on the Northern and Eastern edges of the latter. Two platoons of "A" Coy were detailed to watch the right flank where a strong point was suspected. The attack was most successful and about 6-30am Zero being 5am FRANCILLY SELENCY and SELENCY were in our hands.

Close to FRANCILLY "C" Coy and part of "B" Coy found themselves straight in front of a German Field (77 MM) Battery which was firing at point blank range. "C" Coy under Capt G.M. Glover outflanked and with great gallantry captured the complete Battery after a hand to hand fight with the German Gunners who remained. Captain Glover was awarded the M.C. for this gallant action. A covering party was left over the captured Guns and the troops continued to the final objective where they consolidated.

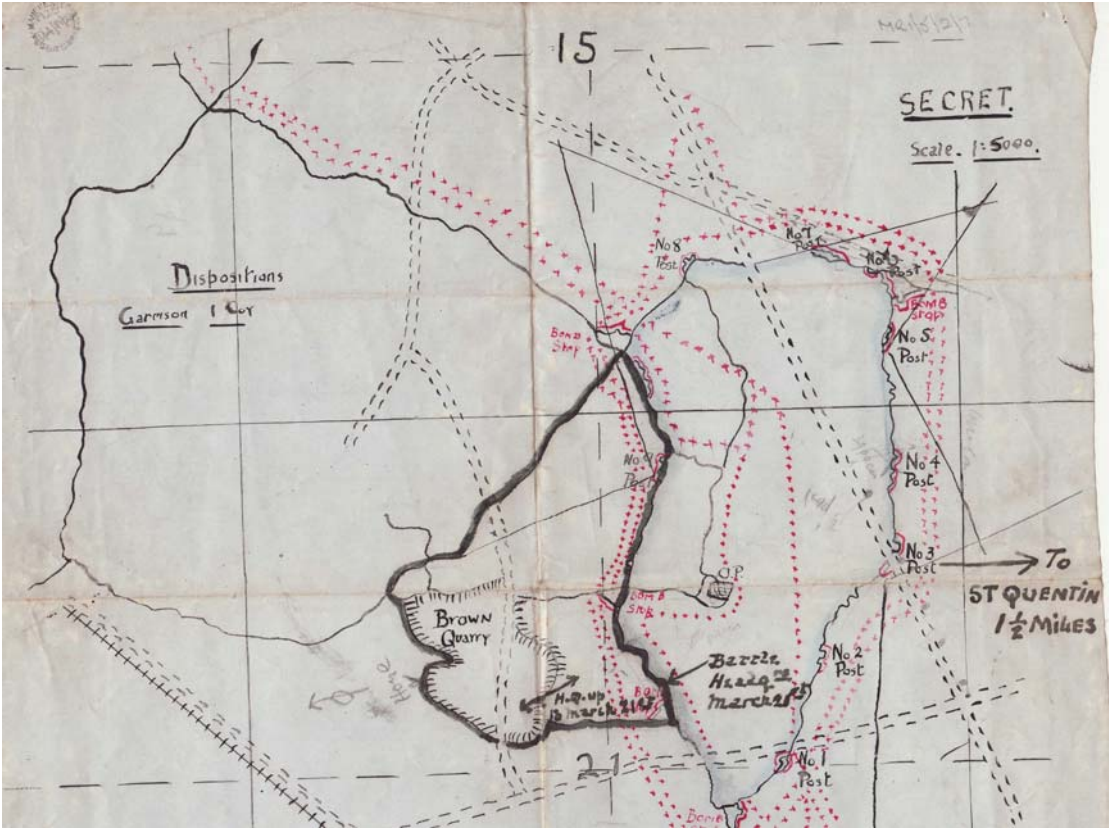
In the meanwhile "A" Coy on the right flank encountered the Quarry which was successfully mopped up, 4 Machine Guns being captured, and in addition 2 more Machine Guns in a trench on the right. This work proved valuable, as in the very early stages of the attack the Battalion had come under very considerable Machine Gun fire from this flank.

"A" Coy again advanced, to a crater on the ST QUENTIN road on the outskirts of ST QUENTIN which they held till dusk when they were ordered to withdraw and rejoin the remainder of the Battalion in SELENCY. The Battalion consolidated and held the newly won ground until relieved by the 77th M.I.B. on April 6th. On April 2nd an attempt was made by Lt & Adjt C.R. Thomas to get out the captured guns but owing to the lack of drag ropes and teams this was unfortunately unsuccessful. On April 3rd, the captured Battery was brought out of the trench.

MR1/2/3/11: Aerial Photo of Manchester Hill (South)



MR1/5/2/7: Sketch Map of Manchester Hill Redoubt



PLAQUE DEDICATION AT SAVOY HOTEL, BLACKPOOL

Re: No 5 Young Officers' Company, 3/7th Battalion King's Liverpool Regiment



Plaque located to right of lift above Terry Edge's shoulder

LT. COL. SIR GILBERT MACKERETH: SELECTED ALBUM PHOTOS



1914 Pre War



21st Royal Fusiliers
Late 1914



Signalling



*In the Trenches on
Palsbury Plain*



No 6 Officer Cadet Battalion March 1916
Mackereth on right



2nd Lt Mackereth



Spring 1918 recovering from wound



August 1918
Mackereth seated on right sits next to Lt Col Crook before taking command of 17th Lancs. Fusiliers (Crook returns to UK to command 5th Reserve Battalion)



ARMISTICE
Lt. Col. Mackereth (centre)

SEEKING CHESTER CHURCH



Cobbers Memorial



Cobbers Memorial Plaque



VC Corner Australian Cemetery



Serjeant Church (between poppies)

The Battle of Fromelles, 19 – 20 July 1916

The outcome of complex and muddled planning, the Battle of Fromelles was a diversionary attack aimed at keeping German reserves from joining the great Somme battle, some 80 kilometres to the south.

In the early evening of Wednesday 19 July 1916 two infantry divisions newly arrived on the Western Front, the 5th Australian and British 61st (South Midland) attacked a strongly held 4,000 yard section of the German front line near Fromelles. At its centre was the notorious Sugar Loaf strongpoint. Advancing over difficult, wet ground, in clear view of German observers, the attackers faced an enemy that held all the advantages.

The German defenders were well warned and ready. For several days a heavy, but largely ineffective bombardment had poured down on their lines. On 19 July, seven hours before the attack, the bombardment intensified. The Germans hit back, pounding the waiting attackers densely packed in their trenches.

At 6pm the general assault began. Advancing in waves the attackers met an inferno of German shells, small-arms and machine-gun fire. On the extreme right and left, where No Man's Land was shortest, entries were forced in the German lines where vicious hand-to-hand fighting ensued. In the centre, towards the un-subdued defences of the Sugar Loaf, the attackers were cut-down by machine-gun fire. Unable to hold their tenuous footholds in the German trenches survivors were forced back to their start lines.

By the time the assault was called off the following morning, the Australians had lost 5,533 men killed, wounded and missing, the heaviest concentration of losses in Australian military history. Casualties for the British numbered 1,547. Combined, these figures represent over one third of the men who fought in the battle.

Discovery, Recovery, Identification and Reburial

The remains of many of the Australian and British dead from the engagement could not be accounted for at the time but in May 2008 six mass graves dating from the battle were identified on the edge of Pheasant Wood, not far from where you now stand. The British and Australian governments appointed the Commonwealth War Graves Commission to oversee the recovery of remains and to create a new cemetery where they would finally be laid to rest.

Between May and September 2009, the bodies of 250 British and Australian soldiers were painstakingly removed from the Pheasant Wood graves by a team of specialists.

Samples were taken from the remains and sent for DNA analysis. These were compared with samples given by families of those men believed to be among the missing of Fromelles. Details of physical characteristics, such as height and build were recorded, while some 6,200 artefacts found in the graves were also used to help identification.

Each case was carefully examined and a significant number of positive identifications were made. Those who could not be named are still remembered with honour on one of the Commission's memorials to the missing.

In January and February 2010, all but one of the 250 were buried with full military honours. The last soldier was buried during the service to dedicate this cemetery on 19 July 2010 – the 94th anniversary of the Battle in which he, and so many of his comrades, died.

A New Cemetery for a New Century

Fromelles (Pheasant Wood) Military Cemetery is the first new war cemetery to be built by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission since the 1960s.

The cemetery was designed by the Commission's architect and is built in the tradition of our 'Great War' cemeteries. The land for the cemetery was freely gifted to us by the government of France and the people of Fromelles.

The cemetery uses traditional materials. Its distinctive hexagonal shape has as its focus the Cross of Sacrifice, from which the avenues and rows of headstones radiate outwards. From the Cross, on its elevated terrace, there are distant views of the Fromelles battlefield and V.C. Corner, the other cemetery most closely associated with the battle.

The main construction challenge at Fromelles was drainage and stability because of the heavy clay soil. The foundations for the cemetery walls, the terrace, the Cross of Sacrifice and the headstone beams had to be pile driven to a depth of some 7 metres to prevent movement.

The overall aim behind the horticultural design of our cemeteries is to give the effect of a garden rather than the common concept of a cemetery. At Fromelles over 2,300 tonnes of topsoil was introduced and a hardy ryegrass based turf, specially grown to withstand the heavy footfall of anticipated visitors, was laid to reflect the lush surroundings. A mix of herbaceous and alpine plants were used throughout the grounds to promote colour and fragrance across all seasons, and create the warm, peaceful atmosphere for which Commonwealth cemeteries are known.

PHEASANT WOOD CEMETERY



2010 ON THE SOMME: Excavations near Mansell Copse



