CHAPTER XV

THE TAKING OF POZIÈRES

The bombardment with which the battle of July 23rd began was famous even among the many famous bombardments on the Western Front. Occurring as it did at night, before the rise of the moon, it was visible for nearly twenty miles around. Men of the 2nd Australian Division, whose foremost brigade that night bivouacked at the brickfield on the slope immediately in rear of Albert, watched in hundreds the flickering halo from the batteries hidden in the folds before them, and the burst of the shells on the horizon, where lay the enemy's trenches. The fire was mainly that of the Fourth Army. The scene from the rear areas of the battlefield, which by night resembled a vast desolate moorland, is described in the diary of an Australian:

From the open before Fricourt we saw the skyline simply alive with light. Flashes like summer lightning were quite continuous, making one flickering band of light; but this was away in the east behind Fricourt and Montauban. Clearly the British were doing something there. Every now and then a low lurid red flush, very angry, lit the horizon. All around the horizon shells were flashing and the pretty starlights making their graceful curves, a dozen or a score at a time in all quarters to east and north. Occasionally a red light or a rocket bursting into green stars, and the twinkle of shrapnel like the flash of a match which won't light or the glow of a match-end.

The battalions which were to seize the first two objectives—Pozières Trench and the village outskirts—were already in the front-line area; those furnishing the troops for the third objective—the line of the main street—were in some cases bivouacked near the head of Sausage Valley, and in others as far away as La Boisselle. About 10 p.m. these left their bivouacs and filed towards the front, while the pioneer battalion and engineer companies, which were to dig communication trenches and strong-points, made their way towards a rendezvous behind a ruined house in Contalmaison.²

While this movement was in progress the artillery of the

² Capt. H. F. Hübbe (of Burnside, S. Aust.), adjutant of the 1st Pioneer Battalion, was killed while the battalion was moving to the attack. Its chaplain, the Rev. R. A. Harris (of Manly, N.S.W.), accompanied it into action
Reserve Army increased its fire on the Pozières plateau. The Germans, who had been awaiting daily the attack on Pozières, at once laid down a precautionary barrage, which mostly passed over the Australian front-line area but fell heavily upon that through which troops destined for the third objective and for reserves must march. The road past Casualty Corner to Contalmaison was intermittently swept with shrapnel and high-explosive, and drenched with phosgene gas-shell. At times the corner could only be passed by men running one at a time; those who were hit had to crawl away from the place as best they could, their mates having at that moment one paramount duty—to reach their starting-point for the attack.

While the battalions furnishing the third line of the attack were thus approaching the assembly trenches which they had helped to dig on previous nights, those allotted for the first two lines adjusted their front so as to face, in the “jumping-off” trenches, as nearly as possible the objective allotted to each. The order of the battalions is shown in the marginal sketch. In the left, or 1st Brigade, sector, a reinforcement officer of the 1st Battalion and some scouts crept out and pegged down, 100 yards from the German trench, a line of tape upon which the first wave was to form. The ground in front of the 3rd Brigade, part of which was under close observation of the Germans in O.G.1, had been reconnoitred on previous nights.
by Lieutenants Nicol\(^a\) and Hastings\(^b\) of the 11th Battalion, Nicol being shot dead by a sniping bullet on the night of July 22nd. Hastings had survived, but was now killed as he crept over to find the neighbouring flank of the 1st Brigade. About ten minutes after midnight men and officers of the first wave of the first line crept forward from their jumping-off trenches in order to approach the German position before the final bombardment began. The second wave followed at twenty or thirty yards interval after the first. Brilliant white flares rose from Pozières, close ahead, and to the right along the O.G. Lines, but the troops, crawling low, were mostly hidden by the fall of the ground and by thistle tufts which fringed the older shell-holes. Earlier in the night the 2nd Battalion had, as a precaution, cleared a trench bordering the northern side of the Bapaume road, driving back a German patrol. This stage of an attack was always an anxious one; if the enemy, before the barrage was upon him, discovered the troops lying out, he might shatter them with unimpeded machine-gun fire, and signal his artillery to lay down a crushing barrage on their backs. On this occasion any sound of men crawling forward may have been drowned by a feint bombardment laid down twenty-five minutes before “zero” by the 25th Divisional Artillery upon “K” Trench, in order to give the impression that Pozières would be attacked from the west; but there was always the chance that movement might be seen. About 12.24, as the 2nd Battalion crept towards the copses south-west of the village, there shot up among the white flares a rocket which burst into red stars. This probably meant that the enemy had seen men moving. Some rifle and machine-gun fire opened, but not heavier than would break out on ordinary nights if the enemy chanced to sight a patrol. On the far right some of the 9th Battalion were undoubtedly seen by Germans from the O.G. Lines; and, as they crept between the thistles and shell-holes, there came from close ahead the order “Halt!” Every man remained still as death, but a machine-gun opened from the


A howitzer of the Australian Siege Artillery Brigade, whose batteries were among those supporting the 1 Anzac Corps at Pozières.

Photograph taken in summer of 1916.
39. **Air view of the centre and northern arm of Pozières village before bombardment had shattered the trees or most of the buildings**

Bordering the left of the village is "K" Trench

*British Air Force Photograph*
*Taken apparently in June, 1916*
direction of the O.G. Lines, hitting probably some of the 9th and also of the 11th, who, though farther away, had to crawl over an exposed knuckle.

The troops had been instructed to push forward close to the line of their own barrage, accepting some risk of being hit by their own shells. Australian infantry, usually straining on the leash to get near the enemy, required little urging to do this, the task of their officers being almost always to hold them back. During the half-hour preceding the attack the first wave of the 3rd Brigade and part of the 1st Battalion had in some places crawled to within less than fifty yards of the German trench, of which the parapet could be seen close ahead. At 12.28 there suddenly burst upon that trench the full fire of the 1st Australian Division's field artillery, while the batteries of the 25th and 48th Divisions fired on the west and north sides of Pozières, and those of the 34th Division and some French artillery on the O.G. Lines and crest farther east. The heavy guns bombarded trenches and traffic junctions in rear.

A gun of the 6th Battery, A.F.A., which, with muffled wheels and harness, had been brought up the Bapaume road and thence dragged forward by its crew under Lieutenant Thurnhill to a point within 400 yards of the village, began to fire 115 rounds at point-blank range down the main street. In the battery positions the Australian gunners, for the first time in the experience of most, had for two minutes free leave to fire

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4 Lieutenant Belford of the 11th Battalion afterwards estimated the distance of his line from the enemy parapet as "30 to 30 yards." Major P. L. Howell-Price stated that the front wave of the 1st Battalion was "40 yards from Pozières Trench."


6 This gun was fired from the main road, 200 yards from the southern end of K Trench, which was held by the Germans. The ammunition waggon was placed so as to screen the crew from machine-gun fire from that trench, and there were no casualties.
as fast as they could load, their shells pouring upon Pozières Trench immediately in front of the crouching infantry. The trench became illuminated by a continuous band of bursting shrapnel so accurately thrown that, except by one gun which fired short on the left, the infantry was untouched. Under cover of this, parts of the line, which by the fall of the ground had hitherto been prevented from approaching within stone-throw, now crept nearer.

At 12.30 the 1st Division's guns lifted their fire to the line of the orchards, which they bombarded at a much slower rate, the more distant barrages mostly continuing as before. This general shell-fire rendered it difficult for officers and men of the infantry to be certain when the barrage lifted, and the officers' whistles could not be heard in the tumult; but the men saw them scrambling to their feet, and, rising with them, rushed for Pozières Trench. A few Germans were found in it on the left, a number in the centre, and several machine-guns at various points. At the south-western end of the village a machine-gun crew had just mounted their weapon and fired two or three shots when the line reached and shot or bayoneted them. Farther to the right the 1st and 11th Battalions rushed a pocket of about sixty, who surrendered. Still more to the right, in front of the O.G. Lines, where the 3rd Brigade stumbled forward over the shell-holes, Pozières Trench was in places hardly recognisable among the craters, and there was little resistance. One German tried to club
an Australian with his rifle; another, standing in a shell-hole among four comrades who wished to surrender, bravely threw a bomb; all were immediately killed. A machine-gun barked from the right, wounding, among others, Major Milner of the 11th. But Pozières Trench was carried at once, practically without opposition, and the two waves of the second line, which had started forward when the bombardment opened, almost immediately came up, passed through the men of the first, and lay up near the barrage ready to assault the second objective along the back hedges of the village.

Only on the extreme right, in the O.G. Lines, did the first attack meet with heavy resistance. On this night the leading platoon of the 9th in O.G.1 was again commanded by Lieutenant Monteath, that in O.G.2 being under Lieutenant Armstrong. The German posts had been specially shelled for two hours by heavy artillery, and on this occasion the attacking troops were disposed in line across the open from O.G.1 to O.G.2, and not—as on the 22nd—crowded in the trenches. As they advanced they were fired at from ahead, and the line was obliged to split into two parties. That with Monteath swept past the position from which they had been bombed the night before, and the junction of Pozières Trench, finding both empty. From a point not far in front, however, the fire of two machine-guns forced the line to take cover in the trench, and from this position a discharge of bombs was kept up. Here the attack was for a time held up, the Germans with their egg-bombs out-throwing the Australians; but, before means could be devised of ending the deadlock, a man

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* Maj. J. T. Milner, 11th Bn. Station manager; of Western Australia; b. Quirindi, N.S.W., 3 May, 1881.
* Maj. N. G. Armstrong, 9th Bn. Bank accountant; of Brisbane; b Mount Perry, Q’land, 29 July, 1885.
of the 9th, John Leak, jumped out of the trench without orders, ran forward, threw three bombs into the German position, and then jumped into it. There Monteath presently found him, wiping the blood off his bayonet with his felt hat. It was then 12.59 a.m.

This post, which was at the junction of a communication trench leading eastwards to Munster Alley, appeared to have been held by only three German soldiers (whom Leak had killed) supported by two machine-guns which fired from some position slightly beyond. As usual in this fighting, the "strong-point" was merely a deep dugout, the entrance to its stairway being protected with a concrete top, which, as the trench had been destroyed, now stood out as a low mound covered with earth, the trench forming a mere shallow depression around it. During bombardments the German garrison had sheltered in the dugout, and had apparently dragged their dead and wounded into it; when the bombardment ended, the survivors came up and fought from behind the mound. Monteath's men were now about the mound, exposed almost to the waist to any fire which might be turned on them down the shallow depression of the trench ahead. In the confusion of the night it was impossible to obtain any clue as to what was happening even on the immediate right or left. But, looking along this hollow, Monteath could see the Germans in some post ahead, and German flares seemed to be rising not only from that direction but from every side. Pozieres Trench up to its junction should have been taken by the first line of the 9th, and most of that sector had in fact been occupied and was being deepened and improved by Captain Lawrance and his men. But enemy flares appeared to be rising from the portion nearest to the O.G. Lines, almost in Monteath's rear. He had now only six or seven men at the mound or "strong-point"; behind them for ten or fifteen yards the trench was empty. Then came the line of men lightly strung out along the trench, forming a chain for the continuous forwarding of grenades. But no grenades were now arriving. As

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11 For his bravery on this occasion Leak was awarded the Victoria Cross.
Monteath went back across the empty sector to hasten up the supply, two Germans, apparently driven by the advance of the troops on the left, came running towards it. He shot them; but it was obvious that for holding even what had been gained in the O.G. Lines—the first objective—reinforcements would be required and also more bombs.

Meanwhile Armstrong’s party attacking O.G.2 had found that trench entirely destroyed and indistinguishable from the surrounding area, which resembled a choppy sea of bare earthen waves. Machine-gun fire, apparently from some more northerly sector of the O.G. Lines, swept the area. Three attempts to find the trench entirely failed; the difficulty of determining the right direction in the dark in such an area was almost insurmountable, but eventually Armstrong with some of his men returned to O.G.1. Thus, when the time arrived for launching the second stage of the main assault, no progress had been made in O.G.2; in O.G.1 the first objective had been reached, but the position was confused and precarious, and further advance could not be made in order to keep pace with the barrage or with the advance on the left. As the barrage lifted, the Germans to the north along the O.G. Lines, being unattacked, would be free to turn their rifles and machine-guns on to the flank of the line attacking Pozières.

The troops had been carefully instructed that each attacking line was to stop at its proper objective. In the 1st Brigade, to render this order easy of performance, men of the first line wore a white ribbon tied behind the right shoulder, men of the second line a blue ribbon, and those of the third line a green. Near the right of the 3rd Brigade, however, an officer of the 9th, leading part of the second line across Pozières Trench, and shouting to his men in the confusion of the night to “keep on moving,” was followed by part of the first wave also. Officer and men appear to have swept straight on until they reached the light railway skirting the back hedges and a narrow projecting plantation, or copse, across which the railway ran. An explosion had been observed in this copse, and men of the 9th, thrusting forward among the shredded trees, found, amid a litter of
ammunition baskets, an abandoned battery of old Belgian 5.9-inch howitzers. They threw bombs into the neighbouring shelters, chalked the name of their battalion on certain of the guns, and in some cases had wandered into the barrage of their own artillery, when the hour arrived for the second lift of the bombardment.

To the waiting infantry of the second line the reduced bombardment which had been falling on the second objective had been by no means easy to distinguish from the barrages on the flanks and in front, or from the German shells which began to burst overhead and in rear a few minutes after the first attack. Machine-gun fire was now coming from the O.G. Lines on the right, and a number of officers and men were hit. As an officer afterwards said: "There was one illumination of bursting shells and flares all round," and the second lift of the barrage, at 1 a.m., was consequently almost impossible to recognise. Officers therefore had to trust almost solely to their watches in giving the orders to advance. The troops quickly struck the railway line, which they crossed, and made for their objective, the back hedges, under the impression that the Germans would be found holding a line of trench there. Along most of the front, however, no defences could be found, the enemy having been prevented by nightly fire from completing this line. On the extreme left the 2nd Battalion eventually discovered a trench among the tree-stumps. The 1st found only a ditch, which manifestly was

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23 Some of these guns appear to have been first captured by the 11th. To the south-west of the village Lieutenant H. H. MacCarthy (of Bothwell, Tas) of the 4th Battalion and his men captured a 5.9-inch howitzer, and Lieutenant W. L. Cooke of the same battalion a 77-mm. field-gun.

24 Major W. McK. Young and Lieutenants C. A. Wittkopp and J. H. Lukin of the 9th Battalion, Major J. T. Milner of the 11th, and Captain M. W. MacVean of the 1st seem to have been wounded about this time, and Captain A. C. Mackenzie of the 1st and Lieutenant W. Aggett of the 9th killed. Major F. W. W. Lindeman of the 1st had been mortally wounded earlier. (Young was of Koongal, Q'land; Wittkopp of Kingaroy, Q'land; Lukin of Perth, W. Aust.; MacVean of Coonamble, N.S.W.; Mackenzie of Drummoyne, N.S.W.; Aggett of South Brisbane, Q'land; and Lindeman of Woollahra, N.S.W.)
no defence line, since no equipment had been left there, and went on hunting for a trench. Part of the 11th came upon the old gun-positions in the copse. But a good part of this line of the 3rd Brigade was diverted from its proper task by the sight of about thirty Germans who had been startled by the advance, and who could be seen by the light of shells and flares running back towards the village and the O.G. Lines beyond. To the men of the 11th and 9th who were nearest them, this spectacle was too tempting. The shouts of officers and N.C.O’s were unheeded; about 140 men followed the fleeing enemy right through the Australian barrage, which had just lulled in the process of lengthening on to the Bapaume road. The Germans were gradually overtaken in the neighbourhood of the road and shot or bayonetted, and here three N.C.O’s—Company Sergeant-Major Graham and Sergeant Baggs of the 11th, and a sergeant of the 9th—overtook their men hunting in droves and diving for any German who broke cover. They would not yet listen to restraint, but the N.C.O’s pushed forward with them, endeavouring to gain control, until they reached the summit near the windmill. At this distance from the main fight it was very dark. There seemed to be no more Germans to chase, and the men grew tired, came to a stop, and for the first time gave ear to their sergeants, who told them they were far beyond their objective and, if they stayed, would be cut off by the enemy. Once stopped, they were easily turned. It remained to find their way back. The lines of the road, a cross hedge, and the railway afforded a safe guide; but the barrage of the Australian field-guns and howitzers was now heavy, and there

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18C.S.M. Graham afterwards stated that they were “over the hill.”
was nothing to do but face it and make the passage in rushes. This was accomplished in spite of loss. Of seven who plunged into a shell-hole with Graham, he alone clambered out, a high-explosive shell having burst in their midst. Nevertheless about 2.15 some ninety of these men returned to the position which they should have occupied, forming a most welcome addition to the scanty line there.18

Meanwhile the time had arrived for the advance of the third line. In the 1st Brigade's sector this was to be furnished by the leading halves of the 3rd and 4th Battalions, and in the 3rd Brigade's by those of the 10th and 12th. The allotted companies of the 3rd and 4th had, in spite of the enemy's precautionary barrage, reached their jumping-off trenches in good time; here, when the first wave attacked, the enemy's answering bombardment fell on them, but more heavily on the reserve companies close behind. German 5.9-inch shells, bursting in the assembly trench of the 3rd Battalion, killed two officers and two company sergeant-majors, and seriously wounded two company commanders, the regimental sergeant-major, and many others. Parts of the third line had by arrangement assembled beside the Chalk Pit road and in a communication trench—both at right angles to the objective—and, before advancing, must consequently carry out several changes of direction, a process difficult under fire by day and almost impossible in the confusion of a night attack. Word had just come back of the capture of the first objective, when, at 1 a.m.—the hour for the attack on the second objective—the third wave scrambled out. At the dividing line between the two brigades a line of telegraph poles led to the village, and the officers had hoped that, if the two inner flanks followed these to the railway and the troops there slightly changed direction, they would be able to attack their objective "square on." But a previous misdirection of part of the 3rd Battalion, and the confusion caused by the shelling and loss of leaders, dispelled all hope of retaining accurate formation. The companies of the 3rd found themselves advancing in small groups, which kept

18 Having found no Germans on the hill-crest, these men came back under the impression that they could have "walked to Berlin."
feeling for their left in order to preserve touch. Captain Harris, who commanded this wave of the battalion and himself moved along the line of poles, states:19

I found myself alone except for my batman, who, though he was carrying a large bucket of bombs, stuck closely to me, and added a touch of humour to the proceedings by sitting down on his bucket whenever I paused for a moment to get my bearings. . . . We passed over a shallow ditch of linked-up shell-holes—the first objective—which was dotted with little groups of men, some cheering wildly, some singing, and some groaning. We eventually came to the tram line where there was a confused mass of men belonging to different battalions.

The troops had been on the look-out for this railway, most of them being directed to halt there and reorganise—a precaution which saved this stage of the advance from disorder. Officers and N.C.O's hurriedly sorted out their men as far as possible, and at 1.30 moved on to the final objective. Stumbling amid the huge shell-holes, through stunted hedges, broken copses, and enclosures which had once been back gardens, they came upon an open space covered with heaps of bricks and the tumbled framework of roofs, which they knew must be the village. Some of the troops of the second line, finding no trench at their proper objective, had already wandered forward searching for one. These, and some of the third line who had been led forward a little too soon, had found their own barrage falling about them, very sensibly waited in shell-holes for orders, and were presently found by their leaders in precisely the position intended. The main street, though lying immediately beyond the nearest row of ruins, was not at first easily recognised,10 and here too there was no sign of a trench; but the officers quickly laid out the lines for one winding round the rear of the brick-heaps, and, as the only chance of shelter lay in digging, the men set eagerly to work. The second line of each wave had been loaded at the start with picks and shovels, but in their eagerness to join the fight most of the troops had thrown these away, and they had now to rely upon their

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19 In a monograph written for his battalion during the war.
20 See Vol. XII, plates 219-21 An elderly man of the and Battalion, finding himself lost with a few others, settled in a large shell-hole, lit a fire, and waited for daylight, when he found he was close to the intended line.
entrenching tools, small implements highly inadequate for a heavy task. Fortunately, although flares were still rising from “K” Trench west of the village, from the O.G. Lines to the east, and occasionally from hidden sources beyond the road, enemy fire, both of small arms and artillery, now died down, and the line of troops, feverishly digging with their tiny picks amid the brick-heaps along the final objective of the 1st Brigade, was almost undisturbed. The diminished barrage of their own shells, now bursting a hundred yards beyond the road, afforded some safeguard against counter-attack.

In the area of the 3rd Brigade, however, the assault had at this stage fallen seriously behind the time-table. While the battalions furnishing the third line of the 1st Brigade had been approaching their assembly position by the open road past the Chalk Pit, those of the 3rd Brigade had to continue along the causeway towards Contalmaison, and then file to the left up Black Watch Alley to their jumping-off point. Nearing Contalmaison in a barrage of gas-shell, part of the leading half of the 10th, which, being destined for the extreme right, should have led this column, was forced to put on gas-helmets. These, being of the old “P.H.” type, rendered the men almost completely blind. Some wore them only when halted, but others kept them on when moving, missed the opening of the alley, and, on turning back to enter it, became sandwiched between the following companies of the 12th. The leading company commander of the 10th succeeded in collecting his own platoons; but this mishap, and repeated entanglement in telephone wires which spanned the alley, caused such delay that, at the time when both battalions should have been forming up to attack, they were still wedged in the narrow trench, edging slowly forward at snail’s pace half-a-mile short of their proper position. At
1.30, when the barrage behind which they should have been advancing was due to be lifted to its final phase, uncovering any Germans in the area which they should have been attacking, they were still being anxiously awaited by the commanders of the 9th and 11th Battalions, which they should have been supporting. Every telephone line to the rear had long since been cut by shell-fire or trampled down; but at 1.35 a messenger from the 3rd Machine Gun Company reached MacLagan's headquarters, and, stumbling down the dark stairway under the foundations of the red-brick ruin past the tired runners into the low chamber, announced to the staff, which for the moment had been able to lay aside its gas-helmets, that at 1 a.m. parts of the 12th and 10th were still entering Black Watch Alley. "Seemed to me all boxed up somehow," he added. Half-an-hour later there arrived from Lieutenant-Colonel Elliott of the 12th the news that these companies were still there. "Hold artillery barrage on third objective," the message ran. "God Almighty!" exclaimed MacLagan. It was then 2 o'clock, and the barrage had lifted at 1.30.

The actual situation, however, was not so serious as it appeared. The companies of the 12th were in charge of two experienced commanders, Vowles and that same Margetts whose experiences on Baby 700, on the day of the Anzac Landing, have been fully narrated in the first volume of this series. Though—like all his company—filled with tense anxiety at the knowledge that he was desperately late, Margetts walked across to the headquarters of the 11th and 12th Battalions in some old gun-positions in Sunken Road Valley slightly to his left front, and asked his colonel for instructions. It was then 1.33. Elliott told him to advance at once. Guided by Captain Kayser, intelligence officer of

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*See footnote 58 on p 478.*
the battalion, Margetts and Vowles led their companies over the open, crossed Pozières Trench shortly after 2 o'clock, and after reorganising moved on, Margetts on the left, Vowles on the right. Men of the 9th Battalion in Pozières Trench were calling "keep to the right," and three of Vowles' platoons heading in that direction lost touch. The rest presently came upon a line of the 1st and 3rd Brigades digging at some distance beyond the railway. Ahead, amid the ruins of the village, Germans could still be seen running away; the wild rush of part of the second line towards the windmill had indeed long since cleared the whole objective for that part of the third line, and more; and, as the rest of the second line, finding no trench at their own objective, had gone forward searching for one, most of the ground up to the third objective had already been occupied. Both the 9th and 11th had by then lost a large proportion of their officers, but Lieutenants Belford and Hallahan of the 11th, and Le Nay, its Lewis gun officer, had succeeded in getting their men to dig on a line parallel to the main street and barely fifty yards from it, and running through the forward end of the long copse. This practically secured the third objective. To the east some of the 9th under Lieutenant White, the only officer of that battalion who had reached this neighbourhood, were entrenching themselves about fifty yards in advance of the tramway, with a good field of fire commanding the Bapaume road east of the village as far as the O.G. Lines. Here, about 2.15 a.m., Margetts and Vowles with their companies of the 12th found the line, practically on the third objective, and therefore apportioned their force along it with orders to "dig like blazes." The

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"General confusion of units looking for trench in second objective."

In the 11th, in addition to those already mentioned (p. 502), Captain A. H. Macfarlane (who had commanded part of the front at Cordonnerie during the German raid on the night of May 30) had been killed with gas-shell in Black Watch Alley early during the bombardment, and Captain F. G. Medcalf (his colleague of the Cordonnerie raid) had been sent up to take his place. Captains F. J. Griffin (of Uddingston, Lanarkshire, Scotland, and Perth, W. Aust.) and H. A. Mansfield (of Perth) had been wounded in the same trench, and Captain G. G. Campbell (of Fremantle, W. Aust.) in taking the second objective. Captain Mansfield died of his wound.

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Among the records of the fight an earth-stained message from Lieutenant E. Rogerson (of Upper Swan, W. Aust.) of the 11th, timed as late as 3.20, runs.

"General confusion of units looking for trench in second objective."

In the 11th, in addition to those already mentioned (p. 502), Captain A. H. Macfarlane (who had commanded part of the front at Cordonnerie during the German raid on the night of May 30) had been killed with gas-shell in Black Watch Alley early during the bombardment, and Captain F. G. Medcalf (his colleague of the Cordonnerie raid) had been sent up to take his place. Captains F. J. Griffin (of Uddingston, Lanarkshire, Scotland, and Perth, W. Aust.) and H. A. Mansfield (of Perth) had been wounded in the same trench, and Captain G. G. Campbell (of Fremantle, W. Aust.) in taking the second objective. Captain Mansfield died of his wound.
commander of the right-flank platoon of the 12th, Lieutenant Laing, seeing that this flank was completely open through the failure of the attack on the O.G. Lines, bent back his right from White's position in a curve across the railway, so as to face the open ground stretching to O.G.1, which trench lay 300 yards distant on the right. Observing figures moving through the dark in his rear, Laing sent out and discovered that they were the three platoons of his company which had swerved away to the right. He accordingly set them to extend this flank in a curve southwards.

Thus by 2.30 along the whole length of the village a front line was being dug parallel and close to the Bapaume road, but bent back at the eastern end short of O.G.1. On the left the companies composing it at once reported themselves in touch with each other, and patrols sent out by Captain Harris of the 3rd in the left centre immediately connected with them. On Harris's right there was at first a gap, but his patrols found the 11th Battalion digging in the copse, and, before the arrival of two platoons for which he sent to fill the space, it had already been bridged by the 3rd Brigade. The line was thus complete as far as the curved eastern flank, and the troops were digging with all their might to entrench themselves before day-break. At certain points in the several objectives engineers and pioneers were, according to plan, constructing strong-points and also communication trenches to connect with saps already driven forward from Black Watch Alley and other parts of the old line.

The objectives in Pozières had thus been taken without much resistance from the enemy. But in the O.G. Lines and

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27 Under Captain H. C. Pearce (of Yass, N.S.W.) and Lieutenant H. H. MacCarthy of the 4th
28 It was filled by the party which had been chasing Germans, and by part of the 14th
their immediate neighbourhood the attack had been much more stubbornly opposed. At 1.30 the leading company of the 10th Battalion under Captain McCann29 had arrived at the headquarters of the 9th in O.G.1, and had at once been sent on by Colonel Robertson to relieve Monteath. The head of this company had reached about the point in O.G.1 from which the attack originally started, when it was met by a back-rush of the front post of the 9th. This was the result of a counter-attack by the enemy in the O.G. Lines, who happened, during this night, to be reinforced by two relieving companies. McCann ordered his two subalterns30 to place their platoons in shell-holes to right and left of the trench respectively, and, putting himself at the head of a central party in the trench, gave the order to advance. Little opposition was met until, near the junction of Pozières Trench, progress was stopped by barbed-wire in the trench and by heavy machine-gun fire from some nest of the enemy close on the right front. The platoon which had been advancing on that side of O.G.1 had not reached this point, but McCann, recognising that the enemy post must be seized, lined out in front of it in shell-holes the ten or twelve men who were with him. With bombs, they thoroughly subdued the German bombers and smashed one machine-gun.31 When bombs began to run out, McCann passed the word to charge

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29 Lieut.-Col W. F. J. McCann, D.S.O., O.B.E., M.C.; 10th Bn. School teacher; of Malvern, S. Aust.; b. Glenville, S. Aust., 19 April, 1892. (McCann's company had reached the north-eastern end of Black Watch Alley at 12.30 a.m., but had to wait for the arrival of 10th Battalion H.Q., which then ordered him to report to the 9th.)

30 Lieutenants A. R. Walker (of Mt. Gambier, S. Aust.) on the right, and A. C. Sandland (of Jamestown, S. Aust.) on the left. A third subaltern, Lieutenant H. W. Thomas (of Goodwood, S. Aust.) had been wounded in Black Watch Alley. Walker was killed next month at Mouquet Farm; Sandland was mortally wounded this night.

31 McCann's success in this bold movement was partly due to his having with him two old Gallipoli sergeants, G. D. Beames (of Eastwood, S. Aust.) and J. C. Wickham (of Parkside, S. Aust.). He attributed his eventual failure (1) to bombs being sent up without detonators; (2) to the failure of Australians farther back in O.G. 1 to keep touch with his party.
with the bayonet, and he was on the point of giving the word when he was hit in the head by a machine-gun bullet. Lieutenant Ruddle, the adjutant of the 9th, who had gone forward to assist in the supply of bombs, was shot dead while peering over the parapet. The supply failed and the South Australians were driven back down O.G.1, which they barricaded 120 yards short of the junction with Pozieres Trench. Just as day was breaking, McCann, though his skull had been fractured, managed to report to Colonel Robertson that the fighting of the last hour-and-a-half had left things as they were.

At that hour a reserve company of the 10th under Major Giles—not that which should have followed McCann's, but one which should have advanced immediately west of the O.G. Lines—arrived in O.G.1 by way of Black Watch Alley. At Colonel Robertson's request Giles sent fifty of his men under Lieutenant Blackburn, together with two teams of the battalion bombers, to carry on the fight. Blackburn found at the barricade the remnants of McCann's company, almost exhausted by the fatigue of throwing. The Germans were close ahead. Blackburn, with a few bombers supported by men of his own company, leapt over the barricade and rushed to the next traverse. After tearing down the barricade—since the supports were exposed in crossing it—they rushed bay after bay, in each case after a heavy discharge of bombs. German machine-guns in O.G.2 swept the surface, and snipers in Munster Alley as well as in the trench ahead picked off men who were exposed. After 100 yards the trench became almost indistinguishable in the crater-field, and the Australians, crawling to avoid the fire of a machine-gun, could bomb only with difficulty, though the enemy in a crater thirty yards in front threw continuously. Calling a halt here, Blackburn with four men crept ahead to locate the gun. In exposing themselves to do so, all four men were killed, but

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23 It had previously been lying under a bombardment largely of gas-shell on the causeway from Casualty Corner to Contalmaison. The two companies of the 10th which should have been immediately ahead of it seem to have missed their way, and to have wandered in the dark on a semicircular course in the Sunken Road Valley (the depression north of Black Watch Alley).
a German strong-post was observed in a cross-trench only a stone's throw to the right—evidently the same which had baffled previous parties. Returning to Colonel Robertson, Blackburn arranged for trench-mortars to bombard it, and then attempted a second rush. But the machine-gun, unsilenced, hit four men as they started. Robertson arranged that artillery as well as mortars should support the next attempt, in which, using a second team of bombers, Blackburn gained another thirty yards.

The German resistance now stiffened. Blackburn, crawling forward with Sergeant Inwood, his right-hand man throughout, found that it came from the cross-trench which seemed to cut O.G.1 at right angles. In a fourth attack he captured the part west of O.G.1, but during consolidation he found that the junction with O.G.1 was being rendered impassable by enemy machine-guns in Munster Alley and the German post, which killed Inwood and cut off Blackburn's own party. Searching for another avenue, he crawled west along his trench. It ended in a broken-down tunnel: beyond this were men, and to his delight he ascertained by shouts that they were Captain Chambers's company of the 9th. He was, in fact, in the eastern end of Pozières Trench, and the tunnel was merely its crossing under the Pozières-Bazentin road. A passage was quickly opened through which Chambers sent men and tools, and the pioneers soon opened a safe line of communication.

Meanwhile, although enemy bombing had increased, Colonel Robertson ordered another advance. Blackburn accordingly

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86 Sgt. R. M. Inwood (No. 1533; 10th Bn.). Clerk; of Railway Town, Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Renmark, S. Aust., 1895. Killed in action, 24 July, 1916. Inwood had previously distinguished himself at Armentières. An extract from the 10th Battalion war-diary of 19 May, 1916, reads: "At 2000 (i.e., 8 p.m.) the enemy suddenly opened up a heavy shell attack on our billets in the vicinity of Rouge de Bout. ... During the first bombardment—when seven men were wounded on the road—No. 1533 Sgt. Inwood and 168 Cpl. Hamilton, at great personal risk, ran to the assistance of the wounded men and carried them to shelter..." Inwood was a brother of Cpl. R. R. Inwood, who was awarded the Victoria Cross after the Battle of the Menin Road, 20 Sept., 1917. Hamilton belonged to Semaphore, S. Aust."
made his fifth, sixth, and seventh attempts, but each time deadly fire stopped the advance over the exposed ground. Blackburn wriggled forward into the next bay only to find a machine-gun peering through the traverse at its farther end. Robertson, however, arranged for howitzers to support an eighth effort; Captain Olding, the artillery observer, directed the fire, but reported that the howitzers were too old and unreliable for such close shooting—some shells fell in the Australian trench. The enemy was little affected, and, when the infantry advanced, at once shot down the leading men.

Blackburn was then ordered to hold on where he was. His persistence had saved the situation in the O.G. Lines, and, of his 70 N.C.O.'s and men, about 40 had been killed or wounded. Shortly after noon Major Giles relieved them by a platoon under Lieutenant Partridge which, by throwing bombs, kept the enemy at a distance, while O.G.1 was rendered defensible and the pioneers cut through to Pozières Trench, now held by part of the 9th under its sole remaining company commander, Captain Chambers. That evening Partridge's platoon, worn out with continual throwing, and having lost 26 of its 35 men, was relieved by part of the other wing of the 10th originally allotted for the advance up the O.G. Lines. Giles withdrew his tired men and led them to their proper area, covering the gap between the thrown-back flank of the 12th and the 9th in Pozières Trench.

The attack up the O.G. Lines and also that immediately west of them had thus stopped 600 yards short of the

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86 For his gallantry on this occasion Blackburn was awarded the Victoria Cross.
87 These consisted of 34 men under Sergeant F. J. Scott, 20 under Sergeant C. R. McLaren (who was sniped through the throat, and two teams of bombers. Both Scott and McLaren belonged to Gawler, S. Aust.
objective. But the gap of 500 yards between Blackburn's position and the nearest of the Australians in the village, to whom this narrative must now return, had been covered by the turned-back flank. Pozières was indeed, by daybreak, very strong. The soil, having been pounded with shells, was soft, and the trench fringing the main street was now four feet in depth, with support trenches and strong-posts in certain parts and communication trenches partly completed. Several Vickers machine-guns were in the front line; and, since Lewis guns were now boldly allotted to the front lines of attack, sixteen or more of these weapons had reached the objective with the first troops, constituting a tremendously powerful defence against counter-attack. Day broke, however, without any sign of an enemy counter-stroke. Sniping shots began to come from the now visible ruins across the road, and from one point on the right south of it, and, stung by the killing of mates beside them, small parties of Australians—some specially detached, others "prospecting" on their own account for adventure and "souvenirs"—made their way among the dry heaps of rubble on both sides of the road. The artillery of both sides was by this time almost silent, the gunners being tired and the respective staffs as yet uncertain where their own or the opposing infantry were situated. The adventurers could therefore wander through the ruins without fear of shell-fire, searching for the openings of cellars and dugouts where the snipers were suspected to be hiding, and rolling into them phosphorus bombs. These filled the underground chambers with smoke and set fire to them, forcing the occupants to come out. A proportion of these chambers proved to contain Germans, and throughout the village could be seen isolated Australians "ratting" occasional fugitives from the rubble heaps, chasing terrified and shrieking Germans and killing them with the bayonet, or shooting from the shoulder at those who got away, and then sitting down on the door-steps to smoke and wait for others to bolt from the cellars. Occasionally parties of prisoners, in some cases numbering nearly a score, were brought in by two or three men. This grim sport—for so in the fury of
war it was regarded—was not without great risk to the hunters. While it was in progress there emerged, on the eastern side of Pozières, the first serious counter-attack. About daylight Germans had been seen moving at that end of the village and near the stump of the windmill. An officer of the 12th, Lieutenant Brine, who had gone forward to search for a lost patrol, had not returned. About 5.30 a.m. several hundred Germans suddenly issued from the O.G. Lines south of the Bapaume road and from the open space east of the village, and in a single file, widely extended, made their way south-westward across the railway, passing the flank thrown back by Lieutenant Laing, and heading directly

The eastern end of the village became especially dangerous. Lieutenant White of the 9th, whose men at dawn were being hit by snipers firing from behind a red-brick ruin, twice sent out small patrols of a sergeant and three or four men, the first of which killed three snipers and bombing a few cellars, and the second, about 9.30 a.m., moved along the main road, throwing bombs into cellars until it had collected eighteen prisoners. White was afterwards forced to prevent men from going out, as many were shot. The 11th and 12th east of the copse were constantly troubled by sniping at fifty yards' range from a cross-road south of the main street. C.S.M. Graham (the N.C.O. who had brought his men back from the windmill the night before) said to his officers: 'I'll go across and see if I can find the beggars—give us a bomb or two.' He found a shaft leading to a deep dugout, and threw a bomb down the staircase. It exploded on a landing and he at once followed it, and from the landing threw his remaining bomb into the chamber below. Before it exploded someone at the foot of the stairs fired twice with an automatic revolver, the first bullet piercing Graham's gas-mask and the second the back of his neck. His men, however, were occupied upon the enemy's first counter-attack, which happened to be advancing at that moment. As soon as it had been beaten off, Sergeant R. L. Richardson returned to the dugout, and its inmates, who had been subdued by Graham's second bomb, surrendered, seventeen in all, including five officers, some of them medical. (This dugout is shown as No. 1 in the marginal sketch.)

Several hours later, at the mouth of another dugout, which had been visited earlier by a single Australian, there was seen a German waving a white handkerchief. Signs were made to him to come in; after a long pause he came forward with both hands above his head, followed by eleven others, including two neatly-dressed medical officers, both of whom wore gloves and one an eye-glass. The senior said, in English, "Well, this is a blessing!" and all showed their relief by offering cigarettes and souvenirs to their captors and endeavouring to shake hands. [This dugout was probably, but not certainly, the headquarters of the 111/62nd I R. (see p. 524), shown as No. 2 in the marginal sketch.]

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Builder and contractor; of Claremont, W. Aust.; b. Sale, Vic., 13 April, 1891.

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23rd July, 1916 TAKING OF POZIÈRES 515

into the gap between it and the post in the O.G. Lines. This counter-stroke had no chance of success, the Australian infantry being ready and not shaken by any shell-fire. Seeing the line of the 3rd Brigade, the Germans opened fire, but the rifles of the 9th, 11th, and 12th, and a Lewis gun on the flank caused a number to fall, and the attacking line almost immediately sank into shell-holes. Five minutes later it rose again and, under heavy fire, made back for cover across the Bapaume road and thence round the north-eastern end of the village, where the back-hedges partly screened it from view. Almost the whole Australian line, however, observed the movement, and at 6.25 a.m. the fire of the artillery was called down upon that part of Pozières. The Germans sheltered in a series of covered artillery-dugouts beyond the hedge, and for the time being no more was seen of them. The "ratting" of Pozières was resumed, hampered, however, at the south-western end by sharp sniping from "K" Trench just outside the western outskirts, and by the Australian shells which were still bursting over that part of the ruins. At this stage, the front line having been in some places dug in to a depth of seven feet, its garrison was reorganised, most of the battalion commanders personally walking round their line and in some cases thinning the garrison, which was now being sorted by the front-line officers into its proper units.

48 This was the first general counter-attack at Pozières, made by the III Battalion, 157th Regiment (see pp. 523 and 524).

49 It is recorded that Elliott (12th), Howell-Price (3rd), Heane (1st), Mackay (4th), and Stevens (2nd) were all engaged in this work.
and sending surplus troops to the rear. At the end of this process the front was held from right to left as follows: in O.G. 1 and 2—parts of the 9th and 10th Battalions; then a gap to the south-eastern outskirts of the village, covered, however, by the 9th Battalion in Pozières Trench and the refused right flank of the 12th; south-east of Pozières, the front-line companies of the 12th under Captains Vowles and Margetts; front-line companies of the 11th under Captain Medcalf; front-line companies of the 3rd under Captain Harris; on the left flank, the front-line companies of the 4th and a portion of the 2nd. As for the supports, except on the left no trench existed at the second objective; consequently most of the supporting troops were in the first objective (Pozières Trench) or in the original "jumping-off" trenches. In certain parts, however, support trenches were afterwards dug, 150 yards behind the front line.\(^4\) The 5th and 13th Field Companies of engineers from the 2nd and 4th Divisions respectively were sent forward to assist the engineers and pioneers of the 1st Division in digging communication trenches and other works.\(^5\)

The German shell-fire did not as yet fall on the front-line troops, but an ugly barrage still lay upon Casualty Corner, Contalmaison causeway, and Chalk Pit road. Its full force had throughout the night descended on the headquarters of the 1st Brigade in its miserable niche north of the Chalk Pit. All telephone lines of that brigade, including five separate wires to the headquarters of one battalion, had been cut.

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\(^4\) Where the plan of attack had succeeded, there resulted a wide separation of the two halves of those battalions which attacked the third objective, there being interposed between them in each case the whole of the battalion which had taken the first and second objectives. In the case of the 3rd and 12th this was subsequently rectified by the commanders of front-line battalions obtaining permission to bring forward their reserve companies, part of the supporting battalion being then sent back.

\(^5\) The communication trenches, which were dug with great rapidity, are shown on map No. 8. The engineers had with them some working parties of the 6th Battalion Lieutenant J. W. Forbes (of Melbourne and North Sydney) of that battalion, himself wounded, carried on the work of an engineer officer who had been hit.
before the attack, and the staff had to rely mainly upon runners, who went incessantly through the barrage with their messages. Part of the 2nd Brigade had now been moved up to Contalmaison causeway, and parties from that brigade were carrying food, water, and ammunition through the barrage almost without interruption. Such of the wounded as could walk had to make their own way to the aid-posts, and were thence directed to the field tram-line in Sausage Gully, which led them to a dressing station in Albert. The seriously wounded were collected by the battalion stretcher-bearers and brought to the regimental aid-posts, carried thence by bearers of the 2nd Field Ambulance and some of the 3rd down Chalk Pit road to Casualty Corner, and from there by bearers of other ambulances to Sausage Gully, from the head of which horse-ambulances took them to a dressing station at the still almost-intact château in Bécourt Wood. Men in the front lines, themselves intact, could see much of this work proceeding amid the shell-bursts a quarter of a mile in rear.

The Australian soldier was thus, at last, encountering the dreaded barrages of the Somme, and, as at all other stages of the war, from the first moment of this new experience he adopted his own independent standard of conduct. He judged, by what he saw, that all except the heaviest barrages could be passed with a reasonable chance of survival, provided that he did not hesitate, and it became a matter of pride that, if he was carrying food or ammunition to his mates waiting for them in the firing line, his burden must be delivered, barrages notwithstanding. Having resolved that this shell-fire must be faced, he went through it characteristically, erect.

44 One artillery line was, however, maintained—in fairly continuous use—to the headquarters of the 2nd Battalion, where Lieutenant W. Graham (of Perth, W Aust.) of the 2nd AFA. Brigade was stationed as observing officer. For three days—until July 25th—two artillerymen, Gunners F. P. Greet (of Hawthorn, Vic.) and A J Mudd (of East Maitland, N.S.W.), living out in shell-holes in the bombarded area, continued to repair this line. At 1st Brigade Headquarters during the night of July 22-23 Lieutenant F. U. J. Tinkler (of Sydney) and his linesmen had continued to repair their wires until 8.25 a.m., by which time all available wire had been used, and repairs were abandoned. Pigeons and lamp-signalling were also used.

45 The 7th Battalion lay behind the causeway as reserves for the fighting. The carrying parties were provided by the 6th.

46 From Bécourt the seriously wounded were sent by the motors of the field ambulances to Warloy-Baillon, whence they were despatched by motor-ambulance convoy to the casualty clearing stations at the railheads. The less severely wounded at Bécourt were despatched by returning motor-lorries to the terminus of the field tramway near Albert, where the other "walking" wounded were picked up and all light cases taken to the corps collecting-station at Vadenecourt. Thence they were sent either to casualty-clearing stations or—when it was established—to the Corps Rest Station, which was formed largely for the reception of cases of shock and overstrain.
with careless easy gait, as if the scream and burst of the projectiles were utterly unnoticed, in many cases too proud to bend or even turn his head, because his mates were looking on. The stretcher-bearers—who were moved by an inward desire to show to the combatant troops that they shared the worst dangers—and the runners drew on themselves the special admiration of their mates; but the average Australian troops were always ready to accept a risk if the object seemed worth achieving. "Give it a go" expressed their attitude in facing many a dangerous project. From this standard they never varied throughout the Pozières fighting, the example being set by the troops themselves quite as much as by their officers. As a veteran major said on that battlefield: "I have to walk about as if I liked it; what else can you do when your men teach you to?"

It was by reason of these qualities that, by noon on the first day of the Pozières battle, the front-line troops had received water, food, rifle-ammunition, and bombs. Dumps of munitions had been formed in the communication trenches and at other convenient points in rear. All the Australian objectives, except in the O.G. Lines, had been well consolidated, and a strange silence had fallen on the village. In some of the front trenches the exhausted men, having worked through the night, were allowed to rest.

Huddled up in strange and contorted attitudes in the trench (writes Captain Harris), or stretched out in shell-holes in the rear, they slept as soundly in all the discomfort and danger as if they had been in feather beds.

To gain range for a farther advance, the 2nd Brigade of Australian Field Artillery brought up its batteries and emplaced them about a mile behind their infantry, just hidden from the enemy by the curve of the ground towards the head of Sausage Gully.

The German side of the narrative may now be told. The Pozières area, like the rest of the German front north of the Somme, had at the beginning of the Somme battle formed part of the area of the XIV Reserve Army Corps (Lieutenant-General von Stein), of the Second German Army (General Fritz von Below.) In consequence of the immense numerical growth of this army, its front was on July 19 subdivided, the northern part, including Pozières, being allotted

That is, "Give it a try," or "Have a shot at it." The happy-go-lucky attitude of the Australian in action is illustrated by an incident which occurred in the trench rushed by the 2nd Battalion at Pozières. One of the men picked up a water-bottle containing hot coffee. "Don't drink it," shouted another. "It's poisoned!" "Well, here's luck!" answered the finder, as he gulped it down.
to the First Army (to which von Below was transferred) and the southern part to the Second Army (now commanded by General von Gallwitz, brought from Verdun). A similar development had taken place in the XIV Reserve Corps, which, when swollen by reinforcing divisions, became known as the "Group Stein." The IV Army Corps (Lieutenant-General von Armin), brought down from the north, took over the sector between Pozières and Ginchy, and expanded into the "Group Armin." The westernmost division in von Armin's group was a composite one, known as "Burkhardt's Division," which almost from the beginning of the battle had been fighting for Ovillers. Major-General Burkhardt was the commander of the 10th Bavarian Division, but his present force included regiments hurriedly rushed forward from three different divisions, only one of them being his own. When Ovillers was lost, these overstrained troops fell back on the newly-adjusted front from Pozières to Thiepval. At this stage the drawing of the British line round Pozières, the frequent British reconnaissances, and the incessant bombardment of the village pointed (as the German official history states) "to the inference that the next British major-attack would be directed on Pozières. An early strengthening of the garrison of this important sector became increasingly urgent if the commanding position of this ruined village was not to be lost." Accordingly the 117th Infantry Division (a Silesian formation, brought down from Ypres) began on the night of July 20 to relieve Burkhardt's tired troops; the 157th I.R. taking over the K Trench and the adjoining 1,000 yards of Third Avenue (the "Schwarzwaldgraben") and the 11th and 22nd R.I.R. the extensions of that trench towards Thiepval, facing the 48th and 49th British Divisions. South of the Bapaume road the defence of Pozières had lain entirely in

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520 THE A.I.F. IN FRANCE [July, 1916

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60 The 10th Bavarian Division, which had been holding part of the second German line on July 1, had been immediately dismembered, its regiments being rushed to several points of danger. Thus the 16th Bavarian I.R. had been detached to Longueval, where it lost 2,631 officers and men; the 6th Bavarian R.I.R. despatched to Hardecourt, near the junction of the French and British line, lost 1,809; and the 8th Bavarian R.I.R., which had been holding Ovillers, 1,183. This last was the only one of his regiments which the commander of the 10th Bavarian Division still controlled, his other infantry being the 180th I.R. (26th Reserve Division—Württembergers), 15th R.I.R. (2nd Guard Reserve Division), and 185th and part of 186th Infantry Regiments (185th Division).

61 Commanded by General Kunze.

"Black Forest Trench." This faced the right of the 48th Division. The front posts of the 157th were at this time in "Second Avenue" and in the almost demolished trenches known to the Germans as "Kabel" and "Röder" Trenches; from the latter, just north of the Bapaume road, a German patrol was driven by the 2nd Australian Battalion before the fight.
the hands of the 7th Division, upon whose 27th Infantry Regiment this task had fallen ever since July 13. Its troops having been heavily tried, parts of other regiments had been lent for their relief. In order further to assist them, and to transfer to a single authority the responsibility for defending the south-west corner of Pozières, against which the British attacks had mostly come, the 117th Division was ordered to extend its flank so as to take over Pozières Trench as far east as the Pozières-Contalmaison road. This was accomplished on the night of July 21 by the I/157th I.R., which already held “K” Trench and part of the Schwarzwaldgraben, and which now put in its 4th company south of the road. The battalion which it relieved—the tired II/27th (by then reduced to some 150 rifles)—was withdrawn to switches (afterwards known as “Centre Way” and “Tom’s Cut”) north of the village.

Thus it was that on the night of July 22 Pozières was defended on its western and south-western sides by the comparatively fresh troops of the 1/157th I.R. (117th Division), and on its south-eastern side—including the southern end of the O.G. Lines—by the tired troops of the III/77th R.I.R., one of the battalions lent to the 27th I.R. (7th Division). The III/77th R.I.R. was to be relieved during that night by the III/62nd (7th Division). Through difficulties of relief the companies in this part were to some extent mixed. There were also in the forward area twenty light machine-guns of the 2nd company of the II Musketeer Battalion, and some machine-guns of the 91st R.I.R. (2nd Guard Reserve Division); and in the rear areas of the battlefield were arriving the advanced troops of the IX Reserve Corps (from near Lens), which was shortly to relieve the IV Corps in the Pozières-Ginchy sector. The local reserves were disposed as shown in the marginal sketch.

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63 Troops from Prussian Saxony; commanded by Lieutenant-General Riedel
64 The 157th I.R. was commanded by Major Hengstenberg, and its 1st Battalion by Major Zech, killed on 6 Dec., 1916.
65 That is—I Battalion, 27th Infantry Regiment. The reader is reminded that the battalions of a German regiment are here indicated by Roman numerals, I, II, III, and companies by Arabic, 1 to 12. It will further assist him if he bears in mind that the 1, 2, 3, and 4 companies constituted the I Battalion; 5, 6, 7, and 8 the II Battalion; and 9, 10, 11, and 12 the III Battalion. I R. and R I R. mean “Infantry Regiment” and “Reserve Infantry Regiment” respectively, but I R. will, where convenient, be dropped, and reserve regiments be indicated by an “R” after the numeral.
66 For example, 30 men of II/27, with two machine-guns of that regiment, were still between the 10th and 11th companies of the 77th. At noon on July 21 the order of companies (from west to east) had been: in Pozières Trench—5/27, 6/27, 10/77 R., 11/77 R.; O.G. Lines—7 and 8/27, 9/77 R.; farther east—12/77 R., 3/27, 7/77 R. At the time of the attack, early on July 23, it was: in Pozières Trench—10/77 R., part of 6/27, 11/77 R.; in O.G. Lines—9/77 R.; east of O.G. Lines—12/77 R., 3/27, 9/27 (here also 9 and 12/62 were coming up to relieve III/77 R.)
67 These units had been newly formed. Each musketeer battalion comprised two companies, and each company three platoons (each of 40 men with 10 guns). One platoon of this company was east of Pozières cemetery, and another west of it.
68 III/157 in Courcellette was the reserve of the 17th Division; II/157 in Le Sars, reserve of the Group Armin; a few elements of the 10th Bavarian and 2nd Guard Reserve Divisions were still in the area.
The communications of the German garrison in the Pozières sector, like those of the British and Australians facing them, ran, not direct to the rear, but almost parallel to, and close behind, the front. Thus, although the 157th Regiment's front line faced chiefly the II British Corps (48th Division), its supporting battalion at Courcellette would have to pass across the fronts of the III British and I Anzac Corps before they could reach the front; its support positions, in the O.G. Lines and their communication trenches north of the Bapaume road, were opposite the front of the I Anzac Corps. It followed that any reinforcements sent up in the heat of battle would have to pass through areas much more heavily shelled than those which they would have crossed if approaching directly from the rear. The areas behind the German line were liable to tremendous and well-directed bombardments; those in rear of the British were much less dangerous.

The attack on Pozières had been daily expected, the IV German Corps noting that the village had been under bombardment for weeks. By this shell-fire the garrison, though frequently relieved, had been subjected to fearful trial. Among the records is a translation of a letter written by a German in Pozières to his wife:

In Hell's trenches, 23/7/16.

Dear Luise and children,

My darlings, the gods only know if I am writing for the last time. We have now been two days in the front trenches. It is not a trench, but a little ditch, shattered with shells, with not the slightest cover and no protection. We've made a hole, and there we sit day and night. We have already lost about 50 men in two days, 6 killed, the others wounded. We get nothing to eat or drink, and life is almost unendurable. Up to now I have only had a bottle of seltzer. Here I have given up hope of life. To my last moment I will think of you. There is really no possibility that we shall see each other again. Should I fall—then farewell.

Information of the impending attack had also been received more directly from captured soldiers, who had told the Germans that a great attack would take place at 3.15 a.m. on July 24th. The Chief-of-Staff of the Group Armin was of opinion that the prisoners had mistaken the date, and that the attack would be delivered on July 23rd between 1 and 2 a.m., and, as a precaution, orders were given to the German artillery to lay down bursts of shell-fire on the area from which the attack was expected to come. On the night of July 22nd the commander of the I/157th wrote to the III/157th in Courcellette: "According to the regiment's information Pozières will be stormed in the next few hours." The battalion staffs were comparatively safe in their deep dugouts, but the bombardment entirely severed their connection with units on either flank and to the rear. The staffs were, therefore, utterly befogged as to what was occurring, and were surprised both by the swiftness of the assault, after only two minutes' bombardment, and by the rapidity with which, when a trench was captured, a host of machine-guns were established in it. The higher staffs in rear received only vague information of

60 "We" probably means his company.
61 The writer of this letter appears to have been afterwards taken prisoner.
62 This was stated by Germans at the time, and has since been confirmed. The information did not come from a member of the A.I.F.—no Australian soldier was captured until the attack had been launched.
63 "No sooner is a trench taken," observed the commander of the II/27th, who was among the prisoners, "than a good barrage of machine-guns is laid down in front of it."
what had occurred, and the banishment of their aeroplanes robbed them of the best means of ascertaining the position after daylight. Thus the staff of Burkhardt's Division, before handing over control at 9 a.m. to that of the 23rd Brigade, merely reported that Pozières and the Schwarzwaldgraben had been strongly attacked: the Pozières defences had been penetrated, but the III/157th had been sent forward from Courcelette to counter-attack (the II/157th being despatched by the army group to Courcelette to take its place) and had probably restored all ground in that area; the 11th R.I.R. was reported to have retaken the Schwarzwaldgraben, which the British had attacked at the point where the flank of the 11th joined the 157th. The incoming 23rd Brigade staff, however, found the position very different: the British, in spite of counter-attack, were still clinging to the Schwarzwaldgraben, and had consolidated their position there "on a two-platoon frontage," the 11th R.I.R. having no more reserves at hand with which to strike; at Pozières the 1st Australian Division, which had penetrated the southern defences of the village at the junction of the 27th and 157th Regiments, were still in possession, the early morning counter-attack by the III/157th, summoned from Courcelette, having failed—how completely, seems to have been not yet known.

The German official account is (possibly through absence of data) too inaccurate to deserve full quotation, but makes it clear that the body of Germans in Pozières Trench who were overrun and killed or captured by the 1st Battalion were the survivors of the 10th company, 77th R.I.R., including its commander and three other officers. The others, who were seen running near The Copse and were followed by part of the 3rd Brigade, were evidently a remnant of the same company and the twenty men of the 6th company of the 27th, who..."
with their two machine-guns fell back on the O.G. Lines. The 11th company of the 77th R. also fell back on the O.G. Lines and, with the 9/77th R. and the 9 and 12/62nd (which were coming up to carry out a normal relief) was responsible for the German counter-attacks that prevented the progress of the 9th and 10th Australian Battalions up the O.G. Lines. The most powerful counter-attack, which, it is claimed, for a short time drove the Australians back past their old lines, was undertaken by men of both German regiments organised by Oberleutnant Ohr of the 62nd. It was presently beaten back, Ohr himself being killed.

The commander of the III/62nd, who was to relieve the III/77th R. had early in the afternoon gone forward to the latter's headquarters in Pozières—just south of the main road near The Copse to arrange the relief. The commanders and staffs of three battalions—I/27th (Captain Lyons), III/77th R. (Major von Lettow-Vorbeck), and III/62nd (Captain Brück)—were in this dugout when the fighting started; but practically nothing was known of the battle's progress until a runner, who had been sent to bring up the medical officer of the 62nd, said that he had seen several of the enemy in front of the headquarters dugout. The three staffs clambered upstairs to defend the dugout; flares were thrown, and, surely enough, a line of Australians was seen digging-in little more than thirty yards away. A few shots were fired at them, but these drew stronger rifle-fire, the adjutant of the 27th being wounded. Major von Lettow-Vorbeck and Captain Lyons therefore withdrew their staffs through the barrage to the nearest switch trench, north-east of the village. The commander and staff of the III/62nd, who stayed, were afterwards captured.

At 1.30 a.m. the commander of the 157th (Major Hengstenberg) in Courcelette had heard that the line round Pozières had been broken. After informing his divisions and the artillery, he had ordered the III/157th (at Courcelette) to recapture the lost ground—the II/157th was already on its way to Courcelette to take that battalion's place. Captain Lyons of the II/27th in "Centre Way" helped to organise the counter-attack, and joined it with one of his composite companies, himself advancing with the second wave. When it was shattered, Lyons and the broken companies took shelter in the north-eastern outskirts of Pozières.

Unhappily the British offensive of July 23rd had, as a whole, met with no success comparable to that of July 14th. On the extreme right the attack by part of the XIII Corps upon Guilmont at 3.40 a.m., after partly succeeding, was

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*See sketch on p 515.*

*Its 9th company, however, was held back at Courcelette to guard the batteries there, the counter-attack was made by the 10th, 11th, and 12th companies and one of the II/27th.*

*It did not even achieve the slight success claimed in the German official history, unless this represents the interruption for a short while of the "prospecting" of the village by individual Australians*
driven back. On the front from Delville Wood to Pozières the rest of the XIII Corps, and the whole attacking force of the XV and III, advancing after a final bombardment lasting for six and a half hours, secured no permanent gain of ground. On the front of the XV Corps one of the finest Scottish divisions, the 51st, was unable to clear High Wood,
Thus on the whole front east of Pozières no inch of ground was gained. West of it, however, the nearest brigade of the 48th Division had succeeded in capturing a small section of "Second" and "Third" Avenues, the two southernmost of the series of long German communication trenches in which, as has been previously stated, the enemy front between his first and second systems then lay. Third Avenue more to the west had been assaulted by the 6th Gloucester (of the left brigade of the 48th), but the battalion had been caught by machine-guns and repulsed with heavy loss; and, on the extreme left flank of the offensive, the 49th Division was driven back after an initial advance in the "Leipzig Salient" of the old German front-line system. But where the 48th had penetrated it held on. In an endeavour to extend that hold to the left, where the 6th Gloucester had failed, the Bucks Battalion at 7 a.m. renewed the attack, but was driven into the trench already captured. On the right the foothold was gradually enlarged, but it was found that, between the 48th Division and the left of the Australians, bodies of Germans were present in strength and fought stubbornly. For connection with the 1st Australian Division, the 48th had to rely on its posts in the trench along the northern edge of the Bapaume road.

The total result of this—the third—great British attack on the Somme was, therefore, that one of the two buttresses of the enemy's northern flank on the battlefield had been broken, but the powerful effort had failed everywhere else. The failure strongly impressed the Commander-in-Chief. It was mainly due to the care and cleverness with which the Germans had occupied in advance of their main line new positions which had escaped bombardment; and it seemed to show that, reinforced as they had been, they could afford the

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* The 145th Brigade.  ** The 144th Brigade.  *** Pozières and Thiepval.
time and the troops to create a strong and fairly elaborate
defence, supported by powerful reserves, which could no
longer be broken through by sudden strokes such as those of
July 1st and 14th. It even seemed possible that they might
undertake a strong counter-offensive.

The attempt to break through the German front on the
Somme before the enemy's full reserves could be summoned
had therefore definitely failed; but Haig was not the type
of commander to think of breaking off the struggle. The
notion of transferring—in certain events—the main effort to
another part of the British front had, it is true, not been
entirely discarded: Haig was already considering a future
thrust in Flanders in possible association with the navy. But
such an operation would take long to prepare, and, without
some such alternative attack in immediate prospect, the
abandonment of the Somme offensive was inconceivable.
The increasing strength of the Allies in men, guns, and
munitions had now given them the initiative; they could not
afford to hand back to the German staff the opportunity of
renewing at Verdun or elsewhere the pressure on France,
which was at last being relieved. French public opinion
rightly expected from Britain an immense effort in assistance.
Moreover to the British people—who assumed from com-
muniqués and other reports that the battle had been a constant
progress towards eventual success, and who were pouring out
for it men and material to an extent hitherto unapproached
in the history of their nation—the abandonment of the
offensive would have caused a bitter shock and disillusionment.
It is true that to men and women of British race such shocks
are usually the most powerful stimulants to more determined
action, and that the best and simplest course is probably to
keep the nation constantly informed, within the limits of
military prudence, of the whole truth. But only if no
prospect of success remained, or if a better prospect were
attainable elsewhere, could it have been worth while so rudely
to shatter the rising spirits of the nation and army, and Haig
fully believed that success was gradually being attained on
the Somme. The situation which had now arisen had been

"On July 22 Haig's C.G.S. wrote to Gen. Hunter-Weston, whose corps, the VIII,
was being transferred from the Somme to the north: "Until the time for a move on
the north comes, whether in co-operation with success down here (as we hope) or as
a result of a decision to close down here (for which there are no grounds at present)
you will be able to get your divisions made up gradually . . . and give them a
comparative rest."
considered before ever the Somme offensive was launched, and he had decided that, even if the effort failed in its primary object, it would be worth continuing for a secondary one—that of wearing down the enemy. The "wearing-down battle," or bataille d'usure, is a method well known to military science; operations have often been undertaken with the object of wearing down armies and even nations; and the later instances differ from the earlier mainly in the extent and thoroughness of the effort, and especially of its application by means of blockade, air-raids, and propaganda to the whole civil population of the opponents, previously protected by the provisions of that structure of international law which Germany, at the outbreak of war, threw down. This process—in ordinary life known as "seeing who can last the longest"—involves, when applied in a great war, such loss and destruction as may well cause even hard-driven leaders to shudder at the prospect of adopting it as the only way to victory.

If they so adopt it, their success will of course depend upon whether they can wear down their enemy at a faster rate—at least proportionately to their strength—than that of the wastage of their own army or people. At this stage in the First Battle of the Somme the Allies possessed the advantage in killing, having greater strength, especially in guns and ammunition and in the air; and a continuous calculation by Haig's intelligence staff of the German losses—as indicated both by the published casualty lists and by the withdrawal of exhausted divisions—placed the German loss considerably higher than the British. It was apparently assumed that the German commanders, like the British, would not finally withdraw a division until it had suffered at least 4,000 to 5,000 casualties. Provided that these calculations

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19 The Battle of Verdun is the example best known to laymen. Both the offensive and its methods were originally devised with the primary object of wearing down the enemy, the strategical object being secondary. The intention was afterwards changed and, when the attack was delivered, the primary object was to pierce the French front. This failed, but the original object was in a large measure attained, a loss of 400,000 being inflicted on the French at the cost of 250,000 to the Germans.
20 A whole war waged on this principle is a "war of attrition." This was the object of the policy known as that of "killing Germans," already referred to in Vol. II, p 778. As was natural, leaders for the most part fell back upon this policy only when their strategic efforts failed.
were approximately correct, the continuance of the battle would help ultimately to reduce the German Army, both in numbers and morale, to a point at which a break-through might again become possible. Moreover Haig had not fallen back on the wearing-out battle as the sole means for success. There had been invented in England a new and secret instrument of attack, with which his army would soon be provided, and the arrival of which might give him another means of breaking the enemy’s line. He was determined to return to the policy of wide offensives when his position was more favourable.\textsuperscript{78}

In the meantime, however, at 6.15 a.m. on July 23rd\textsuperscript{79} he changed the whole policy of the battle by an instruction to his army and corps commanders that, instead of renewing the general attack, they must now make local assaults upon such points as each corps required for the favourable launching of the next wide offensive, and thus maintain constant pressure on the enemy, while allowing men, ammunition, and other means of attack to accumulate in the reserve area.

The new policy was to be immediately initiated. The XIII Corps would attack Delville Wood; the XV Corps, the strong-points at the east and west corners of High Wood; the III Corps, Munster Alley and part of Switch Trench adjoining. The XIII Corps were also ordered to capture Falfemont Farm and Guillemont, arranging with the XX French Corps the date and time for that operation. The several corps at once began to draw up their separate plans. Haig, however, required them to co-operate as far as was possible without initiating important offensives which would

\textsuperscript{78}A few days later Haig’s determination to continue the battle had to be defended against the anxious questionings of the British Government, reported to him in a letter of July 29 from Robertson. “The powers that be,” he said, “are beginning to get a little uneasy. . . . The casualties are mounting up, and Ministers are wondering whether we are likely to get a proper return for them . . . They will persist in asking me whether I think a loss of, say, 300,000 men will lead to really great results, because, if not, we ought to be content with something less than what we now are doing, and they constantly inquire why we are fighting and the French are not. . . .” Robertson tried to allay this anxiety at a Cabinet meeting on August 1, and Haig wrote to him: “Any weakening of purpose now would certainly have a deplorable effect on our Allies’ trust in us, on the general faith in our power to achieve victory, and even on the confidence of our own army.”

\textsuperscript{79}The Commander-in-Chief at this hour conferred with Rawlinson.
call for large drafts on his reserves. According to the diary of the III Corps, he called at noon at its headquarters at Montigny.

and emphasised the necessity of close liaison between us and the 1st Australian Division, and the importance of having fresh British troops in the neighbourhood of Munster Alley and of seizing point X.5.B.4.1 (the junction of Munster Alley with O.G.2).

As the Australians and III Corps were to work together, a conference was held the same afternoon at the III Corps Headquarters between Haig's chief-of-staff (General Kiggell), General Gough (Reserve Army), the commander of the III Corps, and General White, representing the I Anzac Corps, which, from noon onwards, had been made responsible for the sector occupied by the 1st Australian Division. At this conference the next step in the O.G. Lines was agreed upon—the storming of those lines as far as the road, not by continuing the endeavour to bomb up them, but by a frontal attack by the Australians south-east of Pozières. The III Corps either simultaneously or later would assault Munster Alley, the operations being undertaken, if possible, that night. The 1st Australian Division also intended to capture immediately the remainder of Pozières village, north of the Bapaume road.

Meanwhile the Australian infantry, unaware of the high decisions of which during the next six weeks they were to bear the main results, were filled with the consciousness that they had at last achieved a victory of importance on the Western Front. The famous British division on their right flank\textsuperscript{80} sent them a message saying that it was proud to fight beside them. On the afternoon of July 23rd, with the German barrage still falling well in rear of them, and with some of their front trenches dug, like those of Gallipoli, a

\textsuperscript{80} The 1st Division.
good eight feet in depth, they ate their rations, donned German helmets "ratted" from accessible cellars, chaffed one another or "swopped yarns" of their experiences in the village, congratulating themselves that success had thus far been cheaply and easily achieved, though well aware that the job was not yet finished and harsher experiences were possibly to come. To take the place of officers who had been lost there had been sent up to the units a number of those left behind at Albert during the first attack, who, with the restlessness of schoolboys wondering why they have been left out of a cricket match, had been plaguing the divisional staff with endless inquiries as to whether they had yet been sent for by their units, and with appeals for permission to rejoin.