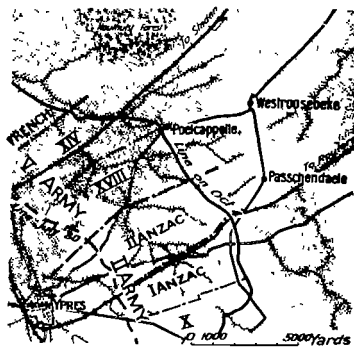


## CHAPTER XXI

### THE PLAN BREAKS DOWN. PASSCHENDAELE I— OCTOBER 9TH

THE next move, the capture of Passchendaele, was to be made in two steps, the first—so far as the Second Army was concerned—a short preparatory advance projected for October 10th, to be followed by a much deeper advance on the 13th in which Passchendaele would be captured by II Anzac, using the 3rd Australian and the New Zealand Divisions. The Fifth Army would join in both these attacks and might assault Westroosebeke on October 14th, the Second Army swinging up its left to assist. Westroosebeke gained, the descent towards Roulers could begin. Although no certain programme could be adopted, these steps were definitely in view. At Haig's conference with Gough and Plumer on the afternoon of the Polygon Wood fight, Gough urged that, after the next fight, it would be necessary for the French to support the Fifth Army's left by advancing across the corner of Houthulst Forest. Haig promised to arrange for the French to participate on October 10th.



On September 28th at a further conference Haig surprised the army commanders by announcing that the time was approaching for a change of method. Under the rapid series of blows lately delivered, he said, the German forces were being used up and demoralisation was increasing.

The moment would probably shortly arrive at which we could do more than gain a definite and limited line. We must be prepared to exploit our successful attack and so achieve more decisive results.<sup>1</sup>

The operations of October 4th would complete a definite stage of the offensive, and those of October 10th, being on a

<sup>1</sup> The quotation is from the official record of the conference.

very wide front, would probably furnish an opportunity for exploitation. The Director-General of Transportation must push ahead the chief roads and railways, and the army commanders must have their plans made, and reserves, with tanks and detachments of artillery and cavalry, ready for action either to the east, towards Moorslede, or northwards, at the back of the ridge.

Both Gough and Plumer thought that Haig was overestimating the deterioration of the enemy, and each sent him a written opinion of which the effect was that he was proceeding too fast. Gough agreed, however, that by October 10th it might be possible to increase the speed and depth of the blows; also, the infantry would then be clear of the worst of the mud. But the artillery could only get through it as roads and light railways were pushed on; the two steps in which it was proposed to reach and take Westroosebeke must be carefully prepared. Then, probably, after three powerful blows in six days, the Cavalry Corps might be used with success, although the main force might still have to wait until the railways arrived at the ridge.

Haig's reliance on the deterioration of the enemy's spirit undoubtedly led him, later, to unfortunate decisions, but in the measures inaugurated on October 2nd he envisaged little more than the prospect described by Gough.<sup>2</sup> He had in view much the same situation that was actually to occur in the Battle of Broodseinde. He never forgot how, on the 31st of October, 1914, in the First Battle of Ypres, when the exhausted British could not have withstood further pressure, the Germans failed to push forward. Such a chance must not be missed by the British. If another clean victory on October 10th brought them to the outskirts of Passchendaele, there was every probability that a well-prepared advance an hour or two later might take the place at no undue cost.<sup>3</sup> If the clearing of the coast was still in view, the prospect of such a gain of ground was not to be forgone, especially with winter rapidly approaching. The repercussions of even a local break-through at that stage might have been far-reaching. And, although doubtless there was little prospect of cavalry

<sup>2</sup> He noted this in the margin of Gough's memorandum.

<sup>3</sup> A subsequent intelligence summary of II Anzac said of the situation on Oct. 4: "There can be little doubt that, if it had been in accordance with the wishes of the Higher Command, we could have captured Passchendaele this day with slight opposition."

being effectively employed on October 10th, Haig might justly have been criticised if he had continued his series of strokes while totally unprepared for their exploitation.

He insisted on the army commanders making such plans, and called a conference on October 2nd to discuss them. Plumer and Gough then proposed that exploitation should be undertaken, first, by the reserve brigades of the divisions which attacked on October 10th,<sup>4</sup> and the corps cavalry, supported by batteries previously advanced in readiness. If opportunity arose, the local commanders would send these troops on to Passchendaele or even beyond. If resistance proved to be crumbling, the thrust would be taken up next morning by reserve divisions and cavalry divisions.<sup>5</sup> On October 2nd Haig approved of these plans, and ordered that on the evening of October 10th two cavalry divisions should be within a day's march of the battle-front, with the rest of the Cavalry Corps (less one division) ready to follow. On the same day he decided, in view of the sustained success of the recent operations, to continue the effort at Ypres as long as possible by employing there "all necessary and available" forces "as long as the weather conditions permit." This would mean the abandonment, for the present at least, of the operations of the Fourth Army on the coast and the First Army near Lens. Six British divisions would be brought up to the Fifth Army between October 4th and 20th, and the Canadian Corps (four divisions) to the Second Army about October 20th.

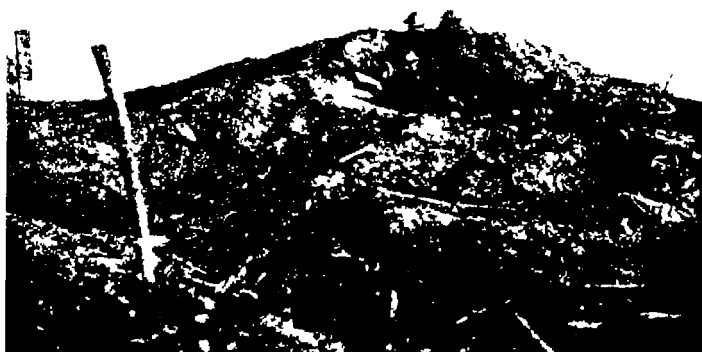
How prudent were Haig's precautions was shown by the occurrences of October 4th, and these made a deep impression not only on him but on Plumer and Harington. That evening the chief of the intelligence staff<sup>6</sup> informed Haig:

I am . . . of opinion that, at the present moment, there is no formed division (of enemy reserves, beyond those on that morning's map) within immediate reach of the battlefront. I do not think that any formed division can reach the battlefront until early morning on the 6th October.

<sup>4</sup> I Anzac, owing to the exhaustion of its line divisions, which were not relieved after Oct. 4, had to allot part of its reserve division.

<sup>5</sup> The Director-General of Transportation said that he could bring up one inf. division for each army within seven hours of the order being given, or within three or four hours if previous warning was given.

<sup>6</sup> Brig.-Gen. J. Charteris, C.M.G., D.S.O., p.s.c. G.S.O. (2), First Army, 1914-15; B.G.G.S. (Intell.), G.H.Q., 1916/17; Deputy Director-General of Transportation, G.H.Q., 1918. Officer of British Regular Army; of Glasgow, Scotland; b. Glasgow, 8 Jan., 1877.



50 OBSERVERS ON THE SAND HUMMOCK ON BROODSEINDE RIDGE,  
5TH OCTOBER, 1917

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E4516*



51. GERMANS CAPTURED ON OCTOBER 4TH AT BROODSEINDE RIDGE

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo No I3877*

*To face p 88o*



52. A HOWITZER BOGGED IN THE HANNEBEEK VALLEY, 4TH OCTOBER, 1917  
Men of the 2nd Pioneer Battalion are helping to dig it out. In the background is a party carrying duckboards.

*Aust War Memorial Official Photo No E1076*

*To face p 88*

The units in the German line were mixed in a manner that suggested great confusion. It was afterwards ascertained that fresh divisions came into the line opposite I and II Anzac on October 5th; before the next battle, the whole of the battered front was held by fresh troops, and an extra division had been inserted opposite the In de Ster plateau.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless it is now known that an acute shortage was in prospect.

Ludendorff, who was providing nine divisions against Italy and was expecting a French limited attack in Champagne, was doubtful whether he would be able to reinforce the Flanders front, and—though this was unknown to the British until long afterwards—was ordering a direct reversal of the recently adopted method of defence. He insisted that Crown Prince Rupprecht “should not allow our troops to be shattered by enemy fire, and should give way before it.” The forward area was now to be held with a few posts; the main line of resistance would be sited perhaps half-a-mile farther back. The German artillery would register it,<sup>8</sup> and, when the British attacked in force, the weak German posts would quickly fall back, and, on their firing signals, the artillery would lay down its barrage across the path of the attack. The British would thus no longer be able to escape the German barrage. Ludendorff also insisted on more counter-battery fire.

Crown Prince Rupprecht would have liked to strike dead the British offensive by a German counter-thrust through its flank in the direction of Kemmel, but he was entirely without the means for this. In the end he was forced to contemplate a series of voluntary withdrawals, despite the risk of uncovering the Belgian coast. “If, as must be expected, the French attack the Seventh and Third Armies at the same time as the launching of an English attack,” he noted on October 9, “O.H.L. will no longer be in a position to help us by bringing up fresh forces.” “Our troops, on the chief fighting front in Flanders,” he wrote on the 11th, “are in a fair degree of confusion. The disentangling of formations is in progress. . . . Most troublesome is the fact that our fighting force becomes all the time of poorer quality, and that every means that we thought out is ineffective as a counter to the overpowering superiority of the enemy’s artillery. As it is a matter, for us, of fighting to gain time, nothing else remains except by repeated withdrawal to force the enemy to a fresh time-consuming advance of his artillery.”

Let the student looking at the prospect as it appeared at noon on October 4th ask himself, “In view of the results of three step-by-step blows, what will be the result of three more in the next fortnight?” In spite of all the critics, if the weather made these methods possible, was Haig’s strategic design beyond chance of attainment?

<sup>7</sup> To compensate for the lengthening of the line.

<sup>8</sup> During registration their shots would fall far behind their front line, this action was to be cloaked by a covering bombardment.

But, on the very day on which this prospect opened, the weather broke. Half-an-hour after noon light rain began to fall, and the sky gave no promise of its ceasing. The crossing of the valleys beyond the end of the duckboard tracks immediately became a matter of immense labour. The strain on all carrying and digging parties was trebled; in the 3rd Division's sector, where the stretchers-bearers' "carry" was long, the duckboards short, and a large proportion of the trained bearers had been taken for the corps dressing station,<sup>9</sup> the system of medical evacuation at once broke down. The cramped pillboxes used as aid posts overflowed with serious cases, and the mudfield outside became crowded with badly wounded men, who had to lie all night without shelter from the shelling or from the rain. In I Anzac the new circuit road to Westhoek was to be used that day by horse ambulances, and the old circuit, to Bellewaarde, by motor ambulances.<sup>10</sup> But the ambulance cars skidded off the greasy planks into the bog. Even one of the horse ambulances, full of wounded, slipped from the road and overturned; by the afternoon two, but only two, were placed on the forward circuit. Major Hunt,<sup>11</sup> in charge of the forward relay at Westhoek, was killed when leading up his bearers. They had to carry as far back as Birr Cross-road and worked themselves to exhaustion, but the wounded were not clear by dusk. A number had to be placed in pillboxes for the night and made as comfortable as possible, and by special measures these were cleared at dawn.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>9</sup> The 9th Field Ambulance bearers were thus taken. A number of infantry were supplied in their place, but lacked physique and training, and proved difficult to control. During the whole day only four field-ambulance bearers reached the aid post of the 38th and 40th Battalions at Levi Cottages. The regimental bearers, forced to carry to the rear as well as in the forward area, could not clear the wounded. Fortunately the actual collection of wounded lying out after this fight was much assisted by an order issued by the German Ypres Group. "Previous experience," it said, "shows that the English respect the Red Cross flag. It is therefore to be used as much as possible in the pauses in the fight, so as to clear the wounded."

<sup>10</sup> See sketches on pp. 793 and 903.

<sup>11</sup> Major G. M. Hunt, M.C.; A.A.M.C. Medical practitioner; of Sydney and Candelo, N.S.W.; b. North Sydney, 13 Oct., 1889. Killed in action, 4 Oct., 1917. (He had already been wounded.)

<sup>12</sup> German prisoners had helped in the morning of the 4th, but the officers on the spot had to be stopped from sending them forward again for a second carry, as this interfered with their examination and also might have brought retaliatory measures. The bearers of the 1st and 2nd Divisions were assisted by the 13th Field Ambulance, the tunnellers, and, later, the 15th Field Ambulance. Before the battle the 5th Division had also been ordered to provide 200 men as a reserve of stretcher-bearers, and the 3rd Brigade supplied 100. With this help, by 8 a.m. on the 5th the wounded were cleared. In I Anzac the evacuation was through Westhoek, which was a dépôt

More serious for the continuance of the operations were the difficulties in getting forward the artillery. I Anzac had pushed its roads and railways far beyond any others, but it had been unable before October 4th to provide a third planked road circuit like those undertaken before September 20th and 26th. Forward of Westhoek it had to place chief reliance upon the single road from Westhoek to Zonnebeke, in which the crowded shell-holes had been filled in with earth. This track (known as "Smith's Road"<sup>13</sup>) would have carried traffic well enough in dry weather, but when, shortly after noon on October 4th, the first echelon of guns was ordered to advance by it to Anzac and Tokio Spurs, even in the slight rain it gave way beneath them. As the rain went on, mules and pack-horses, endlessly ploughing their way along the same tracks, as well as on the special mule-tracks, quickly rendered them almost impassable.

The rain continued, as a drizzle throughout October 5th, in constant showers on the 6th, and in bitter, drenching squalls on the 7th. On the 8th, until 4 p.m. there was a strong, drying wind, but at that hour the rain became torrential. The meteorological experts said that no improvement was to be hoped for; a tempest 1,000 miles west of Ireland was approaching at the rate of forty miles an hour.

In these circumstances Haig made the most questioned decision of his career. To the average soldier it appeared that the chance of strategic success in 1917 had probably gone.

I believe that if the weather had only held over another two or three weeks (wrote a subaltern<sup>14</sup> on October 8) we would have had Fritz well on the run in Flanders, and would have had numerous opportunities of following him up and further knocking him about with our cavalry. Now I fear that it must be a wash-out for the year—tough luck, but we've got to take things as they are and keep plugging away. . . .

---

of stores and a relay station for bearers, and, if possible, was to become a loading station and advanced dressing station. It was eventually used as an advanced dressing station, although the shelter was slight and a number of casualties occurred, Captain J. Davie being among those who lost their lives, and Majors T. J. Frizell and N. E. B. Kirkwood being wounded. The principal advanced dressing station was at the Menin Road, stretcher cases being dealt with (under Lieut.-Colonel E. T. Brennan, 1st Field Ambulance) on the north side of the road, and the walking wounded on the south side (under Lieut.-Colonel A. H. Moseley, 6th Field Ambulance). From here 59 lorries carried 1,250 wounded to Remy Siding, and 230 went by train. Another 700 were evacuated by lorry and train from the auxiliary dressing station at No. 10 Bridge in Ypres. (Davie belonged to Jerilderie, N.S.W.; Frizell, who died of his wounds on Dec. 2, to Strathfield, N.S.W.; Kirkwood to Wollongong, N.S.W.; Brennan to Beechworth, Vic.; Moseley to Annandale, N.S.W.)

<sup>13</sup> See sketch on p. 903.

<sup>14</sup> Lieut. C. F. Sharland, 40th Bn. Bank clerk; of Hobart; b. Westbury, Tas., 23 Oct., 1882. Killed in action, 12th Oct., 1917.



But on October 4th, with a brilliant prospect still open, Haig had decided to hasten the next steps, and strike on October 9th and 12th instead of on the 10th and 13th. He had now to face the question whether those dates should be cancelled, and the attacks postponed until fine weather.<sup>15</sup> To do so meant abandoning his strategic designs for 1917; not to do so, was to forgo the sure method that lately had served him so well. Haig cannot have been unaware that the basic conditions—careful preparation, protection by the artillery, and maintenance of the infantry's freshness—were possibly, if not certainly, unobtainable in the mud, especially now that the speed and depth of the strokes were being increased in view of the weakening morale of the Germans. All the commanders would have liked to stop the offensive, but Plumer and Gough were loyal to Haig's conceptions, and he was intensely desirous of crowning his army's immense effort with the strategic success that seemed so near; he clung to the hope of it. For advice as to the practicability of attacking, he looked to the local commanders, but in referring to them on October 7th he expressed his great anxiety "that there should be no postponement unless absolutely necessary."<sup>16</sup> Notes of an address given by General Harington to the war correspondents on the eve of this attack show that the recent successes were proudly attributed by him to the methods pursued by the Second Army, and that, whether the Fifth Army thought differently or not, the Second Army was set upon making the attack. It still hoped that after one or two more strokes the cavalry might be put through, and, though ill-weather was almost certain, considered the attempt worth making. The sandy crest of the ridge, Harington said, was "as dry as a bone."

To some of those who, with tense anxiety, listened to this address, the situation seemed to contain the seeds of a classical tragedy; the brilliance of the Second Army's success appeared to be tempting its leaders to forsake their tried methods.

I believe (noted one who was present) the official attitude is that Passchendaele Ridge is so important that to-morrow's attack is worth making whether it succeeds or fails. . . . I suspect that they are making a great, bloody experiment—a huge gamble. . . . I feel, and most of the correspondents feel, . . . terribly anxious. . . . These major-generals . . . are banking on their knowledge of

<sup>15</sup> The order to prepare for exploitation on Oct. 10 was cancelled on Oct. 7.

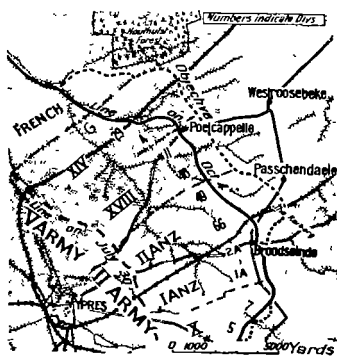
<sup>16</sup> At that time there was still hope of finer weather. The corps commanders of the Second Army were to consult with General Plumer at 8 a.m. on Oct. 8, and the decision would be given by 9 o'clock. It had then ceased raining, and a strong drying wind blew, but at 4 p.m., when heavy rain began again, there was still ample time for stopping the attack.

German demoralisation. . . . I thought the principle was to be "hit, hit, hit, *whenever the weather is suitable.*" If so, it is thrown over at the first temptation.

Drenching rain continued until midnight. Birdwood, who knew that his troops were almost exhausted, hoped for postponement; but, as his corps had but a slight task on the flank of II Anzac, whose commander was for attacking, he did not care to protest. Haig decided to let the assault go forward.

So far as the official records show, the offensive of October 9th, delivered on a front of 13,500 yards from south-east of Broodseinde to St. Jansbeek, was supported by as strong an artillery as the previous strokes. As on July 31st, the Fifth and French armies, attacking on the lower and less vital ground, met with much success. According to reports received during the morning, the Second Army's progress was almost equally good; although part of II Anzac started late, the final objective was reported to have been gained almost everywhere, and at 11.15 a low-flying airman gave confirmation to this. Although comparatively few Australians were engaged, the actual position must be shortly told.

The 66th British Division, the right of II Anzac, had to advance along the ridge, where lay the main objective, while the 49th British Division, the left of II Anzac, seized and advanced along the Bellevue-Meetcheele spur, which joined the ridge just beyond Passchendaele. The two heights were separated by the valley of the Ravebeek, described in a Second Army intelligence summary of October 7th as being "saturated ground. Quite impassable. Should be avoided by all troops at all times." The only Australian division taking part in the main operation was the 2nd, which was to make a flank for the 66th from the railway southwards; but a party of the 1st was to divert attention by raiding "Celtic Wood," down Broodseinde Ridge. For the main operation there were two objectives,



the "red" and "blue" lines, entailing advances of 650 and 600-850 yards respectively. This would bring the 66th Division to the first cottages of Passchendaele, 750 yards short of the church. This division was supposed to be supported by nine brigades of field artillery, but, as will be seen later, the real fell far short of the nominal strength. The artillery arrangements were in general the same as for the previous attack.<sup>17</sup> The barrage would fall when the infantry advanced at 5.20 a.m.,<sup>18</sup> and would finally cease at 10.27.

The 66th was an untried division as to the capacity of whose staff for this operation there was anxiety not only in Australian circles. The relief in which its 199th Brigade took over the 3rd Australian Division's line on the night of October 5th was marked by an almost incredible degree of mismanagement.<sup>19</sup> The divisional staff now took the precaution of bringing up east of Ypres the two brigades for the attack, 197th and 198th, so that, on the night before the attack, they would have only two and a half miles to go to their tapes. Starting at dusk, they would have ten hours for the march, and at half-a-mile an hour it would only take five. But the engineering force of II Anzac had been chiefly concentrated on making roads for the guns; when the 10th and 11th Field Companies of the 3rd Australian Division were turned upon the infantry tracks, they could do little except mark them with tapes, stakes, and lamps, and improve the crossings of the worst swamps. On the night of the approach, drenching rain made these almost impassable, and five hours before zero it became certain that the right brigade (197th) could not reach its jumping-off line in time. The brigade's diary says that all available staff officers were sent out with orders

to push forward all men who were able to move quickly and leave those who were exhausted to come on later. Men struggled up throughout the night but were unable to get right up to the tape line by zero hour.

<sup>17</sup> Except that the preparatory bombardments were now interspersed with periods of silence. In the attack the rate of advance would be practically the same as for Oct. 4. The barrage would lie for 4 minutes 150 yards ahead of the infantry; then advance the first 200 yards at 100 yards in 4 minutes, and the rest of the way to the first objective at 100 in 6, and to the second objective at 100 in 8.

<sup>18</sup> The daylight saving "summer" time had ceased on Oct 7, when the clocks were retarded an hour and the B.E.F. reverted to true time.

<sup>19</sup> Birdwood was so shocked by the particulars which reached his ears that he conceived that the corps and divisional commanders should be frankly informed of them. The sole effect of his representation, however, was to imperil the career of a splendid officer of the division (a brother of the Maxwells of Mouquet Farm and of Messines) who indirectly and unwittingly had been the channel through which Birdwood received the information.

At that hour, 5.20 a.m., Lieutenants Rutledge<sup>20</sup> and King<sup>21</sup> of the 3rd Division's artillery, waiting at the front to join the infantry, could find no sign of them. The commander of the leading battalion also had come on early, and now, thinking that the attack must have been postponed, he went back to his pillbox. Actually, the head of his battalion was then not far away, struggling with conditions which (says the diary of the second battalion in the column, the 2/8th Lancashire Fusiliers)

were almost indescribable. The night was inky, the track led over ground covered with innumerable shell-holes full of mud and water. This march, which would normally take about 1 to 1½ hours to complete, occupied 11½ hours, with the result that the battalion arrived in the front line 20 minutes late.

The battalion commander having been wounded, a company commander, Captain Macpherson,<sup>22</sup> led on these troops as they arrived. An Australian diarist, who a few hours later met a junior subaltern of the division, helmet-less and puttee-less, with head bandaged, stumbling back along the duckboards of the 2nd Australian Division, has set down the description of the fight which this youngster gave him:

Ah doan' know what our brigade was doin' to put us in after a twelve hours' march—twelve hours from beginning to end. We had no duckboards like these—we plugged through the mud. We didn't know where the tapes were, and by the time we arrived there our barrage had gone on half-an-hour. The men were so done they could hardly stand oop an' hold a rifle. We didn't know where our starting position was, but we went on after the barrage. I'm sorry for the Australians,<sup>23</sup> and it was our first stoont too. We're a new division, ye know.

Asked if he saw any Germans, he said,

Ah saw eight or nine and ran at them with my revolver, and they came running in—but we were held up on the third (*sic*) objective.

The Germans' resistance had been feeble. They surrendered in numbers even before this ragged advance, an hour late for the barrage, and on the Passchendaele crest the second objective was eventually reached by a considerable number of the 197th Brigade. But neither the 198th on the left, nor the Australians on the right, were within touch or view. The 198th Brigade and the 49th Division, although their assemblies were nearly complete by zero hour, had

<sup>20</sup> Lieut. H. F. Rutledge, 7th A.F.A. Bde. Grazier; of Bungendore, N.S.W.; b. Goulburn, N.S.W., 11 March, 1891. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>21</sup> Lieut. C. B. King, M.C.; 8th A.F.A. Bde. Station hand; of Sydney; b. Randwick, N.S.W., 1897.

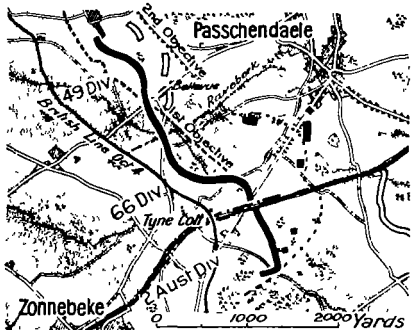
<sup>22</sup> Capt B. Macpherson, M.C.; 2/8th Bn., Lancashire Fusiliers. Cotton manufacturer's representative; of Manchester, Eng.; b. Manchester, 1 Sept., 1883.

<sup>23</sup> The 2nd Australian Division had to go on and attack alone.

received little advantage from that circumstance. As the 1/4th York and Lancaster afterwards reported, the "irregularity and weakness of our field-gun barrage" left the Germans unhampered and their machine-guns unsuppressed.

No single German was found killed by shell-fire . . . there was no curtain of fire at all, and it was impossible to see where the edge of the barrage was intended to be.

The line of shells was not sufficiently accurate for its movement to be recognised; and whatever assistance it might have given was lost through delay in the mud of the Ravebeek. After crossing this, the 49th Division (on the old New Zealand front) was held up by the dense, unbroken wire and intact pillboxes on the Bellevue Spur. Meanwhile the Germans there directed a deadly fire into the flank of the 66th Division. Its left brigade, though some parties went far ahead, was held up 200-300 yards short of the first objective. About noon, officers of the right brigade, which had penetrated much deeper on the Passchendaele Ridge, endeavoured to turn back a flank to face the fire from Bellevue. But neighbouring parts of their force, mistaking this movement for a withdrawal, retired, and the



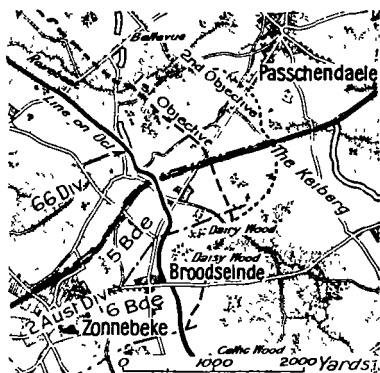
whole line near Passchendaele came back to the first objective. Meanwhile the 49th Division, in brave but futile efforts to push up its supports under fire from the Bellevue blockhouses, had incurred much additional loss. About 1 p.m. an airman reported flares along the final objective not only of the 66th but of the 49th Division, in one part beyond the wire and pillboxes of Bellevue Spur. The brigade staffs doubted the accuracy of the report, but they were ordered to push on and consolidate the line supposed to have been reached. Through difficulty of communication, this order could not be carried out, but during the night the reserve brigade tried to obtain touch with the supposed line. Its patrols immediately

ran into Germans.<sup>24</sup> The 66th Division also was ordered to retake its final objective at 5.15. The operation, however, was prevented by a heavy German barrage at that hour. A German counter-attack in the Ravebeek valley was easily stopped. The line of the 66th Division was at night reported as being a little in rear of the first objective.

The duty laid upon I Anzac this day was to form a flank for the 66th Division. The commander of the 197th Brigade afterwards reported that this flank, as well as his left flank, had been unsupported at the final objective. What happened was as follows.

The task was not extensive, and the two divisions that had made the great attack on October 4th were kept in the line to carry it out. But only the left division, the 2nd, was to make ground, and only its left brigade was to advance to any depth. The right brigade would merely blunt the angle by carrying out a shallow advance through Dairy and Daisy Woods. For the advance on the left, the 2nd Division employed its 5th (N.S. Wales) Brigade, which had been in reserve on October 4th. The 6th (Victoria) Brigade would make the shallow advance on the right.

In the rain that followed October 4th every available unit of I Anzac had been concentrating upon the basic task of constructing means of communication; and so great was the difficulty that on October 5th Birdwood had had to inform Plumer that the Second Army's proposals for exploitation, involving the advance of most of the heavy artillery to behind Tokio Spur, were beyond possibility of attainment so far as I Anzac was concerned. The light railway could not be pushed on in time. Smith's Road



<sup>24</sup> It is certain that the airman was mistaken. Late in the afternoon another airman marked down the line of British posts in the same relative positions, but 500 yards farther back.

would require great improvement before it could carry heavy artillery, and this single avenue could hardly suffice for all purposes of the corps. Plumer had already called on the X Corps to provide six infantry battalions to work upon the light railways of I and II Anzac. The almost desperate task of planking Smith's Road had been entrusted to Colonel Nicholson of I Anzac staff, who employed upon it the 1st and 2nd Pioneer Battalions. The 5th Pioneers worked upon the tramways. The engineers with infantry fatigues extended the duckwalks and buried the signal cables. When, on October 6th, the 6th Brigade came out of battle, its men, after a few hours' sleep in shell-holes in the rain, were roused for six hours' cable-laying. Having no overcoats, they carried their waterproof sheets as capes, and returned at dusk to find their shell-holes drenched. They slept there, some with their feet in water, and next day were sent to bury cables and work on the tramway. Under such treatment the 6th Brigade, and the 7th also, simply faded away. Hundreds were evacuated through exhaustion, hundreds more with incipient "trench feet." By October 9th the 6th Brigade was down to 600 available men, and the 7th to 800. It was suspected, when the 6th Brigade eventually went into the line, that certain numbers of men had temporarily deserted, but the 24th Battalion, which apparently investigated the matter, could find no definite cases.<sup>25</sup> The 5th Brigade, which had not been employed for the great attack, had still 2,000. The meaning of these cold figures in terms of human suffering may be judged from the notes of the Official War Correspondent, who described in his diary the men who met him on the duckboards on October 9th:<sup>26</sup>

It was on the Menin road that I first noticed the condition in which our men were coming back. A couple . . . passed us, going very slow. They were white and drawn and detached, and put one foot slowly in front of the other, as I had not seen men do since the Somme winter . . . but these men looked whiter. . . . On our way up the duckboards we met an officer of the 28th Battalion (7th Brigade) . . . who said that the mud was "nearly as bad as Flers." Murdoch asked if it were quite as bad. He shook his head: "Oh, no—we've never had anything quite like that!" A number of men of

<sup>25</sup> The process by which a company became so reduced without fighting may be illustrated by figures relating to a company of the 20th Battalion. This was 97 strong on Sept. 29. By Oct. 3 it had suffered 8 casualties; and 21 more had been hit or evacuated by Oct. 7. On the 8th 7 were killed or wounded, and 6 sent out exhausted. A few more were lost during the following night, bringing its strength on Oct. 9 to 50 or less.

<sup>26</sup> See Vol. XII., plate 399.

7th Bde. and 3rd Bde. coming out, the 7th Brigade always looking the worst and sometimes . . . looking like a dead man looks, and scarcely able to walk. . . . A man of the 20th Bn. (5th Brigade) limping. He had some wound inside the thigh . . . which was still bleeding. . . . As he passed us he grinned up and volunteered, "We got the b——s good on the second ridge." . . .

On October 7th, on being ordered to the line, the 6th Brigade arranged to send back to the reinforcement camp at Caestre 100 of the most exhausted men of each battalion, and bring up 100 fresh men in their place. The 100 for the 23rd Battalion had not arrived when, on the night of October 8th, the battalion went to the line to relieve the 19th (5th Brigade). Lieutenant-Colonel Beiers<sup>27</sup> of the 19th found the relieving battalion so weak that he at first refused to allow it to take over the front line. The 21st Battalion, which was to have been held in reserve, was accordingly ordered to take over half the front of the 23rd and to attack beside it.<sup>28</sup>

For convenience the railway had been adopted as the boundary between I and II Anzac in the forward area as well as in the rear.<sup>29</sup> In the early hours of October 9th the 20th Battalion (New South Wales), with the 17th (New South Wales) in rear, formed up on its tapes immediately south of "Defy Crossing" near "Tyne Cott."<sup>30</sup> Though stronger than those of the 6th Brigade, their companies were down to 50-60 men.<sup>31</sup> These were strung out by each battalion into a single line at wide intervals, the 20th keeping a flank group north of the railway. Of the infantry on the left

<sup>27</sup> Lieut-Col H. M. Beiers, M.C. Commanded 19th Bn., 1917/18. Constructional and mechanical engineer; of Wide Bay district, Q'land; b. Maryborough, Q'land, 17 March, 1889. Died, 28 Feb., 1940.

<sup>28</sup> The strength of the 21st with its reinforcement was 8 officers and 220 men.

<sup>29</sup> The 66th Division on the night of Oct. 6 handed over to the 7th Brigade the 41st Battalion's old front south of the railway. On the following night the 5th Brigade, then holding the rest of the divisional front, took over this part also. Thirty German aeroplanes had been over, and, during this relief, the German shelling became intense. In the 1st Division's sector Major A. Steele (Mt. Gambier, S. Aust.), the capable officer acting in command of the 11th Battalion, was killed, as was Lieut. L. C. Cooke (Cowcowing, W. Aust.), of the same battalion. Farther north a battery on the Keiberg was shooting direct into the 19th Battalion's trench near Daisy Wood. Near the railway the troops under Capt. Gould (27th Bn.) suffered over 40 casualties. On the crest a fluster of men, hurrying all ways, with a shrill voice issuing orders and curses in their midst, proved to be the 20th Battalion, caught in the barrage and being hauled into position by Colonel Ralston. Its rear company suffered many casualties. The sight of about 50 German infantry extended at Daisy Wood caused the S.O.S. signal to be fired. The barrage fell within two minutes, and the movement ceased, but from German records it does not appear that an attack was intended. The shelling, and the weakness of the 6th Brigade, delayed the relief of the 18th and 19th Battalions, which were to have made the coming attack. The 17th and 20th were therefore allotted for the operation.

<sup>30</sup> The 17th Battalion, at an hour before zero, withdrew 150 yards from the front line for the purpose.

<sup>31</sup> About 40 men of the 20th Battalion also went astray during the night.



no sign was seen. But a solitary machine-gun officer of the 66th Division, whose guns and crew had been hit or left in the mud, had struggled on to the railway cutting.

The outburst of the bombardment at 5.20 filled the air with sound, but the line of the eighteen-pounder barrage was difficult to discern. The 20th Battalion, which was not originally to have taken part, had brought in most of its junior officers to give them experience. Immediately after the start, part of the barrage seemed to shorten or to remain stationary,<sup>32</sup> and the 20th found itself beneath it, and suffered loss. The line also came under deadly enfilade from a German post firing across the railway from near the first objective of the 66th Division. Many casualties were suffered.<sup>33</sup> Fire from ahead was less troublesome, but as the right advanced it heard with deep anxiety the rattle of rifles and machine-guns continuing on its flank, and eventually on its left rear. A post ahead was easily outflanked, and a large number of Germans with several machine-guns captured.<sup>34</sup> The line of the 17th here caught up the 20th, and they went on to their first objective together.

The firing on the left flank came from a strong-post of Germans in an old dump of cement bags near Defy Crossing. Part of the 20th Battalion eventually worked behind it and captured 40 Germans.<sup>35</sup> The two battalions waited on their first objective in the muddy hollow before the Keiberg while the shells burst along the hedges and pillboxes on that hill. The pillboxes were constantly hit, but there was no dust or smoke-screen. A German machine-gun in a small wood ("Decline Copse")<sup>36</sup> on the left, where the railway cut through the hill, was firing throughout the pause in the

<sup>32</sup> Similar occurrences were noted by other units during the Passchendaele fighting.

<sup>33</sup> Including Lieuts. E. C. New and A. R. McDowell (17th), and Sergeants W. Wheate and E. A. Tate (20th) killed, and Capt. F. S. Hall and Lieut. T. McGill (20th) wounded. (New belonged to Haberfield, N.S.W.; McDowell to Marrickville, N.S.W.; Wheate to Sydney, N.S.W., and Liverpool, Eng.; Tate to Kangaroo Valley, N.S.W.; Hall to Ootha, N.S.W.; McGill to Lewisham, N.S.W.)

<sup>34</sup> The portion of the 20th attacking this post was led by its N.C.O's, although two of them, R S M. C. A. Pryor (Sydney) and Sergeant A. E. Bladwell (Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.) were hampered by wounds. They had only one rifle-grenade. This was fired by Sergeant C. D. G. Fleming (Nelson, N.Z., and Sydney), and C S M. T. W. Gooda (Warralda, N.S.W.), but went wide. The troops, however, worked round the Germans, threw a couple of bombs, and then rushed them.

<sup>35</sup> Sergeant H. C. M. Sharp (Millmerran, Q'land) was given the task of clearing another machine-gun from in front of the 66th Division. He took with him L/cpl J. S. Reid (Enfield, N.S.W.) and one other man. They captured the gun, killed part of the crew, and brought back several prisoners. These were at once used, with others, for carrying back wounded.

<sup>36</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 401.

advance. A much nearer wood, "Decoy Copse," in the hollow in front of the centre, was cleared by Lieutenant Edwards<sup>37</sup> of the 20th with a few men.<sup>38</sup> Few parties of the enemy this day offered more than a feeble resistance to either the 2nd Australian or 66th Division. The mere approach of the troops set many bolting from Decoy Wood and the Keiberg hedges, with the Australian machine-guns playing on them. Another party of the 20th seized "Rhine" (known to the Germans as Keiberg North), the fortified ruin of a farm



lying beyond the right of the 5th Brigade's sector. The 6th Brigade was not yet up; its nearest battalion (23rd) had veered northwards behind the 17th, missing Dairy Wood from which Germans were now firing with a machine-gun into the rear of the 5th Brigade. Fortunately it shot high. By arrangement with Lieutenant Allan<sup>39</sup> the 23rd, as it advanced, dropped posts along the flank of the 17th, ending at Rhine, and thus safeguarding the flank.

The intensification of the barrage signalling the time for the further advance was not easily detected. On the right, at about the proper time, Lieutenants Allan, Lyons, and Ham<sup>40</sup> of the 17th, with about thirty men in all, pushed on independently towards the most conspicuous landmark above the hedges of the Keiberg, a large barn known as "Assyria."<sup>41</sup> In the intervening hedges two German posts were captured, together with 17 men<sup>42</sup> and 3 machine-guns. To extend the flank, a few groups of two or three men each were dropped by the right as it advanced. Severe fire from the hedges around Assyria presently stopped this flank, but Lieutenants

<sup>37</sup> Lieut. C. C. Edwards, M.M.; 20th Bn. Labourer; of Rockhampton, Q'land; b. Rockhampton, 1890. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>38</sup> He captured a dozen Germans. Sergeant Sharp and L/Cpl. Reid also beat through this wood, Reid being killed by a sniper as they returned.

<sup>39</sup> Capt. H. T. Allan, M.C.; 17th Bn. University student; of Hunter's Hill, N.S.W.; b. Hunter's Hill, 5 Jan., 1895.

<sup>40</sup> Lieut. W. J. Ham, 17th Bn. Accountant; of Mosman, N.S.W.; b. Miller's Point, N.S.W., 3 July, 1893.

<sup>41</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 387.

<sup>42</sup> Of these, 10 were captured by Corporal W. O. Rabey (Windsor district and Five Dock, N.S.W.), 17th Bn.

Lyons and Ham drove the Germans from several posts between Assyria and the railway.

It was at the railway cutting that the fight was heaviest. Here the left of the 20th came on with the 17th. Most of the officers had already fallen, but, after a pause at a road-bank at the foot of the hill, a wounded officer of the 5th Machine Gun Company—apparently Lieutenant Gritten, who with Gilchrist and Rentoul had led Gellibrand's forlorn hope at Bullecourt—gave the word to advance. Lieutenant Dickens<sup>43</sup> (17th) ordered Company Sergeant-Major Raitt<sup>44</sup> to form a party and bomb the dugouts along the foot of the northern bank of the railway cutting while others captured the height on both sides. As Raitt bombed the nearer entrances, Germans bolted from the farther ones and fled through the distant end of the cutting. Having cleared the dugouts, he climbed the southern side of the cutting and joined a wounded officer of the 20th and two wounded men in a shell-hole. At the same time Lieutenant Gritten and his machine-gun crew climbed the northern bank and turned their gun on the fleeing enemy.



The 5th Brigade was thus on its objective, but quite alone, and with numbers too small to eject those Germans who remained between its posts. Within five minutes German machine-guns swept away Gritten's post, wounding every one in it and driving them from their gun to shelter in the cutting. On the southern side, ten yards from Raitt's shell-hole, were Germans in another shell-hole, with a machine-gun. With a bomb Raitt set them in flight and, chasing them into a trench, ran against another German. Being too close to use his bayonet, Raitt knocked the man down and then shot him. But he himself was now quite alone, and the Germans were coming back in numbers. Raitt dived for the cutting, found it empty except for dead and wounded, and, as the Germans entered it, he escaped along the railway. Other parties had

<sup>43</sup> Lieut. G. M. Dickens, 17th Bn Insurance clerk; of Ashfield, N.S.W.; b. Ashfield, 24 June, 1884. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>44</sup> R.S.M. J. W. Raitt, M.M. (No. 1276; 17th Bn.). Labourer; of Sydney; b. Inverberrie, Scotland, 1888.

much the same experience. On the right Allan had had to fall back 300 yards. The centre posts were driven, first, from the summit, and, later, from the slope. The first objective was held, but, of the troops in front, Lieutenants Gritten (5th Machine Gun Company), Dickens and Lyons (17th Battalion), and Lumb<sup>45</sup> (20th), and a number of their men were never seen again.

It was just when the Australian left was driven off the Keiberg that parties of the 66th Division were observed advancing on Passchendaele Ridge. Meanwhile news had reached 5th Brigade Headquarters that the advance was unsupported on the left. Accordingly, at 9.15 the 18th and part of the 19th Battalions were sent forward.<sup>46</sup> By that time, however, the advanced line had been lost,<sup>47</sup> and these troops merely helped to form the line along the first objective and to safeguard the left flank.

The 6th Brigade attacked on a front of 1,200 yards with all four battalions, their objectives from north to south being as follows:—

<i>Unit.</i>	<i>Objective.</i>
23rd Bn. . . .	Rhine (beyond Dairy Wood)
21st Bn. . . .	Knoll 38 (beyond interval between Dairy and Daisy Woods)
24th Bn. . . .	Edge of Busy Wood (beyond Daisy Wood)
22nd Bn. . . .	Neighbourhood of old German headquarters at sandpit on Moorslede road.

Their average strength at the starting point was only 7 officers and 150 others. At least half of these, however, were fresh from the nucleus at Caestre.

<sup>45</sup> Lieut. E. F. Lumb, 20th Bn. Packer; of Sydney; b. Woolwich, Eng., 1883. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>46</sup> The 18th had moved up to the old front line, and, in accordance with orders, established a new headquarters on Broodseinde Ridge. The pillbox chosen—the only one large enough—lay in view of the Germans, and was also in their new barrage line. At this place Lieut. A. V. L. Hull, signalling officer, while sending a message by Lucas lamp, was sniped through the neck. He was pulled into a shell-hole and his wound was dressed. Later, an incendiary shell ignited the camouflage of brushwood and the timber of the dugout. Lieut. A. W. Irvine pulled Lieut. A. T. Doig out of the fire, but Hull, Sergeant R. G. Fountain, and 10 others were killed. (Hull belonged to Lockhart, N.S.W.; Irvine to Sydney and Wanaaring, N.S.W.; Doig to North Sydney and Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.; Fountain to Woy Woy, N.S.W.)

<sup>47</sup> One company of the 19th had been ordered to form a defensive flank along the railway, but it lost its officers by a single shell. Lieut. H. E. B. Smith (Annandale, N.S.W.) being killed, and Lieut. F. B. Forster (North Sydney), wounded. Lieut. L. H. Bignell (Flemington, Vic., and Marrickville, N.S.W.), of the next company, was about to lead on the officerless troops when their advance was stopped near the first objective by a subaltern of the 17th, who said that the remnant of his battalion was back there.

So thin was the barrage that from the first the German machine-guns played almost with impunity upon the advancing parties. On the right the two detachments of the 22nd under Captain Bunning<sup>48</sup> and Lieutenant Anderson,<sup>49</sup> attacking the neighbourhood of the old German headquarters at the sandpit, reached the area of their objective, dug in with the German posts close beside them, and suffered heavily in the fighting with these.<sup>50</sup>

Next on the left, the 24th Battalion had 200 yards to go before reaching Daisy Wood. Half-way across it met strong rifle-fire from the wood, and the right company, under Captain Williams<sup>51</sup> when a little further on, was checked by opposition from the hedges near the sandpit. At that hour only the flashes of the enemy's shots could be seen. First Williams, then Lieutenant Pickett (of Bullecourt fame), going forward to bomb these Germans, were shot dead, and Lieutenant Nation<sup>52</sup> was wounded, but Sergeant Prime<sup>53</sup> with a dozen surviving men formed a post at the southern corner of the wood. Meanwhile the left company had just reached the wood when a machine-gun was suddenly switched upon it from near Dairy Wood, 150 yards farther north. This almost wiped out the left.<sup>54</sup> Under Captain Smythe, the centre had pushed on into the copse, a thin stubble resembling Polygon Wood, and now swung round facing this



<sup>48</sup> Capt. W. H. Bunning, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Clerk and paymaster; of North Fitzroy, Vic.; b. Clifton Hill, Vic., 22 Feb., 1894.

<sup>49</sup> Lieut. K. S. Anderson, M.C.; 22nd Bn. Clerk; of Portland, Vic.; b. Portland, 8 May, 1892.

<sup>50</sup> The southern party, under Capt. Bunning, reached its position under cover of rifle grenades, but Lieut. J. D. Campbell (Warrnambool, Vic., and Narngulu, W. Aust.), 6th M.G. Coy., was killed and, while digging in, Lieut. A. Skene-Smith (Philippine Islands and Melbourne) was sniped. As he lay on a stretcher he was hit again and killed. The northern party, under Lieut. Anderson, when it had gone 20 yards, was almost wiped out by machine-gun fire, but eight survivors under Lieut. P. G. Chalmers (Ballarat, Vic.) pushed on.

<sup>51</sup> Capt. C. M. Williams, M.C., 24th Bn. Station overseer; of Willandra, N.S.W., and Melbourne; b. Cairns, Q'land, 2 July, 1891. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>52</sup> Lieut. N. C. Nation, 24th Bn. Accountant; of Malvern, Vic.; b. Moore Park, Sydney, 1888. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>53</sup> Sgt. A. G. Prime, M.M. (No. 933; 24th Bn.). Clerk; of Castlemaine, Vic.; b. Castlemaine, 25 Dec., 1896.

<sup>54</sup> Lieuts. R. M. Oliver (West Melbourne) and G. W. Day (Camberwell, Vic.) were among the wounded.

gun.<sup>55</sup> It was most difficult to detect, but Lieutenant Scales and Sergeant Radley<sup>56</sup> eventually caught sight of it in a heap of bricks between Daisy and Dairy Woods. They sniped several of the Germans, who thenceforward could only make hurried shots.

The 21st, which should have passed between the woods, was mostly held up before reaching them. Lieutenants Hogan<sup>57</sup> and Place<sup>58</sup> were killed on their edge.<sup>59</sup> Sergeants Bowler,<sup>60</sup> Weir,<sup>61</sup> and Warren<sup>62</sup> got through and established posts far out, that of Bowler being in touch with the 23rd at Rhine. The action of the 23rd, which veered north of Dairy Wood<sup>63</sup> on the flank of the 17th, has already been described.

The 6th Brigade had thus placed a few posts near its objective, but there were German posts in their rear, and most of the brigade was held up in front of these or among them. It was observed that immediately the attack was launched the German batteries assumed that their forward area was lost, and shelled it. The posts of each side signalled to their respective aeroplanes, which came over alternately; the German infantry fired flares to attract the attention of its airman, and the Australians waved maps, or lit ground flares for theirs. Divisional headquarters thus received early information of the position of the Australian posts, but no other news. Few runners lived to get through. The four battalion commanders of the 6th Brigade<sup>64</sup> were rendered anxious by the thinness of their line. The 28th Battalion

<sup>55</sup> Lieut. B. F. Nicholas (Trafalgar, Vic.), after making touch between the centre and right, was killed by it.

<sup>56</sup> Sgt. J. J. Radley, M.M. (No. 262; 24th Bn.). Farm hand; of Chiltern, Vic.; b. South Melbourne, 1891.

<sup>57</sup> Lieut. A. D. Hogan, 21st Bn. Jewellery salesman and optician; of Lismore and Wagga Wagga, N.S.W.; b. Sydney, 30 Nov., 1886. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>58</sup> Lieut. H. L. Place, D.C.M.; 21st Bn. Blacksmith, of Murat Bay, S. Aust.; b. Fowler's Bay, S. Aust., 1 Aug., 1893. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>59</sup> Lieut. D. G. Armstrong (Kyneton, Vic.) had been killed and Lieut. H. N. Garton and 10 men wounded before reaching the jumping-off position.

<sup>60</sup> Lieut. T. L. Bowler, D.C.M.; 21st Bn. Engine-driver; of Burnley, Vic.; b. Elsternwick, Vic., 6 Jan., 1886.

<sup>61</sup> Lieut. R. L. Weir, M.C., D.C.M.; 21st Bn. Pastoralist; of Bundoora, Vic.; b. Croxton, Vic., 1894. Killed in action, 26 July, 1918.

<sup>62</sup> Sgt. A. Warren, M.M. (No. 1784; 21st Bn.). Farm hand; of Cathcart, Vic.; b. Bilston, Staffs, Eng., 1892. Killed in action, 9 Oct., 1917.

<sup>63</sup> Advancing towards the wood, Capt. A. J. Noall (Geelong, Vic.) was wounded, and Lieut. W. O. Frost (Haberfield, N.S.W.) killed.

<sup>64</sup> Some months earlier, misunderstandings between himself and the divisional staff had caused Gellibrand to ask for relief from the brigade command. Birdwood was eager to compose the difficulty, but Gellibrand would not take the opportunity offered for explanation. Gellibrand's request was therefore granted, and he was temporarily sent to a training command in England. The task of his successor, General Paton, was difficult, for the battalion commanders could not accustom themselves to the change. In the present operation they shared a common headquarters and endeavoured to conduct the operation between them, merely asking for support as they needed it.

had already reinforced it, and the 27th was now ordered up to the old British trench near Daisy Wood.<sup>65</sup> It found the old front line already crowded with troops driven back, and could only stay there and be shelled.<sup>66</sup> Dairy Wood and half of Daisy Wood being still untaken were a menace to the 5th Brigade's right, and its brigadier, General Smith, had decided to use his last reserve, two companies of the 19th under Captain Taylor<sup>67</sup> in clearing them. Reaching Nieuwemolen, Taylor sent an N.C.O. (Corporal Lynch<sup>68</sup>) and two scouts along the hedges to Rhine, where he knew the 17th should be, and, on seeing them arrive safely, brought up a platoon by twos and threes to line out on the northern edge of Dairy Wood. When, despite sharp fire, they arrived, he ordered up the rest under Lieutenant Blake,<sup>69</sup> and then, covered by their fire, scoured Dairy Wood,<sup>70</sup> and captured a German post immediately south of it. Fire now received was traced to a trench in Daisy Wood marked by a line of German helmets. Taylor had them completely enfiladed, and, covered by a Lewis gun, he and Lieutenant Roy Smith<sup>71</sup> with eight men made for the place. A few Germans bolted. A white flag was waved, and 15 of the enemy surrendered.<sup>72</sup>

Taylor's party had, unknowingly, been assisted by Lieutenant Scales (24th) in Daisy Wood. Seeing that the Germans in the post near him were turning round their machine-gun upon the approaching men, Scales had crawled out, shot the gunner and five other Germans, and then rushed the post and captured the machine-gun. This cleared the opposition at Daisy Wood, and Stokes mortars under Lieutenant Painter<sup>73</sup> had suppressed those at the sandpit.

<sup>65</sup> The 25th and 26th reinforced the 5th Brigade farther north.

<sup>66</sup> By this shelling the 27th alone lost Captain E. S. Gould and Lieuts. J. Jury and S. Organ killed, and Lieut. R. B. Coulter mortally wounded. Two companies of the 27th were eventually withdrawn. In the 25th Captain S. S. Bond was killed (Gould belonged to Unley, S. Aust.; Jury to Magill, S. Aust.; Organ to Cheltenham, Vic.; Coulter to St. Peter's, S. Aust.; Bond to South Brisbane).

<sup>67</sup> While in support on the crest, Taylor's company had been shelled, Lieut. F. R. Bennett (Guildford, W. Aust., and Rose Bay, N.S.W.) being killed, and Lieut. A. L. Lillie (North Sydney) wounded.

<sup>68</sup> Cpl. P. J. Lynch, M.M. (No. 915; 19th Bn.). Letter sorter; of Summer Hill, N.S.W.; b. Forest Lodge, N.S.W., 1891.

<sup>69</sup> Capt. L. W. Blake, M.C.; 19th Bn. Telegraphist; of Sydney; b. Brisbane, 16 Sept., 1889.

<sup>70</sup> The machine-gun was found abandoned, in a log shelter.

<sup>71</sup> Lieut. R. A. W. Smith, 10th Bn. Surveyor's assistant; of Annandale, N.S.W.; b. Annandale, 1894. Died of wounds, 15 Oct., 1917.

<sup>72</sup> They were unwilling to go to the rear, explaining by signs that German posts farther back would shoot them. Lieut. Smith, standing urging them to start, was mortally wounded. The Germans were sent to the rear carrying him, and, as they feared, were shot at, one being wounded.

<sup>73</sup> Lieut. L. G. W. Painter, M.M.; 13rd Bn. Carpenter; of North Carlton, Vic.; b. Ringwood, Vic., 1897.

Captain Smythe (24th), with Lieutenant Blake and Sergeant O'Hara<sup>74</sup> (19th) and Lieutenant Gow (24th), enclosed the wood in the line of posts. Before dark, through the persistency of Taylor and Smythe, the essential parts of the 6th Brigade's objective had been secured.<sup>75</sup>

At this time the 66th Division also still held most of its first objective. At dusk, however, lines of Germans were seen advancing both north of the railway against the 66th Division and over the northern end of the Keiberg against the 5th Brigade.<sup>76</sup> The farthest Australian outposts, near Rhine, were much too weak to be maintained with safety. After firing the S.O.S. signal, Lieutenant Allan withdrew his post; others were either killed or captured.<sup>77</sup> The barrage caught the Germans as they descended the Keiberg, and no counter-attack came through. But during the night, when the 66th Division fell back farther, the Australian post next to the railway also withdrew. Thenceforth the junction of the divisions was at Defy Crossing.

In order to cause the enemy to spread his artillery-fire for an hour or two, instead of concentrating it upon the main front, the 1st Australian Division had, at zero hour of the attack, raided against Celtic Wood, a large, broken copse containing many pillboxes.<sup>78</sup> Though reported as successful,



Route taken by Taylor shown by dotted line.

<sup>74</sup> Sgt. W. H. O'Hara, D.C.M. (No. 1260; 19th Bn.). Carpenter; of Sydney; b. Waipiti, N.Z., 1890. Died of wounds, 4 Oct., 1918.

<sup>75</sup> A telephone line was brought some way towards the new front.

<sup>76</sup> In the morning, also, at 9.25, the barrage had been called down upon a force of the enemy advancing on the southern end of the Keiberg.

<sup>77</sup> Lieut. Lyons (17th Bn.) had been killed, as was Sergeant Warren (21st). Lieuts. A. G. Walsley (Kensington, Vic.), H. H. Corney (Kyneton and St. Kilda, Vic.), and B. Bollingham (Richmond, Vic.) of the 21st were missing. Of the 22nd's posts, that under Lieut. Chalmers was blown out by a shell at noon, and Capt. Bunning, after beating off two attempts by the enemy to approach, found his post isolated, and withdrew it after nightfall.

<sup>78</sup> The edge of this copse had been successfully raided on the night of Oct. 6 by 2 officers and 60 others of the 11th and 12th Battalions, 15 prisoners of the 448th I.R. (233rd Division) and a machine-gun being captured. On the same night the 18th Battalion raided south of the Moorslede road, 13 prisoners of the 450th I.R. and a machine-gun being captured.



the operation ended disastrously.<sup>79</sup> Of 85 officers and men, only 14 had by next day returned unwounded. The missing were never heard of again. Their names were not in any list of prisoners received during the war. The Graves Commission found no trace of their bodies after it.<sup>80</sup>

All the German divisions facing the Second Army's attack had been relieved since October 4. The thrust of II Anzac fell upon the 16th and 195th, and that of I Anzac on the 233rd. The previous order to increase the front-line garrisons had been cancelled by the Fourth German Army on October 7, but the new system of conditionally holding the forward zone had not yet been fully adopted. For counter-attack against II Anzac the enemy employed the line divisions and parts of the 20th and 45th Reserve, which had suffered so heavily in the previous fighting. But the difficulties of the three previous battle-days were largely absent—in the soft ground (says the history of the 210th R.I.R.) the British barrage lost much of its effect. Nevertheless the casualties of the 195th Division were extremely severe. Opposite I Anzac the 233rd Division re-established its line with its own reserves,<sup>81</sup> the counter-attack division (220th) merely sending a battalion to support.

<sup>79</sup> The raid was to be covered by five batteries of field artillery firing on a front of some 800 yards, but the fire appeared so thin (reference to the events related on pp. 902-6 will show why) that the infantry was uncertain when it began. The troops were fresh from Caestre camp, and keen, if inexperienced. They advanced by clock-time, and were seen to enter the north-western end of the wood. A party under Lieut. F. J. Scott (Gawler, S. Aust.) worked behind the foremost German posts, which began to retreat, but the South Australians were then attacked from the farther end of the wood. A few wounded men returned early in the night, and some others after dark. Of the five officers, Lieuts. Scott and A. N. Rae (Kilkenny, S. Aust.) were known to have been killed, Lieuts. R. P. James (Renmark, S. Aust.) and L. B. Laurie (Salisbury, S. Aust.) were wounded, and Lieut. W. H. Wilsdon (Caltowie, S. Aust.) was missing. Next day stretcher-bearers with improvised red-cross flags attempted to approach the wood in search of other wounded; but about this time there had been some shooting of stretcher-bearers on both sides on a neighbouring part of the I Anzac front—such incidents usually arose through suspicion that the red-cross flag was being misused, or through the spread of largely untrue propaganda as to treachery. This time the bearers were shot down despite their flags. So far as has been ascertained, the records of the 448th I.R., the German regiment which held the sector, contain no mention of the attack.

<sup>80</sup> The 2nd Division's casualties (total, 1,253) were:—

5th Infantry Brigade.			6th Infantry Brigade.			7th Infantry Brigade.		
	Off.	O.R.		Off.	O.R.		Off.	O.R.
17th Bn.	12	177	21st Bn.	8	160	25th Bn.	2	50
18th Bn.	5	53	22nd Bn.	3	45	26th Bn.	—	32
19th Bn.	8	82	23rd Bn.	2	59	27th Bn.	4	39
20th Bn.	6	145	24th Bn.	9	104	28th Bn.	1	58
5th M.G. Coy.	2	26	6th M.G. Coy.	2	26	7th M.G. Coy.	—	17
5th L.T.M. Bty.	—	3	6th L.T.M. Bty.	—	1	7th L.T.M. Bty.	—	4
	33	486		24	395		7	200
Artillery	3	29	Signal Coy.	2	4	Pioneers	3	34
Engineers	2	12	22nd M.G. Coy.	—	12	Fld. Ambs.	1	6

<sup>81</sup> The 449th I.R., south of the railway, had been driven back, and the 450th, farther south, had to throw back its flank. The commander of the 449th I.R. ordered a counter-attack at 4.30. The divisional commander cancelled this, considering that it required thorough preparation by artillery. The corps commander then ordered a counter-attack at 5.30 by both regiments from the south-east. The 449th, however, received the order too late. The 450th merely extended its flank northwards and obtained touch.