

## CHAPTER IX

### THE BATTLE OF HAMEL

THE night of July 3rd was particularly quiet, but was also extraordinarily interesting to any observer who knew what was going forward. At 6 p.m. telegrams had reached the Australian infantry battalions saying that the hour chosen for the attack was 3.10. Several of their commanders saw to it that, as well as their evening meal, the troops had a second hot meal, about midnight (a fact which the American soldiers again record with appreciation).<sup>1</sup> At 10 30 p.m. the tanks, with their engines throttled down, began to make the journey—roughly a mile—from Fouilloy and Hamelet to their assembly line half a mile behind the front, reaching it between 11.45 and 1.15. There they were met by guides from the infantry, who helped the tank section commanders to mark with tapes the tracks from there to the infantry battalions. Meanwhile parties from the infantry were out ahead cutting paths through their own wire or removing extensive lengths of it, while the intelligence officers and engineers laid the tapes. At various times between midnight and 1.45 the rear companies of the 4th Brigade reached the front, and at the same time the companies at the front filed out from the trenches on to their tapes.

The battlefield was partly open grassland, partly covered with deep crops. In one sector (as Capt. Gale noted) the tape "ran through waist-high wheat and clover fields." Even a veteran of so many battles as young Col. McSharry (15th Battalion) was deeply impressed by the silence and perfect

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<sup>1</sup> Lt. Rinkliff (with the 42nd Bn), for example, says: "Capt. Warry sent over a runner with the information that we were to get an additional hot meal before midnight, if possible." Sgts. Peters and Reece write "At 9 p.m. . . . two patrols were sent out with Sgt. Scholes and one with Cpl. Philbin. Rations came up at midnight and we had a meal we enjoyed." The 42nd had a hot meal at 11 p.m. (Scholes was awarded the D.S.C. and the M.M. Philbin later became a captain in the Officers Reserve Corps).

order in which the troops filed "like shadows" to their places. Lieut. Dalziel<sup>2</sup> (43rd Battalion), attached to a platoon of American troops, reported that their wheel on to the tapes, also, was "excellent."

As we were lined up with our bayonets fixed (says the narrative of one American platoon) we all felt nervous . . . but, when we reached our position, we took our places, lay down and soon forgot we were to go over the top. . . . We were soon asleep.

Some battalions of the 11th Brigade, after aligning with their front wave on the tape, were withdrawn fifty yards in accordance with a last-minute message giving them leave to shift back a little until they were certain precisely where their own barrage would fall, as most of the guns had not been ranged. One or two companies were delayed by having to pass through an uncut section of their own wire; some of the Americans following a platoon of the 42nd noted that they themselves, with canvas gaiters, passed through this in half the time taken by the Diggers in puttees. By 3 o'clock the whole force was lying out on the grass and crop behind its tapes. Contrary to the usual practice in the Australian infantry, a warming tot of rum for each man was distributed during this wait.

At 3.2 a.m. the normal early morning harassing fire of the Australian artillery began. Gas, smoke, and high-explosive had been thrown at the enemy about that hour daily for a fortnight. At that moment the sixty tanks were to start at full speed on their last half-mile to the front line. As additional cover for their noise Monash had asked for a night-bombing air squadron to bomb Hamel and the valley behind it from 2.50 a.m. or earlier. Actually the No. 101 Squadron patrolled east of the Fourth Army's front from dusk to dawn, dropping 350 twenty-five pound bombs. Every pilot<sup>3</sup> made at least three flights and two of them four.

What, during the night, could the Germans hear or see? One of a group of Australian observers who spent the whole night on the heights north of the Somme, on the look-out for any sight or sound, has written:

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<sup>2</sup> Lt A. H. Dalziel, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Motor bus company inspector, of Norwood, S. Aust., b. Semaphore, S. Aust., 8 Nov. 1883.

<sup>3</sup> A squadron comprised three flights each of six machines.

Below us (throughout the night) we could see faintly the lagoons and dark trees of the river. On the opposite slope all was very dark—only the outline of the plateau by Villers-Bretonneux against the misty grey of the sky. Every now and then a flare shot like a low rocket out of the woods or fields on the opposite hillside, sailed brilliantly to earth, and lay there dying faintly on the ground. Occasionally the swift whine and bang of a German field-gun pecking into the other side of the valley—you could see the little shell flash before you began to hear the noise. One of our planes began to drone up the valley in the dark.

The night was like the page of an open book. We lay on our backs listening to the drone of this plane, his wanderings and his return. The planes were to bomb all night at intervals on to the enemy infantry if they could find a safe target. Presently from the sky opposite there would shoot down a flare—he was searching for his target. Once or twice the flare fell through the clouds and descended slowly through them like some strange misty moon. At other times from the blackness of the sky high up there slanted a swift series of white sparks most deadly straight and swift. The airman was firing at them with his machine-gun . . . tracer bullets. Twice some plane wandered further over the enemy's line, and those strange strings of little white lights which the men call "strings of onions" were sent floating up by some German group far behind the lines. Four German searchlights began to feel the low clouds for him, moving restlessly in search of him like the eyes of a frightened snail. They shut off—he must have left them. We could not see his bombs, but later in the night dull red explosions on the plateau opposite must have been the bomb bursts from some plane which was still droning in the south.

It was one of the quietest nights I have ever seen on the front. Now and then a machine-gun chattered a few halting sentences. Once or twice our guns carried out their nightly strafe on to some sensitive point behind the German line. About 3 o'clock, when the sky was imperceptibly greying towards dawn, they broke out into the normal dawn bombardment—a spasmodic strafe of a shell or two from every gun.

The tanks started their engines three minutes before they moved. They would take twelve minutes in reaching the infantry, which they should do at 3.14 (four minutes after "zero"), when the barrage, after four minutes in full blast 200 yards out in No-Man's Land, began its advance.

"They can do it in the time," Sir John Monash had told the war correspondents. "We have tried them." He added that if they succeeded in this "the battle is over . . . The only answer the enemy can make to this plan is to discover it, and put down a bombardment."

When the harassing fire started, at 3.2 a.m., the night of suspense was ended. It was certain that the Germans

had discovered nothing. Very few even of the waiting Australian infantry and none of the observers on the heights north of the Somme, straining their ears, had been able to catch any sound of the tanks. Once a few of the 15th Battalion did hear the noise of an engine—it came from a tank that had previously broken down, and consequently had to make the whole of its approach at full power. But the noise of bombing aeroplanes from about 10 p.m. onwards was continuous—as one 'plane receded another would be heard coming up to take its place. The racket of some was exceptional, old F.E. machines being used for certain tasks. The dropping of flares was intended to suggest that the British were searching for signs of a German offensive—indeed one account says that the pilots themselves believed this to be their real task.<sup>4</sup> Once in the night a brilliant parachute flare, fired too far westwards, blazed out in the sky directly above the line of assembling tanks, and for a couple of torturing minutes hung there, showing up an area below as if vignetted in half-daylight. But this led to no discovery. One prisoner afterwards said that the continuous air operations did awaken suspicions in some German minds, but no precaution was taken, and certainly no one guessed that they were intended to cover tank sounds. Even after the war the historian of the 13th I.R. writing of this night says that the noticeable air activity "probably had the object of allowing the garrisons no rest."

The eight minutes' harassing bombardment, too, caused red S.O.S. flares to be fired at 3.3 opposite the southern flank of the attacking force.<sup>5</sup> And in the centre, where the pear-shaped trench projected far up the crop-covered ridge close to the assembly line of the 4th Brigade, a German officer, afterwards captured, had heard the sound of men moving in the crop. "A wiring party," he thought at first; but, as the sounds continued, he suspected that a raid was being pre-

<sup>4</sup> This, however, looks like the kind of story that was sometimes fondly believed at headquarters, but was hardly credible to any one acquainted with the manner in which news spread at the front.

<sup>5</sup> The notes of one close observer suggest that this alarm may have been caused by the smoke bombs from trench-mortars on that flank opening at 3 o'clock instead of at 3.10 as ordered. "3 a.m. Smoke barrage. Is this right? 3.3 a.m. Two reds (German flares). Another red. Red again. More flares. Trench-mortar smoke. T.M. smoke has evidently started at 3. Reds all along line by Warfusée."

pared, and accordingly caused his troops to stand to their arms.

Even if the German artillery had been alarmed before zero hour, all the heavy artillery of the corps was ready to pounce upon and smother it, the rest of the guns proceeding with the plan when the time arrived. As it was, the batteries busy with the harassing bombardment<sup>6</sup> gradually shortened their range until they were on the lines at which the creeping barrage was to begin; and then, with a sudden quickening of a dozen shots, the main barrage crashed down.<sup>7</sup>

Considering that so little ranging had been allowed, it was exceedingly accurate. The American, Capt. Gale, with the 42nd Battalion wrote after the war:

The barrage . . . was most wonderful; it surpassed even the great barrage of September 26th<sup>8</sup> . . . the falling shells of the 18-pounders, exploding as they hit the ground, formed an almost straight line from the north edge of the action at the Somme to as far south as we could see.

Every field-gun and howitzer opened its fire with a smoke shell, whose brilliant cumulus was outlined by the pearly glow of the burst. The flanking smoke screens thrown by the artillery<sup>9</sup> and by the mortars of No. 1 Special Company R.E., were exceedingly effective, except on the Roman road, where a number of the trench-mortar bombs burst behind the lines of the 7th Brigade. In front of the attacking troops the barrage lay almost as deep as at Messines—the 18-pounder shells 200 yards ahead of the infantry; those of the 4.5-inch howitzers 200 yards farther in front; those of eighty 6-inch and twenty 8- and 9.2-inch howitzers at least 200 yards beyond these again;

<sup>6</sup> Firing smoke and high-explosive shell this morning *without gas*.

<sup>7</sup> For a photograph of it *See Vol XII, plate 501*.

<sup>8</sup> In the Meuse-Argonne attack delivered by the First American and Second French Armies in which the 33rd Div. advanced 5.7 kilometres. Another post-war American account describes the Hamel barrage as "one of the most intense and accurate we have ever witnessed" "It was one thing that none of the boys who were present will ever forget," says a third.

<sup>9</sup> The 103rd and 105th Howitzer Batteries and 15th Bty., A.F.A., fired smoke on the Morlancourt heights, and the 107th and 108th Howitzer Batteries, A.F.A., on the Warfusée heights *See Vol XII, plate 502*.

while the spare machine-guns of four divisions<sup>10</sup> also sprayed the zone ahead, largely in enfilade. Along nearly the whole line the infantry at once rose and, lighting their cigarettes and with rifles slung, as if on a march, moved up to the line of shells which in four minutes would make its first jump. On the left, the barrage (says Capt. Gale)

was laid down so perfectly that we were able to approach it and follow it at about seventy-five yards, as ordered, without receiving any casualties from it.

Unfortunately such accuracy could hardly be universal with the artillery forced to rely so largely on map reading for its ranges. At perhaps half a dozen points one or more guns were firing short, particularly about the junction of the 4th and 11th Brigades, and here occurred the tragedy of the action. The first shells caught two sections of infantry as they waited in the crop—one of Americans and one of Lieut. Canaway's<sup>11</sup> platoon of the 43rd—together with part of company headquarters. Although their part of the line had, for safety, been withdrawn fifty yards from the tape, when the rest of the troops rose practically the whole of these men lay killed or wounded.<sup>12</sup> In the 15th Battalion next on the south, opposite Pear Trench, the same thing happened; as the battalion's left started to follow the barrage, of which most shots seemed to be falling 300 yards ahead, a dozen men were struck dead and thirty wounded. Such errors proved almost impossible to correct during the attack—the same guns continued to fire short at each stage up to the final objective; but, practised as they now were, the Australian infantry managed to avoid most of the later bursts from these guns. The 15th did this by holding back; but in the 43rd Lieut. Canaway kept his surviving men so close to the main barrage that the "shorts" exploded well behind them, the platoon thus making its advance between the two sets of shell-bursts. Everywhere the casualties from short shooting occurred chiefly at the start. The Australian infantry

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<sup>10</sup> Including one section from each company of the 3rd Div., three from the 8th M.G. Coy., 5th Div., as well as the 12th, 13th, and 24th M.G. Companies (4th M.G. Bn) and part of the 2nd M.G. Bn.

<sup>11</sup> Lt R. A. Canaway, M.C., 43rd Bn. Clerk; of Hawthorn, S. Aust., b East Adelaide, 23 Nov. 1883

<sup>12</sup> An American officer, Lt. E. R. Plummer (Chicago, U.S.A.; died 9 Jan. 1926), 131st Inf., U.S.N.G., was wounded

knew that a proportion of such accidents was inevitable if they hugged the barrage as they had been trained to do, but they also knew that this was by far the safest course. Lieut.-Col. Drake Brockman (16th Battalion) expressed the general judgment when he reported the short shooting as "nothing beyond what is normally expected on these occasions."

At 3.14, when the barrage advanced, it was still almost completely dark<sup>13</sup>—much too dark for the tanks to move with comfort—and so far as can be ascertained not one of them had yet been seen or heard by the infantry when it began to follow the barrage. Whether a memory of Bullecourt raised in any mind in the 4th Brigade a passing apprehension that the tanks might again have failed, can only be conjectured—there is no word in any available record, public or private, to suggest it. Now, at any rate, the infantry had the cloud of smoke and of dust whipped by the barrage for protection, and the companies walked straight on into it. Along most of the line, especially at the centre and the southern flank, even the most experienced men soon found it difficult to discern the precise line of the barrage. On that dry ground the dust alone would have furnished more than sufficient screen; the addition of smoke shells made the haze so dense that, slowly floating southwards across the line of the advance, it soon hid all shell-bursts at ground level, and the line of the barrage could only be guessed from the flashes of shrapnel<sup>14</sup> overhead. Little wonder that many of the Americans, who had landed in France only a few weeks before, were somewhat bewildered. In the 43rd Battalion the Americans forming part of Maj. Lott's<sup>15</sup> company being, like the rest of these high spirited troops, anxious to outstrip the Australians, were dashing straight into the barrage, when (says one account)

Maj. Lott spoke to them and pulled them back. Next time they didn't start. Maj. Lott said: "How about going on with the fight?" "What, has the barrage gone on?" they said. It had gone on half a minute.

<sup>13</sup> The true time was 2.14, daylight saving being in operation.

<sup>14</sup> Every second shell of the field-guns at this stage was shrapnel. The percentage was: from start to 10-minutes halt line—10 per cent smoke, 40 per cent high-explosive (three quarters of these with instantaneous fuses), 50 per cent shrapnel, from 10-minutes halt to final objective—10 per cent smoke, 15 per cent high-explosive (none instantaneous), 75 per cent shrapnel. The 4.5-inch howitzers fired 10 per cent of smoke shell.

<sup>15</sup> Maj. A. W. Lott, 43rd Bn. School teacher, of Semaphore, S. Aust., b. Burra, S. Aust., 6 Mar. 1887.

An American quoted in the same narrative said that thenceforth

we just watched the line beside us. When they went on, we went on—we knew we were right so long as we were in line with them.

The keenness of the Americans to be not an inch behind the experienced troops raised a constant risk of their coming under fire of their own artillery and was a source of anxiety throughout; most of their casualties are said to have been thus caused. At least one Australian, Corpl. Roach<sup>16</sup> of the 13th, lost his life by himself running into the barrage in order to turn back an American platoon that was entering it. Sergt. Darke<sup>17</sup> of the same battalion, who on an American officer being wounded, took over his platoon, performed a similar action but came through unhurt.

The haze, in which the battalions could advance only blindly, guided on the flank by officers with compasses, created greater difficulty for the tanks. The hour of the advance was earlier than the Tank Corps desired, and the dark was so much increased by the smoke that some tanks found it impossible at the outset to be sure of their proper direction. This led to the hardest fighting in the battle. On the left of the 15th Battalion,<sup>18</sup> where the short shooting of a number of guns made it impossible to get nearer than 200 yards to the main barrage, Capt. Carter's<sup>19</sup> company was following the first lift when it saw men standing up in the mist ahead throwing bombs. At the same time machine-gun bullets from the front began to strike among Carter's troops. As the line rushed these German bombers it reached a belt of wire protecting Pear Trench. The barrage had skipped this wire, falling first west of it and then east of both the entanglement and the trench. The entanglement—rolls of concertina wire in front and barbed-

<sup>16</sup> Cpl M J Roach (No 7063, 13th Bn). Labourer, of Copeton, N.S.W.; b Fortitude Valley, Brisbane, 17 Jan 1895. Died of wounds, 5 July 1918

<sup>17</sup> Lt F J Darke M.M., 13th Bn Coach trimmer, of Granville, N.S.W., b Campbelltown, N.S.W., 9 Sep 1898

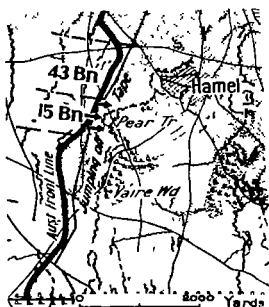
<sup>18</sup> In the 15th the Americans were distributed, not, as ordered, by platoons, but by sections. The decision to do this was Col. McSharry's. There was no wiser head in the force, and the action was therefore probably justified.

<sup>19</sup> Capt E K Carter, M.C.; 15th Bn Watchmaker; of Toowong, Q'land, b Toowong, 4 Mar. 1895. Died 10 Feb 1936



wire behind—was not impassable; some men scrambled through, some climbed over. But it rendered very difficult any progress under fire of the machine-guns, which could now be discerned shooting from the trench ahead. Carter had both legs broken. The troops, many of whom were hit, threw themselves down while the Lewis gunners opened fire on the German guns. The companies on the flanks had pushed farther ahead, but they too were checked by heavy fire from machine-guns. Capt. Glasgow<sup>20</sup> on the right with Lieut. Dwyer<sup>21</sup> saved many lives by wise control of the troops at this point.

Pear Trench, from which the fire came, was one of the three main recognised obstacles and three tanks had been allotted specially to assist the left of the 15th in overcoming it. Now was the time for the infantry to lie down and summon the tanks, which should be close behind them, to roll over the obstacle. But as no tank was in sight the infantry grappled with the difficulty in its usual manner. The companies on the flanks, though themselves enfiladed by machine-guns, managed to work ahead. Each Australian platoon had now two Lewis guns,<sup>22</sup> and it was found that the gunners by firing these from the hip over the tall crops could silence or at least hamper the German machine-guns.<sup>23</sup> Carter's gunners having silenced the two German machine-guns in their front his men at once rushed these. As they did so a third machine-gun opened close on the left. One Lewis gunner, a boy named Dalziel,<sup>24</sup> whose mate—the only other unwounded man of the gun-team—was firing, clapped another drum of



*The Sketch shows the relative positions of the 15th and 43rd Battalions attacking at Pear Trench.*

<sup>20</sup> Capt R Glasgow, D.S.O., M.C.; 15th Bn. Station hand, of Gympie, Q'land, b. Gympie, 8 Dec. 1887.

<sup>21</sup> Lt. J. J. Dwyer, V.C., 4th M.G. Coy. Labourer; of Alonnah, South Bruny Island, Tas., b. Cygnet, Tas., 9 Mar. 1890.

<sup>22</sup> This provision was now general in the B.E.F.

<sup>23</sup> In some cases one gunner fired from the hip while the man with the other gun set up his weapon on suitable ground.

<sup>24</sup> Sgt H Dalziel, V.C.; (No. 1936, 15th Bn) Railway fireman; of Atherton, Q'land, b. Irvinebank, Q'land, 18 Feb 1893.



15. PEAR TRENCH AND THE WOODS, HAMEL.

Photographed on the morning of the battle. The view is down the slope to Pear Trench (whose chalk parapets can be seen on the left). On the farther slope are (from the right) Hamel, Vaire and Accroche Woods, the last-named lying on the left centre of the horizon above the two ammunition-parachutes. The objective ran between Accroche and Vaire Woods.



16. A NEWTON MORTAR FIRING FROM VILLE

17. Inset Mill on the Ancre captured by Lieut. Thompson's platoon, 58th Battalion, 4th July, 1918. Note the wire through the marshes. The distant hill is behind Morlancourt

And see Memorial Official Photos Nos. F2429 and (Inset) E2710

cartridges upon his comrade's gun, and then, drawing his revolver, rushed the German machine-gunners, shooting two and capturing the post.<sup>25</sup>

Meanwhile the flanks had made good headway.

We kept on advancing (wrote an American, Capt Masoner<sup>26</sup>) and when we arrived close to their lines the Boche came running from their positions with their hands over their heads calling "Kamerad."

Immediately north of the Pear the southern flank of the 11th Brigade had been met by the same resistance. A machine-gun killed Lieut. Brook,<sup>27</sup> leading the flank platoon of Capt. Sexton's<sup>28</sup> company, 43rd Battalion, and the platoon was stopped. But a Lewis gunner, a farmer of the Yorke Peninsula named Shaw,<sup>29</sup> and an American corporal, H. G. Zyburt,<sup>30</sup> at once made for the post, Shaw firing his gun from the hip at the machine-gunners. This enabled Zyburt to rush in and bayonet three of the crew, and the obstacle was thus overcome. To the north of this again was Lieut. Canaway of the 43rd, who had directed his platoon to inform him as soon as any man reached the German wire. The report duly came, shouted from man to man along the line. Thus warned that the German trench was close ahead, the platoon made its rush. Canaway himself leapt the trench, shooting a German N.C.O. who came at him. The men of the garrison were too surprised even to hold up their hands, and four machine-guns were captured there with their covers on them.

By such methods the flanks pushed past Pear Trench, and the centre entered it. It was thronged with Germans with

<sup>25</sup> One young German Dalziel spared, because the youngster fought so well. Dalziel himself had his trigger finger shot away, and was ordered to the rear, but at the final objective he was found to have followed up the attack. He was again ordered to the aid-post, but instead was bringing up ammunition dropped by an aeroplane when he was shot through the head. For his work this day he was awarded the Victoria Cross. He was from the Atherton tableland in Q'land, and had discovered the Dalziel gold-mine.

<sup>26</sup> Capt. W. J. Masoner, 132nd Amer. Inf. Regt. Steamfitter, of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Chicago, 17 Oct 1888.

<sup>27</sup> Lt F R Brook, 43rd Bn. Carpenter; of Prospect, S Aust., b. Richmond, S. Aust., 18 Feb. 1883. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

<sup>28</sup> Maj. R. C. Sexton, 43rd Bn. Bank clerk; of Croydon, S Aust., b. Norwood, S. Aust., 7 Sep. 1892.

<sup>29</sup> Cpl. F. M. Shaw, D.C.M. (No 577; 43rd Bn.) Farmer, of Weetulta, Yorke Peninsula, S. Aust., b. Hobart, 7 May 1895. Died of wounds, 12 Aug 1918.

<sup>30</sup> Cpl. H. G. Zyburt, (No 1,387,270; 131st Amer. Inf. Regt.) Meter tester; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Chicago, 18 May 1897. (Was awarded M.M. He was wounded on this day, and again on Oct 10.)

many machine-guns and contained camouflaged positions for trench-mortars.<sup>31</sup> Its rear trench, seventy yards farther on, was also held. At least one German machine-gunner continued to fire until the troops actually reached him, and, although some of the enemy had held up their hands, others behind continued to throw bombs. As often happened, in the heat of the moment, this action appeared to be rank treachery,<sup>32</sup> and the Queenslanders, whose own losses had been heavy, killed right and left in both the trench and the sunken road that ran through the redoubt. "I counted 40 (German dead) in a very small sector," records an American, Capt. Mallon.<sup>33</sup> Having quickly cleared the place,<sup>34</sup> the troops went on to catch up the barrage which had moved far ahead. As several Americans in various parts of the front noted, there was by now "no regular formation," "just one single line," "the men walking across sometimes in line, sometimes in small groups." Fortunately, where the 15th had lost the barrage no more direct opposition was now met with,<sup>35</sup> and the battalion reached the ten-minutes halt line without further difficulty. At this stage its tanks came up.

The second expected obstacle, Vaire and Hamel Woods, lay in front of the battalion next on the south, the 16th, and beyond the valley. As the Western Australians followed the barrage up the farther slope they were fired on, first from the German front line along the terraces immediately before Vaire Wood. Near the top of this slope was a redoubt, sometimes known as "Kidney Trench," similar in shape to the Pear.<sup>36</sup> Most of the

#### **The Woods**

<sup>31</sup> For a photograph of one see *Vol XII, plate 504*.

<sup>32</sup> Actually, of course, men were under no obligation to cease fire because some of their mates surrendered, and those who fought on were often the better men.

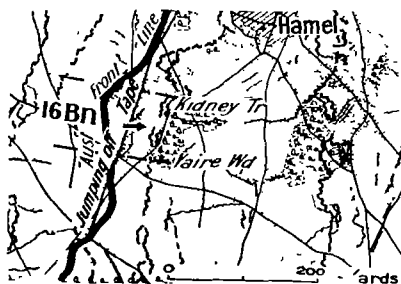
<sup>33</sup> Capt. G. H. Mallon, M. of H.; 132nd Amer. Inf. Regt. Sprinkler fitter, of Kansas City, U.S.A., b. Ogden, Kansas, 15 June 1877. Died 2 Aug. 1934.

<sup>34</sup> Col. McSharry placed his headquarters there, and Maj. B. C. Kennedy (Sydney; died 14 Mar. 1928), the medical officer of the 15th, his aid-post. With Kennedy was an American, Lt. F. E. Schram (Chicago, U.S.A.). McSharry found a number of Germans in the trench-mortar pits, feigning death. When he threw some earth at them, they got up and surrendered (Schram was awarded the M.C.).

<sup>35</sup> Just beyond the battalion's northern flank, however, a machine-gun opened. Cpl. S. H. Krantz (Perth, W. Aust.) of the 43rd Bn. asked a Lewis gunner of the 15th to keep it under fire, and then he and an American rushed it and bayoneted the crew.

<sup>36</sup> In some reports it was mistakenly called "Pear Trench."

16th's front wave was able to pass through the wire, but at this point, as the wire was reached, a machine-gun opened, mortally wounding the company commander, Capt. Woods,<sup>37</sup> and his sergeant-major, H. G. Blinman,<sup>38</sup> and annihilating a Lewis gun team. A lance-corporal, T. L. Axford,<sup>39</sup> at once rushed to the front, threw his bombs among the machine-gun crew, and jumped into the trench, killing ten Germans and capturing six. He then threw the machine-gun on to the parapet and called to the platoon to come on, which it did.<sup>40</sup> In a sunken road behind Kidney Trench were dugouts from one of which 47 prisoners were taken.<sup>41</sup> Both the 16th Battalion and the 14th, which followed it, remarked that many of the Germans in this area were, as General Monash had hoped, wearing gas-masks. "This, of course," wrote Col. Drake Brockman, "made the task of dealing with them very much easier." Many were very young and small.



*Direction of 16th Battalion's attack.*

The 16th Battalion had attacked with only half the force that at one time had been allotted to capture the wood, since both its attached companies of Americans, 500 men in all, had been withdrawn on the previous evening. But its four companies of determined men forced their way abreast through the undergrowth. It was found that tanks could penetrate the wood by the main "ride," but progress was hampered by the trees, and here the 16th was helped by the slow advance of the

<sup>37</sup> Capt F F Woods, 16th Bn Miner; of Broken Hill, N.S.W., b. Long Dutton, Surrey, Eng., 1883. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

<sup>38</sup> CSM H G Blinman (No 1457, 16th Bn). Commercial traveller, of Perth, W. Aust; b. Adelaide, 30 Mar 1884. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

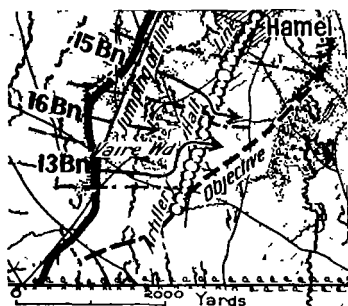
<sup>39</sup> Cpl T L Axford V.C., M.M. (No 3399; 16th Bn). Labourer, of Coolgardie, W. Aust. b. Carrieton, S. Aust., 18 June 1894.

<sup>40</sup> For this action Axford received the Victoria Cross. A little farther north Lt H. E. Blee (Payneham, S. Aust.) was mortally wounded. He, Woods, and Blinman had all been company sergeant-majors of the same company, and all were buried in the same grave.

<sup>41</sup> A battery of trench-mortars also was captured there.

barrage—in some other parts both tanks and infantry would have preferred it to advance more rapidly. Capt. Woods's company was magnificently led by Lieut. Minchin,<sup>42</sup> a Western Australian farmer—formerly a private of the 16th, and once a company cook, but now one of the outstanding leaders of an outstanding battalion. Practically the whole line, riflemen and Lewis gunners, fired from the hip as it advanced, driving the fleeing enemy into the barrage. At the north-eastern corner of Hamel Wood the headquarters of some German company fought toughly, manning its position with stretcher-bearers, orderlies, and a reserve platoon. Capt. Lynas—another outstanding leader, who had been wounded at the start but would not leave the fight—now signalled for a tank to assist; but at that moment a phosphorus bomb set fire to the dugout occupied by the Germans and incinerated a number of them.<sup>43</sup>

The task of the 16th was thoroughly to clear the woods. Having done so, the battalion would move back into reserve; the final objective—the farther edge of the spur, 500-800 yards beyond—would be seized mainly by the 13th (N.S. Wales) Battalion, which must double round the southern end of the wood, and then up behind it while the barrage waited on the halt line. The right of the 15th would meet it, coming from the other direction, after brushing past the north of the wood. The 13th advanced with one company leading—so that the other three should, if possible, be unengaged until the southern end of the wood was passed<sup>44</sup>. There the leading company would dig in, while two behind it would run northward as fast as possible and the fourth would



*4th Brigade's assault.*

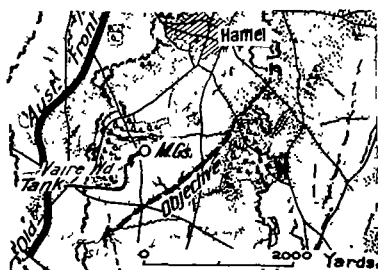
<sup>42</sup> Lt J B Minchin, D S O, M C; 16th Bn Farmer, of Balkaling, W. Aust., b. Middle Swan, W. Aust., 15 June 1894. Died 1 Nov. 1936.

<sup>43</sup> Near the fork in the road on the southern edge of Hamel Wood three machine-guns were taken after a short fight, and on the eastern branch of the road two more.

<sup>44</sup> One section of each, however, was to finish mopping-up Germans, if necessary.

go straight on. The battalion cleared a few posts before it drew level with the wood, notably at the second of the two quarries there.<sup>45</sup> The men of the extending companies had been told to take their tactics from Rugby football, looking upon Vaire Wood as a scrum, their task being to double round it like the scrum half-back and make for the corner 500 yards to the north, where they would turn east and advance in line again. Capt. Marper<sup>46</sup> was leading the northward rush when fire was opened on his party from a neighbouring post held by a group of determined men. Marper charged it, shot three of the enemy, and captured their machine-gun. He then ran on with his company and was just turning eastwards to complete the manoeuvre when, very

close ahead, was seen a carefully camouflaged trench, so well hidden that it had not been detected on the air-photographs. In this were Germans with two machine-guns who now opened fire. By then it was daylight, and nearly every company of the in-



fantry found a tank somewhere within sight and call, exploring to see where it could be of use. The three tanks with the 13th Battalion had caught up the infantry at the first lift of the barrage. As they passed south of the wood, one of them, pressing forward in the edge of the barrage, was struck by a high-explosive shell which killed the Australian scout, Pte. Parrish,<sup>47</sup> who was guiding it from the conning tower, and put it out of action. But the two others were still pressing on and, when Marper's company was forced to ground by the machine-guns in the camouflaged trench, one tank (with the 13th Battalion colours painted on it) was seen waddling up fifty

<sup>45</sup> Within fourteen minutes of the start Lt.-Col Marks heard (by means of a most efficient German field telephone, captured in a previous fight) that his men were digging at the second quarry.

<sup>46</sup> Capt. G. Marper, D.S.O., 13th Bn Hospital warder, of Rydalmere, N.S.W. b Sheffield, Eng., 27 Mar 1891 (One of Harry Murray's old N.C.O's, promoted during the fighting at Mouquet Farm, in Aug. 1916)

<sup>47</sup> Pte. T. Parrish (No. 3770; 13th Bn). Colliery employee, of Boolaroo, N.S.W.; b South Wales, 1898 Killed in action, 4 July 1918. (His brother, Pte. Joseph Parrish, had died of wounds in the previous week.)



yards in rear. Marper ran to the front of it, waving his arm in the direction of the trench. The machine-guns shot him through chest and arm, but the tank turned and made for the trench. One machine-gun position it trampled on; the Germans in the other gave up the fight, and the infantry came up and made them prisoners.

The 16th Battalion was then in the wood, in rear, clearing it of the enemy. The 15th was hidden by its northern horn. But when Marper, having seen the trench taken, handed over command to Lieut. Dwyer,<sup>48</sup> the second main obstacle—the woods—had been overcome.

The third expected obstacle, Hamel, lay in front of the northern brigade, the 11th, and was to be taken and mopped-up by the 43rd Battalion (South Australia) while the 44th (Western Australia), split in two halves, moved past each side of it. A great many tanks had been allotted to this section of the front, six to the 43rd for clearing Hamel and its outskirts; three to each half of the 44th; three to support the platoon (two sections of 43rd Battalion and two of 15th)<sup>49</sup> that was ensuring connection between the two brigades; six following in support to replace in the final stage of the advance the six that were attacking Hamel; three more allotted to the left company of the 15th to clear the pear-shaped trench; and six following in reserve. This arrangement ensured the presence of some thirty tanks at the call of the infantry in the central area, where the advance was deepest.

The three tanks for Pear Trench missed that position in the dark,<sup>50</sup> and the right of the 43rd, like the left of the 15th, became involved in heavy fighting and lost the barrage at this stage. On the front of the 43rd the first German trench-system ran north-eastwards, and consequently on the battalion's left No-Man's Land was nearly 1,000 yards wide. It was not until a quarter of an hour from the start that the centre com-

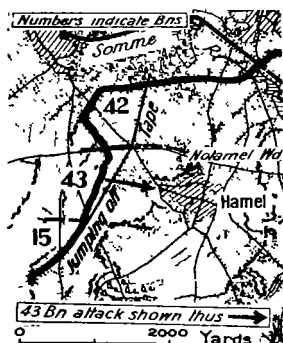
<sup>48</sup> Lt. T. Dwyer, M.C., 13th Bn. Departmental manager, of Kogarah, N.S.W.; b. Sutherland, N.S.W., 27 June 1896.

<sup>49</sup> In this fight each battalion had a section in the next battalion's territory—the two sections combining to form the junction. The 4th and 11th Bdes. were linked by a body of twice this strength. In the German Army a *liaison* force (*Nachkommando*) was regularly allotted to ensure contact.

<sup>50</sup> Pear Trench, on a curve of the forward slope, was hard to find.

pany (Capt. Cope<sup>51</sup>) struck serious resistance at the point where the German defences bent round the western end of Hamel. The dust and smoke haze still clouded the village, but against the glare of a blazing house the Germans in the front line, who had fired a few shots, could be seen running to the rear. Cope's line swept on, but about 100 yards from the village a shot followed by a flare came from a low heap of mangel-wurzels south of the road. In this sector the tanks had not yet been sighted, and there followed a sharp infantry fight, the Australians lying down, shooting and bowling bombs, most of which, however, rolled down the front of the mound and exploded harmlessly. The figures of the enemy were sharply outlined against the glare of the burning village. Capt. Cope told Lieut. Symons,<sup>52</sup> who was close by, attached to a platoon of Americans, to outflank the German position by leading forward his Americans along the road. This Symons did, and a rush was then made from all sides; 15 Germans were killed and about 40, mainly in a dugout behind the heap, were captured. Symons was wounded, but his messenger, Pte. Anderson,<sup>53</sup> the only other experienced man with these Americans, at once took charge and led the platoon until Hamel had been cleared.

North of the village the German front line lay through the small Notamel Wood, and was held in some strength. In the dense smoke the troops approaching this at first lost direction; but by very close observation the tops of the trees were distinguished in the flashes of the shells, and Capt. Moran<sup>54</sup> of the left company, 44 years of age and freshly arrived from



<sup>51</sup> Capt. H. S. Cope, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Carriage builder, of Mt. Gambier, S. Aust., b. Mt. Barker, S. Aust., 21 Feb. 1882. Died 11 Jan. 1928.

<sup>52</sup> Lt. (T/Capt.) I. G. Symons, 43rd Bn. School teacher; of Alberton, S. Aust., b. Petersburg, S. Aust., 3 Dec. 1891.

<sup>53</sup> Pte. D. J. Anderson, M.M. (No. 227, 43rd Bn.) Labourer, of Broken Hill, N.S.W., b. Toora, Vic., 2 Jan. 1897.

<sup>54</sup> Maj. J. T. Moran, M.C., 43rd Bn. Officer of Aust. Permanent Forces; of Adelaide, b. Geelong, Vic., 20 Aug. 1873.

Australia, corrected the drift by giving his troops the order first to "left incline" and then to "right incline." Part of his company under Lieut. Watts<sup>55</sup> on reaching the front line, crossed it and then worked up it from the south with a party on either side; while the Germans fired at the party in their front, Lieut. Watts with the other party bombed them from the rear. While the platoon was so engaged a machine-gun at the edge of the village opened upon it. The platoon sergeant went to a tank and pulled the bell-handle at the back of the machine. A door opened and he showed where the machine-gun was. The tank, says one account, "went straight over and rubbed it out."<sup>56</sup>

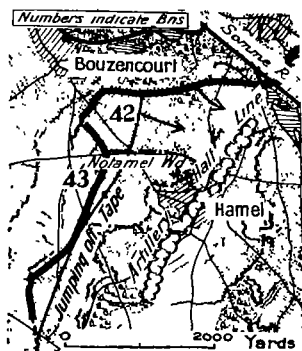
Thus, when the ten-minutes halt line was reached, the defences of Hamel had been taken; the flank companies of the 43rd were preparing to enter the village from north and south, and the centre company was entering it from the west.

On the northern flank the attack by the 42nd Battalion went smoothly, in precise accordance with plan. It was

fortunate that  
**The** here No-Man's  
**flanks** Land was wide,

for, as they had moved on to the tapes at 2 o'clock, the sections of the northernmost company near the Somme marshes found that the ground had been shelled with "blue cross" gas which set the men sneezing. Apparently the enemy did not hear them. When they advanced, a couple of sections from Bouzencourt joined in, sweeping the marshes, from which

a handful of scattered Germans ran back. When the barrage made its second lift the tanks had caught up and, keeping on



<sup>55</sup> Lt. L. S. Watts, M.C.; 43rd Bn. Metallurgist; of Hyde Park, S. Aust.; b. Semaphore, S. Aust., 3 May 1884.

<sup>56</sup> The German crew, it is added, probably ran away when the monster came up. This, however, by no means invariably happened. Col Bingham of the Tanks reported that, in general, the German machine-gun crews "showed extraordinary courage and tenacity and refused to surrender until either completely wiped out or run over by the tank."

the edge of it, as Col. Bingham had ordered them to do despite the danger, moved across to wherever a German machine-gun was suspected, examining the position and suppressing the gun, if there.

On the southern flank, where two battalions of the 6th (Victoria) Brigade advanced, the barrage was perfect. The leading tanks caught up the infantry at the first German trench and fired down it both ways, "crushing," as Lieut. Garton reported, "all the spirit that the enemy may have had to fight." Here progress assumed the ease of a field day. The tanks pressed on into the fringe of the barrage, leading the infantry, which indeed sometimes tended to follow their wanderings and so lose proper direction. On this exposed plateau the smoke screen both on the flanks and ahead proved a vital protection for tanks and infantry; the Germans farther back could see nothing nor could their forward posts detect the Australians until these were upon them. The left battalion (21st)<sup>57</sup> passed three trenches, in each of which were Germans with machine-guns, but only at the last did they open fire. Even there (says the report of the Victorian company commander)<sup>58</sup>

as the gunners were wearing gas-masks it was not very effective and was soon overcome—one gunner was killed, two wounded, and three captured.

After the attack had passed, some of the enemy who had been missed by the left flank began to snipe and bomb the supporting company as it set to digging in. In ten minutes' fighting Lieut. Garton's men surrounded these Germans, who then surrendered.

The right battalion (23rd) reported that the artillery barrage was "the best we have been with."<sup>59</sup> Except on its left flank<sup>60</sup> the 23rd had to make only a short advance, but the Germans

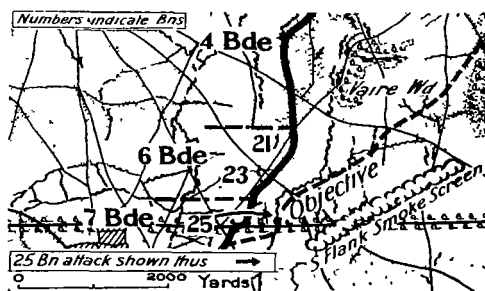
<sup>57</sup> Here again the reader meets the Querrieu brewery company, which formed the left of the 21st; it was temporarily commanded by Lt. W. H. Roberts (Kensington, Vic.)

<sup>58</sup> Capt. M. B. H. Kelly, 21st Bn. Engineering student, of Malvern, Vic.; b Malvern, 3 Mar. 1891

<sup>59</sup> The eight Stokes mortars of the 6th L.T.M. Bty. and two of the 5th had to fire by the map, as the observers could not see the German trench. Their bombardment missed the trench, though it probably suppressed the fire from it. The 6th L.T.M. Bty. had three guns hit at the start. Four of its mortars went forward with the infantry

<sup>60</sup> Here Capt. R. G. Moss's company, following behind the left of the other two, strung out a line to connect with the flank of the 21st Bn.

in front of the right fought stubbornly, and had to be bombed down their trench before the centre company, Capt. Hinchliffe's,<sup>61</sup> could reach the right, Lieut. Hodgson's,<sup>62</sup> or the latter reach the 25th Battalion (7th Brigade). The opposition to the 25th on the extreme flank astride of the Roman road east of Villers-Bretonneux was even more stubborn. The Queenslanders attacked without tanks, covered by a bombardment in which the Stokes mortars of the 7th Light Trench Mortar Battery played a part.<sup>63</sup> The Australian Heavy Trench Mortar Battery<sup>64</sup> helped in suppressing fire from the flank by throwing its huge bombs into Monument Wood and the railway. The two attacking companies<sup>65</sup>



advancing very close to the barrage seized the German trench, although on the left its garrison continued to fight after the Australians were among them.

On the right, immediately south of the Roman road, a German post which formed the southern point of the objective resisted with such determination that, of two platoons assaulting it, only nine men survived unwounded to make the final charge. These took the strong-point. They constituted, however, a very small garrison when at 4.20 a.m. the Germans counter-attacked them from two directions, along the road and from the southward continuation of the trench. S.O.S. flares

<sup>61</sup> Capt. G. L. Hinchliffe, M.C., 23rd Bn. Commercial traveller, of Kew, Vic., b. Richmond, Vic., 31 July 1890.

<sup>62</sup> Lt. S. J. Hodgson, M.C.; 23rd Bn. Station overseer; of Langawiwa Station, via Broken Hill, N.S.W.; b. Woodford, Essex, Eng., 18 May 1890.

<sup>63</sup> The 25th was also covered by a barrage from 19 machine-guns. The Stokes mortars had to use the wretched "blue ring" ammunition, the immense flash of which drew the attention of the enemy and brought retaliation. Moreover one bomb burst prematurely, killing two of the crew and wounding another. By 7 o'clock the retaliation was so severe that the battery had to shift its position along the trench.

<sup>64</sup> See footnote 8 on p. 37.

<sup>65</sup> The 27th Bn. had taken over part of the 25th's front, allowing this battalion to concentrate on its front of attack.

were fired and brought down an accurate barrage of artillery and machine-gun fire through which comparatively few Germans penetrated. These few, however, came on and began a fierce bomb-fight of which the issue was in the balance when help arrived in the shape of a platoon sent along the trench by the northern company.

The beating off of this local counter-attack (reported Maj. Page, commanding the 25th) seemed to be the last straw on the enemy's backs, for his morale, already weakened by our artillery, completely gave way and parties of twos and threes, and in one case ten, came in and surrendered from distances up to 350 yards from our objective.

The tanks attached to the 6th Brigade, one of which nosed around 1,000 yards east of the objective, were a powerful cause of this demoralisation. But after 5.30, when the tanks had turned homewards, the Queenslanders by keen sniping kept the enemy as far back as 400-500 yards from their new front. The casualties of the 25th were not light—93 in all; in the fighting near the strong-point Lieut. Toft<sup>66</sup> was killed and Lieut. Beanland<sup>67</sup> mortally wounded. But 92 prisoners and 5 machine-guns were taken, some of these guns being afterwards used against the enemy.

On the whole of the southern flank the final objective was attained before the barrage reached its ten-minutes halt line.<sup>68</sup>

**The halt** By General Monash's instructions, where German trenches existed at the objective, the troops occupied them. Where there were none, they dug. While the contingent from the 2nd Division was occupied in this consolidation, the attacking forces of the 4th and 11th Brigades were easily reorganised behind the halted barrage. Here and there some German post in the area passed over by the barrage still used its machine-gun. In the 43rd, about to enter Hamel, a Lewis gunner already referred to, L.-Corpl. Shaw, looking round observed 200 yards away a

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<sup>66</sup> Lt C. G. Toft, 25th Bn. Bank clerk, of Bundaberg, Q'land; b. Bundaberg, 2 Apr. 1893. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

<sup>67</sup> Lt C. H. Beanland, 25th Bn. Sawyer; of Woodford, Q'land; b. Woodford, 17 Oct. 1895. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

<sup>68</sup> On the front of the 25th Bn half the field-guns ceased fire, or resumed ordinary harassing fire, at 3.50 a.m., forty minutes from the start, but the smoke barrage laid down by 4.5-inch howitzers diagonally across the plateau, from the Roman road to a point near Vaire Wood, continued for two hours.

machine-gun firing from behind a bank which sheltered its crew. He made for it and, when 100 yards distant, began hosing it with his gun at the hip as he went. When he was thirty yards from it a German officer bravely rushed towards him firing a revolver, but was killed by his fire. As Shaw reached the post, the last survivor of the crew came at him. Shaw, whose magazine was now empty, hit him on the head with his revolver and then shot him. Eight Germans lay dead in the post and the casing of the gun was pierced with Shaw's bullets. Farther south, on the flank of the 15th, Germans were running into Hamel, but fire still came from a post outside the northern edge of Vaire-Hamel Wood and from the wood itself until one of the 11th Brigade's tanks moving over from Hamel suppressed it. At this stage occurred the only serious miscarriage so far as the tanks were concerned. One of those with the 43rd, apparently losing direction, came back firing on a platoon of Australians and one of Americans, scattering them so that it was long before their leaders could collect all their men. At Vaire Wood the tanks with the 16th Battalion suppressed several posts, but it was found that the intended signal from infantry to tanks—the firing of a smoke grenade in the direction in which help was required—was generally useless, the bursts being too similar to those of the smoke shells.

During the halt some of the Australians, as had often happened in the battles of 1917, went through the barrage, probably hunting for prisoners and souvenirs. The attitude of the men throughout the fight was, indeed, noticeably carefree. "Nos. 14 and 15 Platoons hopped joyfully over," was how Lieut. Conrad<sup>69</sup> of the 42nd described the start. Later, in a tight corner, Lieut. Craven of the 14th heard his men talking as they dug. "Do you think Fitzroys'll beat Carltons on Saturday?" was the kernel of the conversation. In front of Notamel Wood Lieut. Roberts<sup>70</sup> (43rd) heard a man ask his neighbour: "What'd you do, Bill, if you were pinned down by the feet by a tank and a box of ammunition was falling on your head from an aeroplane?"

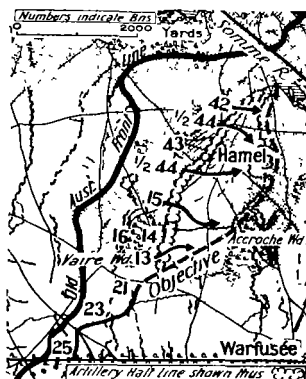
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<sup>69</sup> Lt. H. V. Conrad, 42nd Bn. Clerk; of Adelaide, b. Adelaide, 29 Apr. 1886. Killed in action, 8 Aug. 1918.

<sup>70</sup> Lt. T. W. B. Roberts, M.C., 43rd Bn. Farmer, of Kybunga, S. Aust., b. Kybunga, 27 Apr. 1889.

**The second stage** In the first stage the tanks had rendered easy the advance in many sectors—though not in all; but in the second stage, when daylight had arrived and all the machines had caught up, they played their full part. In the centre the advance in this stage was about as long as in the first, but on the flanks much

less. Resistance was to be expected, on the left, from the old Amiens defence line just over the brow of the prominent ridge beyond Hamel, on the right, where the objective fell short of that line, from machine-gun posts scattered among the many small earthworks or communication trenches west of Accroche Wood,<sup>71</sup> which lay mainly in the next gully. By this time both tanks and infantry were discovering for themselves a satisfactory method of co-operation, many of the tanks advancing actually in the fringe of the barrage which, now being mainly shrapnel, did them little damage, the infantry following, but generally less dangerously close to the barrage than Australians had been accustomed to work. To “hug” the barrage was now unnecessary—German machine-gun crews when uncovered by the curtain of shells were overawed by the tanks, which either fired direct into their positions with machine-guns or grape-shot, or else used their weight to flatten out the emplacements, sometimes crushing such brave men as stayed there—an action which inevitably involved the risk of also crushing the enemy’s wounded.<sup>72</sup> At various parts of the battlefield tanks levelled out by their weight whole lines of shelters and rifle-pits along the edges of banks and sunken roads. From one dugout so run over in Notamel Wood a German emerged unharmed, but it is said “utterly bewildered.” The Australian infantry was eager to clear these positions while



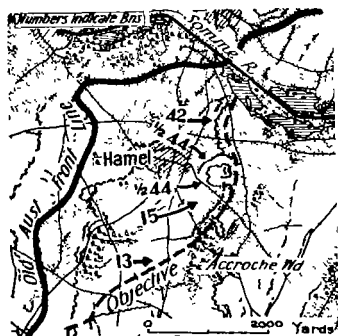
<sup>71</sup> See Vol. XII, plate 510 The old line ran through and behind it.

<sup>72</sup> It is recorded that no wounded of their own side were run over by the tanks.



the tanks "sat on" them, but it also pounced upon any Germans that the tanks could not speedily deal with. For example, when three machine-guns opened in a quarry close beyond Hamel, the Lewis gunner, Shaw, of the 43rd again attacked them, and, while a tank, which had been hailed, suppressed two of the guns, driving their crews into a dugout, he and some men captured the third.<sup>73</sup> In front of the 42nd two German machine-guns killed or wounded nine men, and for a minute or two held up the advance. One was suppressed by a tank, the other outflanked by a Lewis gunner, L.-Corpl. Daley,<sup>74</sup> who then rushed in and killed the crew.

At Hamel the advance was made by the 44th Battalion (Western Australia), which had passed through the 43rd at the halt. While the 43rd entered the village from west, north-east and south-east, and cleared its lanes and the cellars where many Germans had taken shelter, the 44th, with the 15th on its southern and the 42nd on its northern flank, neared the knot of old trenches on and beyond the ridge crest. These were strongly garrisoned, and in front of both battalions German machine-guns now opened. In each case the troops called upon their tanks. With this help, overcoming a series of machine-gun positions, the 44th rushed the trenches on the high knoll overlooking the river. The dugouts teemed with men, 50 coming from one, 40 from another. Among them was a battalion headquarters. Fired on from the same direction, the left flank of the 15th called up a tank officer who "was walking about." On the approach of his tank, the Germans stopped firing and some bolted. The tank moved up and down the trench which the Queenslanders immediately entered, capturing there 50 prisoners and no less than 27 light machine-guns.



<sup>73</sup> An officer and 20 men were made prisoners here

<sup>74</sup> L.-Cpl. M. J. Daley, M.M. (No. 2020, 42nd Bn). Draper; of Rockhampton, Queensland b. Rockhampton, 1877. Killed in action, 12 Aug. 1918.

Other Germans fled into the gully, the two battalions shooting at them.<sup>75</sup>

On the right of the 15th, running through Vaire Wood and on towards the German rear, was a long communication trench known as "Hun's Walk," which was to be cleared by the inner flanks of the 13th and 15th Battalions together with a tank especially allotted. Many Germans escaped along this trench to a cross-road and Accroche Wood. Farther south the 13th Battalion dug at intervals 500-800 yards beyond Vaire Wood. In this area the German trenches were scattered without plan, ill-dug, unwired, and, except in one case, badly camouflaged. It was evident that the nightly harassing of the Germans had made systematic digging too costly and difficult.

Owing to shortage of men the 13th and 15th Battalions had to leave many gaps in the new front line.<sup>76</sup> But supports were at hand. The 14th Battalion (Vic.) dug a support line 300-500 yards behind, and engineers of the 4th Field Company with specially trained platoons from the infantry constructed strong-points in that alignment.<sup>77</sup> Soon after the 14th started digging, as the light increased and the haze thinned, bullets from some unseen enemy began to fly thickly around Capt. Wadsworth's company. Scanning the landscape ahead, Lieut. Rule presently detected half a dozen heads lining a trench. A tank was standing by and at his request it waddled over to investigate, but when crawling round the trench could find no enemy. As it came back, however, a white rag was waved over the earth-work, and Rule with Lieut. Ramsay Wood<sup>78</sup> and four men walked over to take the prisoners. When half-way to the place they were again fired on, and the tank at once turned about and accompanied them. As they approached the trench Rule's

<sup>75</sup> At this stage four machine-guns of the 4th M.G. Coy. and four of the 11th were emplaced in the captured line; the 4th Coy. also used four captured German guns and the 11th three. The men had been specially trained to use the German gun.

<sup>76</sup> The 15th noted that a few, but only a few, of the shell-holes specially made by the 9.2-inch howitzers were found.

<sup>77</sup> The 4th Bde. was to have dug three of these points; but the allotted platoon of the 15th Bn. apparently became involved in the heavy fighting at Pear Trench, where Lt. E. S. Davidson (Neutral Bay, N.S.W.), the engineer officer detailed to direct the digging of the northern post, was killed. After his N.C.O. had been wounded, a sapper, R. A. Miller (Sydney), helped with the fortification of the front line. Lts. R. S. Carrick (Sydney) and A. J. Buckler (Sydney) duly saw to the completion of the other two positions.

<sup>78</sup> Lt. R. Wood, 14th Bn. Journalist; of Melbourne, b. Heaton, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Eng., 29 Aug. 1887. Killed in action 4 July 1918.

batman<sup>79</sup> was killed by a shell of the Australian barrage, and immediately afterwards an N.C.O. with the party, Corpl. Cochrane,<sup>80</sup> was shot through the head. Germans were now seen running away northwards along the trench—which was really a communication sap—and the Victorians following them came on two dugouts. Rule, furious at the firing after surrender, ordered the occupants to come out, but there emerged only a crowd of young boys.

We could not kill children (he says). . . . With a boot to help them along they ran with their hands above their heads back to our lines.<sup>81</sup>

As Ramsay Wood and Rule stood looking along the trench for some sign of the retreat of the rest of the garrison, Wood was shot through the head. Only three of the party being then left, Rule went back and brought up a section and some machine-guns to hold the post. Apparently this post blocked the retreat of the enemy in question, for, later in the day, forty Germans from the north-west (in which direction the trench wound) came along in twos and threes and surrendered. Farther north another gap in the 13th's line from which fire came was filled by Lieut. Garton<sup>82</sup> and Davies<sup>83</sup> (14th Battalion) with their platoons, who took 22 prisoners and some trench-mortars with which they afterwards pelted the Germans in Accroche Wood. Lieut. W. Jacka's<sup>84</sup> company filled a third gap by means of a patrol, and part of the 13th's own support company also was sent up.

While consolidation was going on with the protective barrage and smoke screen 400 yards ahead, the tanks were, if possible, of even greater assistance than during the advance. First, it was at this stage that the four carrier tanks delivered their loads at the appointed

<sup>79</sup> Pte D. W. Floyd (No. 317, 14th Bn.). Labourer; of Bairnsdale, Vic.; b. Ormeo Plains, Vic., 20 Sep. 1893. Died of wounds, 4 July 1918.

<sup>80</sup> Cpl. H. S. Cochrane (No. 5762, 14th Bn.). Farmer; of Poowong, Vic.; b. Oakleigh, Vic., 14 Feb. 1897. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

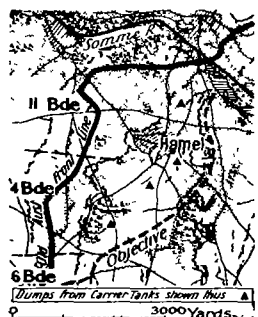
<sup>81</sup> *Jacka's Mob*, p. 305.

<sup>82</sup> Lt. S. J. J. Carion, D.C.M.; 14th Bn. Cabinet maker, of Brunswick, Vic.; b. Ringarooma, Tas., 2 Dec. 1891.

<sup>83</sup> Lt. G. F. Davies, M.C.; 14th Bn. Solicitor, of South Yarra, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 29 Aug. 1887.

<sup>84</sup> Capt. W. Jacka, 14th Bn. Labourer, of Wedderburn, Vic.; b. Wedderburn, 6 Mar. 1897; brother of Capt. Albert Jacka, V.C.

places comparatively close behind the front line. The Australians were normally good carriers; parties from reserve or attacking battalions would usually struggle through barrages, determined that ammunition and supplies should reach their "cobbers" in the front line. But never had supplies reached the front with the swiftness with which they were delivered this day or in such profusion. The young colonel of the 13th, following up the attack, as was his habit, to see that all was right, reached at an early hour the position beyond Vaire Wood where the battalion dump was to be established, and found the site covered with boxes and material. "Why, what's this?" he asked. A man jumped from behind the pile. "It's from our tank, sir," he said—the carrier had already arrived, unloaded, and returned. It had delivered 134 coils of barbed-wire, 180 long and 270 short screw pickets—all for the wire-entanglement; 45 sheets of corrugated iron, 50 petrol tins of water, 150 trench-mortar bombs, 10,000 rounds of ammunition, 4 boxes of No. 36 grenades and 16 of No. 23. The 4th Brigade also used the 14th Battalion to carry a large consignment,<sup>85</sup> but the 11th Brigade relied almost exclusively on the tanks. In all, four carrier tanks delivered without difficulty loads which would have required fatigue parties totalling 1,200 men; and some of the infantry, including at least one commander, considered that in this achievement lay the outstanding lesson of the battle.



The infantry's new-found confidence in the fighting tanks also was confirmed by the activity which these showed everywhere during consolidation. It did not take the infantry long to establish its new line; where trenches existed the troops were, by order, to occupy them; where they did not exist the

<sup>85</sup> Four barrels of chloride of lime, 12 stand-posts for anti-aircraft Lewis guns, 150 petrol tins of water, 10,000 sandbags, 220 coils of barbed-wire, 500 long and 1,000 short screw pickets, 200,000 rounds of small arms ammunition in boxes, 1,500 No. 36 grenades, 1,000 No. 27, and 2,000 No. 5. All this was, of course, in addition to the heavy load of rations, ammunition, water, sandbags, and bombs that each man carried.

ground was generally soft. The Americans dug excellently.<sup>86</sup> In many parts the Australian officers, knowing the position to be now secure,<sup>87</sup> told the tank officers, in accordance with the arrangements, that they could now go. But all along the line the tanks had been helping the digging infantry by going out, sometimes alone, sometimes with a party of Australians or Americans, to suppress any Germans seen or suspected in the wide belt between the front line and the protective barrage; in some cases tanks and infantrymen went into or through the barrage. Thus tanks entered Accroche Wood, and on the extreme right one young tank officer shelled scattered parties of Germans in the trench elements about the Roman road in the direction of Warfusée. Another got out of his tank and told the company commanders on the right where their flanks were. A third, on a German post being shown to him, drove up to it and rooted out fifty prisoners.<sup>88</sup> In most parts, after being told to go, the tanks "pottered around for a bit," as a narrative from the 13th Battalion states. The smoke screen was still ahead.

Early in this stage, with the brightening of the day, observers in rear had their first real view of the battlefield. The smoke barrier in the valley beyond the objective cut out all the farther landscape, and made the objective ridge appear as the horizon. At 4.35 the farthest part of the objective was due to be attacked. An observer on the heights north of the Somme noted: "4.45. Tanks everywhere beyond Hamel. Beyond Vaire Wood."

Along the ridge, among the tanks, could be seen infantry standing in those unmistakable easy attitudes that marked the Digger in every fight. One tank was seen to slide forward,

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<sup>86</sup> On the left flank, at least one officer of the 11th Bde reported that some German prisoners had been made to help in the digging of trenches. This foolish action was a direct violation of the Geneva Convention, and, if word of it had afterwards reached the enemy, would not merely have been welcomed by his officials for German propaganda, but would have brought harsh retaliation on British prisoners in Germany.

<sup>87</sup> Several battalions used captured German machine-guns, having given their men special training in the use of them. Lt. W. G. Faulkner (Claremont, W. Aust.; killed in action, 31 Aug. 1918) of the 44th, for example, got four of them into action.

<sup>88</sup> On the right the work of Lt. J. L. Berry of the 13th Tank Bn. was especially appreciated, but much fine performance by others went unrecorded.

slide back, and slide forward again like a housewife's flat-iron. It was "rubbing out" some German shelter.<sup>89</sup>

At the same time the contact aeroplanes of No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C., came over tooting to the infantry to burn its flares. The lights at once appeared along the objective (ignited in trenches or shell-holes so that the German infantry would not see) and were marked by the observers in the aeroplanes on maps which they dropped ten minutes later at headquarters of the 4th Division.<sup>90</sup> By 5.30 most of the tanks had left the front, though at that hour came a message from Capt. Kelly of the 21st Battalion saying that the tank out Warfusée way, 1,000 yards south-east of him, was still "careering about . . . using its guns effectively." All except three out of sixty had reached their objectives; by 11 a.m. all but five were safely back at their rallying points, at least five miles in rear,<sup>91</sup> and the missing five were brought back during the next two days. Of their crews only 13 officers and men were put out of action.<sup>92</sup>

German troops, who at first had been scattered confusedly all over the area 400-500 yards beyond the lines, now began to settle down and to snipe from the crops. In some places where, through the occurrence of hard chalky ground, Australians and Americans were still digging, this fire was troublesome. From trenches on the right front of the 6th Brigade also the shooting was severe. The wiring parties had to cease work. The 6th Brigade snipers, sent up from the rear,<sup>93</sup> now

<sup>89</sup> An observer with a direct telephone line to corps headquarters gave similar information at 5 a.m. Many of the tanks also sent messages by pigeons, which they had carried. Thus No. 7 Section, 8th Bn (Capt. E. A. H. Jones) reported itself at the objective with the infantry (on the flank) at 3.45 a.m.; No. 1 Section, 8th Bn, at 4.50; others at 4.40, 4.45, and so on. But these messages did not reach headquarters of the 5th Tank Bde. till between 6 and 6.30.

The infantry on this occasion tested the sending of messages by rockets, but, though one of these fell ten yards from the station to which it was directed, some others fell at a distance, and it was difficult to see their flight in the smoke and to find them in the crop. On some of those found the messages were burnt. Lamp signalling succeeded better; the 43rd signalled by lamp from a tree. The receiving stations were sometimes difficult to locate, and, to make sure, some signallers repeated their messages six times. Both 4th and 11th Bdes. also used wireless sets, and the first message from the troops on the objective came by that means. By 5.30, however, the 4th Bde had telephone communication with the front and thereafter the linesmen, repairing breaks under shell-fire, kept it open almost continuously.

<sup>90</sup> Two of them are with Sir John Monash's records.

<sup>91</sup> Two had been towed from the final objective. Five tanks which had been hit managed to carry on. No Mark V tank fell into German hands until July 23, when the 9th Tank Bn assisted the French on the Avre.

<sup>92</sup> Later, however, when the crews had returned to Blangy-Tronville, 5 officers and 3 men of the 13th Tank Bn were killed by an aeroplane bomb.

<sup>93</sup> They were sent when a success signal was sighted.

established themselves in pairs and began to shoot. Three of them were themselves soon hit, but their fire and that of the Stokes mortars gradually suppressed the enemy, the snipers claiming twenty-one hits. In the 13th Battalion five Americans under one of their own corporals were set to snipe at Germans trying to settle in the crops 600 yards away. Here and there Australians and Americans still went out as far as 400 yards and brought in prisoners.<sup>94</sup>

It was at this stage also that, leaving Poulainville aerodrome at 6 a.m., twelve aeroplanes of No. 9 Squadron, R.A.F., **The aeroplanes** began the carriage of ammunition to the fighting troops. At the same time the sky became crowded with other British squadrons some of whose machines could be seen wheeling like hawks and then suddenly diving, evidently at German batteries or parties of infantry hidden behind the next hill.<sup>95</sup> One after another the ammunition carriers came over at 1,000 feet or less, each to drop two brown parachutes at one of the appointed places or wherever a V-signal was displayed, then returning for another load. Each parachute carried one box of ammunition, 1,200 rounds,<sup>96</sup> and each 'plane on an average made four trips. In all 93 boxes (111,600 rounds) were dropped. One box fell within ten feet of a post of the 6th Machine Gun Company.<sup>97</sup> Two were carried by the wind into Ger-

<sup>94</sup> North-east of Hamel immediately after reaching the objective, Lt. F. H. Sessarago (Toowoomba, Q'land), going out with a party to attack a heavy German machine-gun which was causing casualties, was killed by a shell of the Australian barrage just as his manoeuvre was completed. A private, W. F. Lovering (Coruna Station, Barcaldine, Q'land), though wounded in the legs, rushed the machine-gun, bayoneted the gunner, and then fell unconscious, but the gun was captured. At another point on the 42nd's front Lt. C. V. McI. Broom (Bundaberg, Q'land) established a picket line 200 yards ahead of the objective. Thirty minutes later a tank ("Aussie") came up and asked the way "home." It left with him a box of ammunition and 16 Lewis gun magazines.

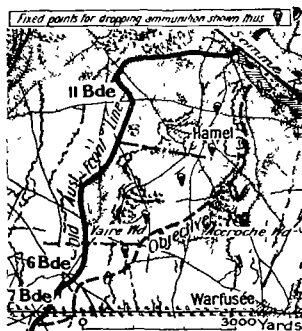
South of Hamel, as late as 2 p.m., an N.C.O. of the 15th Bn. with eight men rushed a German post, killing several men and taking five prisoners and four machine-guns. The Americans constantly participated in similar sallies. Lt. H. A. Yagle (Dundee, U.S.A.) and Sgt. F. A. Kojane (Berwyn, U.S.A., died 19 Oct 1929), 132nd Infantry, with two Australians captured a machine-gun 200 yards ahead of the objective. (Both were awarded the D.S.C., Yagle receiving also the M.C. and Kojane the M.M.).

<sup>96</sup> Nos. 23, 41, and 209 Sqdns. dropped many bombs on German troops from a low height.

<sup>97</sup> According to the squadron's report. Five sites were marked with a large white calico "N." and were supplied by eight of the aeroplanes. The other four aeroplanes looked out for machine-gunners who put out "V's." The parachutes were 14 feet in diameter.

<sup>98</sup> In practice, dropping boxes at 1,000 feet, the 'planes had usually delivered them within 100 yards of the mark.

man territory and hung in the trees of Accroche Wood. The majority fell some distance from their intended destinations, but in many cases this supply was found useful.<sup>98</sup> The opinion of the infantry was that, with more practice, the method might be highly valuable for getting supplies to infantry in difficult positions. Indeed next day the Germans, finding it difficult to send ration parties to the scattered posts in their new front line, threw rations from low-flying 'planes without parachutes and incidentally delivered a few of these parcels to the Australian outposts.



This aerial delivery was being completed—as yet with only one miscarriage, by which an aeroplane was lost<sup>99</sup>—when, at about 9.30, most of the British bombing and fighting 'planes withdrew. Soon afterwards a number of German machines, evidently sent up in response to urgent call, appeared overhead and for an hour or two the air was dominated by the enemy as it had previously been by the British, more than thirty German machines being overhead at once, diving at the newly formed posts, dropping bombs and machine-gunning the troops there. These activities caused little more than annoyance, but the directing of the German artillery by the air observers upon the new Australian positions, especially in the well-known defence line east of Hamel, was a more serious matter. The British ammunition carrying 'planes and the Australian observing 'planes continued their work notwithstanding the odds against them. A second ammunition carrier was lost, shot down,

<sup>98</sup> The 13th Bn. says that the ammunition thus supplied was "very useful"; the 21st Bn. says it was "of great assistance."

<sup>99</sup> Some onlookers reported that this machine was hit by a shell from the Australian barrage. A close observer in the 11th Bde, however, states that its parachute, when thrown out at 1,200 feet, caught in the wing and tore part of the fabric. The pilot managed to steady his machine and was then seen to hand control to his observer while he himself climbed out on the wing to clear the entanglement. The 'plane was brought safely to within 100 feet of the ground when something again went wrong and it crashed. The pilot was found dead and the observer dying. (It is possible that both accounts are right, and that the final crash was caused by a shell.)



but several observing machines of No. 3 Australian Squadron beat off their assailants.<sup>100</sup>

Meanwhile, the 43rd Battalion and tanks had thoroughly cleared Hamel,<sup>1</sup> where 300 Germans—some wearing gas-masks—were found, mostly in cellars and dugouts.

**During  
the day**

The arrival of the Australians was the first that some of them knew of the attack. One South Australian, L.-Corpl. Schulz,<sup>2</sup> whose duty was to search for documents, had noted on air-photographs the trace of a buried cable leading first into Notamel Wood and thence into the village. With two German-speaking Americans allotted to help him he followed this trace to a dugout in the northern part of Hamel. After the Americans had spoken in German to its occupants, Schultz entered the dugout and received the surrender of a battalion commander and his staff. The tanks overawed almost all opposition, although three were disabled here, two on the outskirts being hit by shells,<sup>3</sup> and one in the village overturning. About 7 o'clock Capt. Cope fired three green lights, meaning "Hamel cleared," and two companies of the 43rd withdrew to a line which meantime had been formed in rear<sup>4</sup> by the reserve company and the Lewis gun teams. The other two companies returned to the old Australian front line,<sup>5</sup> the 43rd thus becoming a reserve for the 11th Brigade.<sup>6</sup> An hour earlier the 16th Battalion (4th Brigade), having thoroughly finished the clearing of Vaire and Hamel Woods, where it took 400 prisoners, had similarly withdrawn to the old front line.

Until this time the fire of the German artillery had been ineffective. A scattered barrage had descended, first on the

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<sup>100</sup> It is claimed that the squadron brought down one north-east of Hamel Wood. See *The Battle Below (History of No. 3 Squadron, A.F.C.)*, by H. N. Wrigley, p. 82.

<sup>1</sup> Among others an Australian private, E. N. Toope (Prospect, S Aust) of the 43rd, having lost his platoon, formed a party from various companies and went on with the mopping-up.

<sup>2</sup> Cpl B. V. Schulz, D.C.M. (No 1105, 43rd Bn). Farmer; of Willowie, S. Aust.; b. Wilmington, S Aust., 22 Feb 1893.

<sup>3</sup> One probably from the Australian barrage.

<sup>4</sup> Just short of the old German front line.

<sup>5</sup> These companies began digging two communication trenches.

<sup>6</sup> At this stage on a building at the eastern end of Hamel there was seen fluttering a small French flag. This had been placed there for a bet by Capt Moran, who climbed out on the rafters to fix it.

Villers-Bretonneux plateau, and next on the old Australian front facing Hamel;<sup>7</sup> but the counter-battery fire of the Fourth Army's heavy artillery, as well as of the French, who helped by firing on the German artillery groups in the south, combined with uncertainty as to where the Australians were, had made the German reply almost harmless. At 8 o'clock some of the German field-guns, having probably taken up new positions, became more active, and from 9 o'clock Hamel was heavily shelled.<sup>8</sup> The fire on the village did not prevent a corporal of the 43rd, T. Ryan,<sup>9</sup> who had seen an old dump of British ammunition in a burning house, from asking leave of Lieut. Canaway to take a party to salve it. They brought back 73 boxes, each of 1,000 rounds, as well as some boxes of bombs.

Hamel and the ridge beyond it had been taken with slight loss. The capture of prisoners had been large and thus far there was no sign of counter-attack. "There's a catch in this somewhere—it's too easy," was a general comment. Indeed an embarrassment was that the smooth clearance of the wounded from the front, including their carriage by returning tanks, brought them so swiftly to the motor loading post, half a mile behind the old front line,<sup>10</sup> that the motor ambulances arriving from the rear were insufficient to prevent the accumulation of 70 or 80 cases waiting for clearance. The A.D.M.S. of the 4th Division, Lieut.-Col. McGregor,<sup>11</sup> hearing from Maj. Elwell<sup>12</sup> of the difficulties, sent up his deputy, Maj. Lind,<sup>13</sup> who, on arrival, asked for more cars and all available horse ambulances—the 4th Field Company of Engineers even sent

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<sup>7</sup> This fire began seven minutes after zero hour.

<sup>8</sup> Later in the day "Q" Battery, R.H.A., behind the crest north of the Somme, seeing German ammunition waggons pouring along the Roman road east of Warfusée into the valley beyond Accroche Wood, dug in the trail of one of its guns and hit at least one waggon at 7,700 yards' range.

<sup>9</sup> Sgt. T. Ryan, D.C.M. (No. 5062, 43rd Bn.). Farmer; of Millicent, S. Aust., b. Millicent, 2 Dec. 1888.

<sup>10</sup> Near 4th Bde. H.Q., at a quarry south of Hamel.

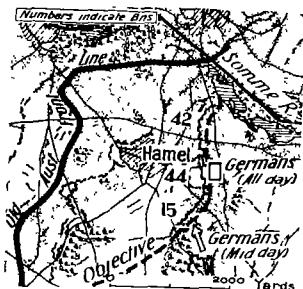
<sup>11</sup> Col. R. S. McGregor, D.S.O., V.D., D.A.D.M.S., 5th Aust. Div., 1916-17, commanded 4th Fld. Amb., 1918, A.D.M.S., 4th Aust. Div., 1918-19. Medical practitioner; of Boggabri, N.S.W.; b. 7 Mar. 1890.

<sup>12</sup> Maj. L. B. Elwell, M.C., A.A.M.C. Medical practitioner, of Stanthorpe, Q'land, b. Albrighton, Shropshire Eng., 26 Aug. 1884.

<sup>13</sup> Brig. E. F. Lind, D.S.O., V.D., D.A.D.M.S., II Anzac Corps, 1917-18; D.A.D.M.S., 4th Aust. Div., 1918; commanded 2nd Field Amb. 1918-19. Commands 23rd Inf. Bde., A.I.F., 1940. Medical practitioner, of Williamstown, Vic., b. South Yarra, Vic., 23 Dec. 1888.

two of its pontoon waggons<sup>14</sup>—and with these means by noon the pool of wounded was cleared.

Few of the troops saw any effort by the Germans to counter-attack. Even the Royal Horse Artillery observers on the heights north of the Somme detected nothing more than the distant movement of a couple of companies across a hillside far down the Somme valley at Méricourt. Nevertheless such attempts were made. At 11 a.m. and again at noon airmen saw about eighty German infantry collecting beyond the gully immediately north of Accroche Wood, in the nearest uncaptured part of the old Amiens defence line. The artillery was called down. The Germans were also fired on by two machine-guns of the 4th Company posted on Hamel ridge under Lieut. Wright.<sup>15</sup> About thirty



managed to trickle across the gully, but the movement then ceased. Half a mile farther north on the knoll east of Hamel, men of the centre and left companies of the 44th, soon after they began consolidating the captured trenches, were shot at and bombed by some nest of Germans on the slope below them. It was found that here the enemy still held a small extension of the trench-system. The commander of the centre company, Lieut. Everett,<sup>16</sup> at first decided to blow them out with Stokes mortars, but, finding that the trench-mortar officer was out of action,<sup>17</sup> he prepared to oust them immediately after dark with a fighting patrol.

The day passed without further interference from the Germans on the battle-front; indeed, in the 6th Brigade's sector on the Villers-Bretonneux plateau the Victorians in the

<sup>14</sup> These carried slightly wounded men. The 12th and 13th Fld Ambs sent up all their cars. As usual when congestion occurred, stretchers ran short, but McGregor sent up these and blankets for the waiting men.

<sup>15</sup> Lt. P. H. Wright, M.C., 4th M.G. Coy. Engineer; of Brisbane; b. Croxton Park, Lincolnshire, Eng., 12 May 1888.

<sup>16</sup> Lt. J. S. Everett, 44th Bn. Clerk, of Maylands, W. Aust.; b. Toodyay, W. Aust., 20 July 1884.

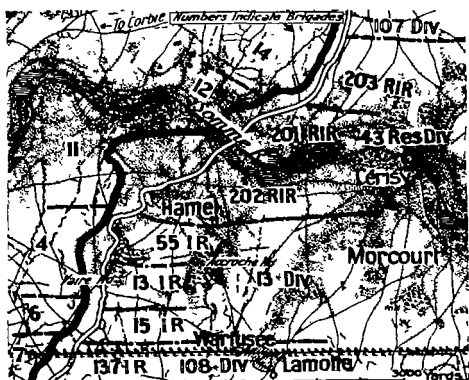
<sup>17</sup> The officer at first in charge, Lt. G. H. Ashton (Rose Park, S. Aust.), had been wounded after capturing a dugout with 20 prisoners.

afternoon pushed far down a communication sap towards a trench-system which the enemy seemed to have abandoned after the attack. Lieut. Weir of the 21st Battalion brought in a wounded German officer and a private; others probing for a quarter of a mile found four abandoned trench-mortars. Later Germans could be seen trying to re-establish a line of posts in that direction.

The curtain covering the events on the German side may now be lifted. The main attack had fallen on two divisions recently arrived in that front, the 43rd Reserve astride of the Somme after six weeks' rest near Lille, and the 13th at Vaire Wood fresh from a month's rest near Le Cateau.<sup>18</sup> The 43rd, whose 202nd R.I.R. was at

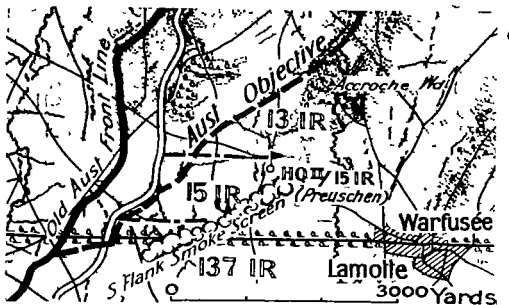
Hamel, had been there a fortnight, but the 13th had only just come in; its infantry was in line, but the artillery was still changing over when the attack was launched. It had all three regiments in line, 55th at Pear Trench, and the northern part of Vaire Wood, 13th in centre at Vaire Wood and immediately south of it, and 15th with its left on the Roman road, facing the southern flank of the attack. The 202nd R.I.R. at Hamel had two battalions in line and one in reserve. Each regiment of the 13th Divn., on the other hand, had one battalion in front line, one in support, and one in reserve. Most of the front-line battalions had two companies in the front line and two in the main defence line, which at Hamel was the old French line but farther south ran through Vaire Wood. According to their regimental histories the German companies were considerably weaker even than the Australian, averaging at this time (when influenza in its milder form was raging) about 50 rifles.

From a great part of the front line few Germans returned to tell



<sup>18</sup> One of the reasons advanced by Rawlinson in proposing the attack to Haig was to shake further the already shaken morale of the 24th and 77th Res and 108th Divs. The 24th Res. had now been relieved by the 43rd Res., men of which had been captured by the 32nd and 45th Bns. on June 25 and 30 respectively. The relief south of the Somme occurred on June 13, but later north of the river. The 43rd near Lille had suffered an epidemic of typhoid, and one battalion, the III/202nd R.I.R., had to be left behind at Gruson on this account, and only rejoined towards the end of June. The third division mentioned by Rawlinson 108th, was still in line, but was only touched by the extreme southern flank of the attack.

what had happened, and the smoke prevented observation. Indeed the length of time that elapsed before the staff of the 108th Divn. (on the southern flank) heard of the attack, was afterwards cited in German orders as a warning against the recurrence of such incidents. It was not until 5.45 that headquarters of the 202nd R.I.R. knew anything of the attack. The commanders and staffs of both its forward battalions had been overrun. In the 13th Divn. the forward battalion (II) of the 15th I.R., although caught only by the southern flank of the attack, almost vanished, no more than one officer and twenty men, in addition to the battalion headquarters, returning. This headquarters, under Cavalry Capt. Freiherr von Preuschen, lay exactly half a mile beyond the objective, and has left the best account of the action among the available German records: First, at 3 a.m., came drumfire. "Only a quarter of an hour later headquarters heard in the direction of the front strong infantry fire. Soon after, tanks appeared on the Roman road (1,000 yards to the south) and the area north of it." Tanks went beyond battalion headquarters and then turned. "When, at 5 a.m., 'English' infantry was visible ahead, battalion headquarters knew that its companies had been overrun." The support battalion (I) was early alarmed but the barrage, raising a haze of smoke and dust, prevented the patrols from finding out what had happened.<sup>19</sup> An advanced post of the support battalion was captured, and another driven back. When a tank came at one of the support companies from the rear, the drum-major, Sgt.-Maj. Schumiki, it is said, coolly let it approach to 30 yards and then fired on it with an anti-tank rifle, whereupon it made off. The rest of his men continued firing on the Australian infantry, who took cover in the wheat and in shell-holes.<sup>20</sup>



Preuschen's headquarters was now uncomfortably near the Australian front, individual Australians approaching very close to it, and at 5 p.m. he withdrew it, creeping away with difficulty over the exposed ground.

No counter-attack seems to have been attempted by the 15th I.R., the support battalion merely taking up its battle positions. Beyond Vaire Wood the opposition to Lts. Rule and Ramsay Wood was possibly offered by two sections of the 13th I.R. under Res.-Lt. Rosenbaum, who became rather the hero of the German defence in that sector. The regimental history says that a company of the support battalion also "counter-attacked" in this sector, its leader, Res.-Lt. Clasen, being killed. Possibly these were the troops seen trying to

<sup>19</sup> The effectiveness of the smoke screen caused the 97th I.R. to order that patrols must be sent from the rear if such an attack occurred again. (As elsewhere in this history, the clock-time given is that of the British Army.)

<sup>20</sup> *The History of the 15th I.R.* (p. 346) says that by this action the company recaptured the main line of resistance, which had been "lost." Actually it was far beyond the objective, but had probably been abandoned and was now reoccupied.

form a new line across the wheatfields beyond the objective. The 55th I.R. (13th Divn.) threw its support battalion into Accroche Wood and the gully north of it, both east of the Australian objective.

Except for the immediate counter-attack on the post south of the Roman road—a vigorous effort by the supports of the III/137th I.R. (108th Divn.)—the only German reaction that made any impression was that of the 202nd R.I.R. (43rd Res. Divn.) at the hill east of Hamel, known to the Germans as the "Wolfsberg." Here Res.-Lt. Paulsen with a small part of one of the forward battalions had managed to cling to the edge of the Wolfsberg. Another remnant of his battalion (III) clustered in the part of the old French line that was not attacked.

Night was just settling when, at about 10 o'clock, the German artillery heavily bombarded the posts of the 11th Brigade in the old Amiens defence line on the "Wolfsberg" and a party of enemy bombers followed by about 200 infantry attacked up a communication trench leading to it from the strong-point which the Germans still held. At 10.10 the S.O.S. signal was sent up and the British barrage descended for fifteen minutes in immense volume upon the German rear. But the attacking Germans were ahead of it. The Western Australians of the 44th—with the exception of fifteen men, stretcher-bearers and others, who were trapped in a deep dugout—were driven from the German point of entry and, as bombs ran short, had some difficulty in stopping their opponents from continuous encroachment. Fortunately the four Stokes mortars of the 11th L.T.M. Battery near by, now vigorously commanded by a sergeant, J. Distant,<sup>21</sup> were well supplied with bombs from the carrier tank, and by throwing shells into the communication trench they constantly hampered the enemy. Lieut. Gaze<sup>22</sup> of the southern company of the 44th, leading a party northwards along the line, found the Germans, apparently 200-300 strong, well established in 200 yards of trench between the centre and northern companies.

A counter-stroke was accordingly organised. Capt. Adams of the southern company asked the support company (Capt. Fowler<sup>23</sup>) to reinforce with a platoon, and from this and

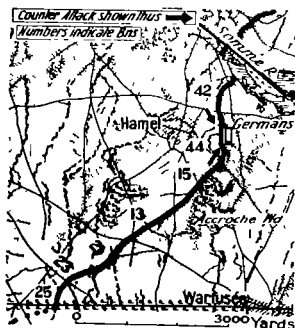
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<sup>21</sup> Sgt J. Distant, M.M. (No. 316, 11th L.T.M. Bty). Labourer; of Childers, Q'land, b. Croydon, Eng., 9 Mar. 1885.

<sup>22</sup> Lt. F. O. Gaze, M.C.; 44th Bn. Farmer; of Gnowangerup, W. Aust.; b. Adelaide, 2 Apr. 1893.

<sup>23</sup> Capt. H. L. Fowler, 44th Bn. School teacher, of Perth, W. Aust., b. Hemel Hempstead, Herts, Eng., 5 Oct. 1891.

other elements<sup>24</sup> a bombing party was organised by Gaze and Lieut. Cornish.<sup>25</sup> This would attack up the trench from the south, while the northern company (Capt. Stables)<sup>26</sup> would simultaneously assault the enemy's northern flank. There had been much confusion in the dark, and the night was continually disturbed, the British artillery laying down four "counter-preparatory" bombardments, and the Germans constantly shelling with mustard and phosgene gas—an experience most trying to several inexperienced American platoons stationed in isolated trenches. Meanwhile bombs were brought up by a company of the 43rd and two bombing sections of that battalion and some Americans<sup>27</sup> also were sent.



At 2 a.m. the bombing parties of the 44th, thus reinforced, attacked the German flanks. On the north Capt. Stables' company was checked by the Germans, but on the southern flank Gaze and Cornish, with Sergets. Padgett<sup>28</sup> and Ingvarson,<sup>29</sup> Ptes. Tierney<sup>30</sup> and Lynch<sup>31</sup> (44th), Angus<sup>32</sup> (43rd), and a dozen others went (as the history of their battalion says) "bald-headed" for the Germans, driving them from bay to bay and finally down the communication trench from which, where it began to peter out, the enemy fled helter-skelter over the open

<sup>24</sup> The teams of the 11th I T M Bty under Sgt. Distant and Cpl F. P. Pullen, having fired off all their ammunition, joined in with the infantry. (Bullen, who was killed on 1 Sep 1918, belonged to Fremantle, W. Aust.)

<sup>25</sup> Of the centre company (Lt C. R. Cornish, D S O ; 44th Bn. Locomotive engine driver, of Midland Junction, W. Aust., b. Arakoon, Q'land, 29 June 1891)

<sup>26</sup> Capt W. J. Stables, 44th Bn. Civil servant, of Perth, W. Aust., b. Perth, 30 Apr 1888.

<sup>27</sup> Cpl. R. H. Powell (Joliet, U.S.A.), 131st Inf., with his section volunteered to take part in a bombing attack, and did so

<sup>28</sup> L.-Sgt. J. R. Padgett (No. 546; 44th Bn). Stone mason; of Pickering Brook, W. Aust.; b. Bradford, Eng., 3 Nov. 1881.

<sup>29</sup> Sgt. J. E. V. K. Ingvarson, D C.M. (No. 1661, 44th Bn). Dairyman, of Perth, W. Aust., b. Brede, Denmark, 23 Dec 1894.

<sup>30</sup> L.-Cpl. C. P. Tierney, M M (No. 2767, 44th Bn). Farmer; of Walebing, W. Aust.; b. Wollar, N.S.W. 10 Nov. 1889.

<sup>31</sup> Pte J. J. Lynch (No. 638a 44th Bn). Axeman, of Brisbane, b. Gympie, Q'land, 1894. Killed in action, 5 July 1918

<sup>32</sup> Pte. F. Angus, M M. (No. 1031; 43rd Bn.). Farmer; of Mindarie, S. Aust., b. Beaumont, S. Aust., 19 May 1884.

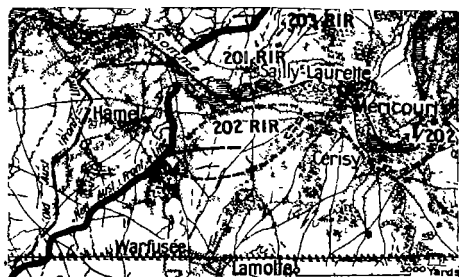
with the Western Australians after them bombing, snaphooting, and firing Lewis guns from the hip. Just before the enemy broke, Lynch, who is said to have been "irresistible throughout," was shot through the head amid a crowd of Germans.

But the success was overwhelming.<sup>33</sup> The trench which the Germans had retained in the original attack was taken. Six German officers and fifty of other ranks were driven into the dugouts and captured together with 10 machine-guns, and eleven of the Australians, previously captured by the enemy, were freed.<sup>34</sup> The 44th's support company moved up and took over this section of the line, its own place being occupied by a company of the 43rd.

It is now known that the German counter-attack at 10 o'clock was made by reserves that had been intended to launch it ever since early morning. As soon as news of the attack on Hamel reached headquarters of the 43rd Res. Divn., the reserve battalion south of the Somme (I/202nd R.I.R.) was ordered up from Méricourt and a battalion

of the 201st R.I.R. north of the Somme was also sent. These were undoubtedly the troops whom the observers of the Royal Horse Artillery saw on the move shortly after noon. But the march of both battalions was very slow, aeroplanes constantly diving on them; even single men (says the history of the 202nd) were attacked from the air with bombs and machine-guns, and the morning

was well advanced before these troops reached the gully south-west of Cérisy, a mile east of the Wolfsberg. News had then come through that Hamel, and apparently the Wolfsberg also, had been lost, and the I/202nd was ordered to retake the hill immediately. The battalion started towards Lamotte and then was turned back; eventually it sent two companies round by the Somme valley and one by Cérisy Gully to Accroche Wood; doubtless it was the latter that was seen by the Australians and fired on at 2 p.m.



<sup>33</sup> It is stated that an American corporal, T. A. Pope (Chicago) and his platoon helped in this movement, Pope rushing and seizing a machine-gun singlehanded. He and Cpl Powell were among eighteen Americans decorated by King George V in person for their work at Hamel (Pope was awarded the D.C.M.—as well as the American M. of H.—and Powell the M.M.)

<sup>34</sup> Four others, stretcher-bearers, who had been surprised while attending to a wounded man in the dugout, had been sent by the Germans to the rear carrying a wounded man. The Australian wounded in the dugout were kindly treated, one, Pte. E. G. Mercer (Bayswater, W. Aust.), having his wounds skilfully redressed by a German medical orderly.



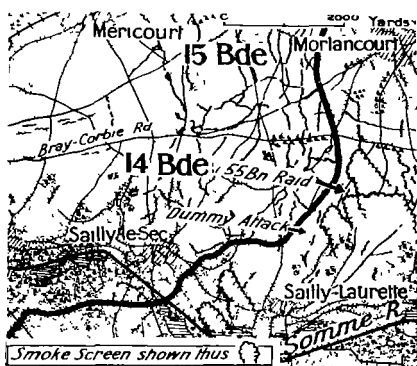
No counter-attack could be launched before night. After the bombardment at dark the three companies forced their way into the eastern trenches on the hill, but attempts to mop-up farther failed through lack of troops. Early next morning the reserve battalion from the 201st also was sent up, but, before it arrived, the 202nd had lost its foothold on the Wolfsberg, and the 1/201st accordingly took post along the next spur.

The German command had some intention of renewing the counter-attack. The 448th I.R. (from the 107th Divn. at Morlancourt) was brought up, and also additional artillery. But on July 5 came an order that the 77th Res. Divn.'s artillery, which had been retained for the intended counter-attack, must be sent away. The plan was therefore abandoned. The line of the 1/201st R.I.R. on the next spur became the German front line east of Hamel.

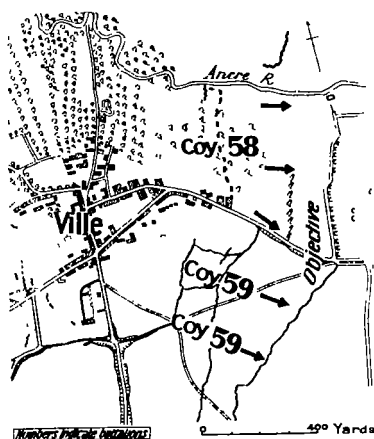
That the German artillery was so innocuous on the Hamel battlefield was doubtless partly due to the feints between the Somme and the Ancre. On the shoulder above  
**The feints**      Sailly-Laurette the dummy attack, simulated by Lieut. Campbell<sup>35</sup> and five men of the 55th raising and lowering fifteen *papier mâché* figures over the parapet for thirty-five minutes after "zero," drew intense machine-gun fire, some of the models being riddled with bullets. The raid of 200 of the 55th under Capt. Wyllie south of the Brick Beacon, though most bravely and skilfully led to its farthest objective, found the Germans on the alert and resulted in the capture of three Germans and two machine-guns at a cost of just one third of the raiding force.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Lt. W. E. Campbell, 55th Bn. Bushman and stockman, of Tamworth, N.S.W., b. Sydney, 8 July 1888.

<sup>36</sup> The raid was in many ways a remarkable one. No sooner had the Australian barrage (thickened by the 4th M.T.M. and 14th L.T.M. Batteries) descended than German trench-mortars threw a barrage near the Australian trenches where the attacking force was lying on its tapes. The raiders and their covering barrage were not to advance for three minutes, and during this time an officer and 6 men were killed and 29 men wounded. As the troops rose and went forward, others were hit, a few by machine-gun fire. At the first German trench, 100 yards away, two small groups of the enemy were killed (except for one prisoner taken) and the second wave passed through and made for the second trench. This was protected by a weak belt of wire, and its garrison fought stoutly, but the New South Welshmen succeeded in rushing it. Lt. L. N. Stafford (Woollahra) after killing two Germans was himself killed, but



The attack made by the 15th Brigade (Vic.) east of Ville was a more important undertaking, involving the capture of the new German front line in the marshes and the drier flats below the hills immediately north of the entrance of the Morlancourt pan. The marshes could be held by either side only by scattered posts, and on that front—750 yards, from the Ancre to the Méaulte road—Brig.-Genl. Elliott attacked with a single company of the 58th Battalion. The German posts to be captured lay along a cross-road, one of the few comparatively dry positions on the flats. The part of the objective on drier land, though only some 500 yards in length, was attacked by two companies of the 59th.



This plan had developed from an earlier project of Elliott's to advance his line east of Ville by night assault. He had desired to attack in the dark so as to have the line consolidated before morning, when he expected it to be severely shelled from Morlancourt heights. When the 5th Division was asked to make a diversion simultaneous with the Hamel attack, and General Hobbs proposed that the assault at Ville should be made by day, Elliott vehemently protested, pointing to the probability of heavy loss among the men digging in by day-

Lt. L. Chadwick (Galston, N.S.W.) captured a machine-gun, and several dugouts and a heavy machine-gun on a concrete platform were blown up. The smoke shells made difficult not only sight but breathing, and, as always in this area, it was difficult to keep direction. The leaders, however, managed to guide the party back by noting the lie of the box-barrage. The barrage of the German artillery had fallen behind them nine minutes after "zero," and Lt. W. T. Piddington (Peak Hill, N.S.W.) was killed and some others were wounded during the retirement. Three prisoners of the 232nd R.I.R. (107th Div) and two light machine-guns were captured, but 3 Australian officers and 64 men were hit.

The history of the 232nd R.I.R. says that its 6th Coy. was attacked and a light machine-gun was taken from its front line and another from the main line of resistance. The company commander, Res.-Lt. Hauschild, hurrying forward to lead a counter-attack, was killed by a bomb, but the company suffered only ten casualties.

light. However, an action at dawn was required and, after discussion as to whether the operation should not be reduced to a mere raid, it was decided to keep the ground won. The troops digging in would be protected for a time by a smoke screen. Some days before the operation the assaulting battalions were withdrawn from the front line, their places being taken by the 60th and 57th through which they would attack.

The two assaulting companies of the 59th were to advance in one wave of three lines—first a thin line of scouts in pairs;<sup>37</sup> next, ten yards behind, a line of small groups; finally, twenty-five yards in rear, the Lewis gun sections. The company of the 58th on the left, being three times more extended, could only detail platoons or half-platoons for particular objectives. On the night of July 3rd-4th the assembly was carried out apparently without disturbing the enemy; and the barrage, which descended at 3.10 a.m., is described<sup>38</sup> as "very heavy and accurate." Upon its lifting, the right company of the 59th immediately rushed, with a cheer, the German trench, many of whose occupants ran off through the tall crops, the Victorians shooting at them. Lieut. Facey,<sup>39</sup> though wounded, set about blocking the right of the captured trench with two barricades at twenty yards' interval. Part of the centre company (the left of the 59th), under Capt. McDonald, came upon wire-entanglement in the crop. The right flank platoon, however, under Lieut. McPherson,<sup>40</sup> was into the German trench just in time. A German, jumping from it, began to fire his machine-gun from the top, but was silenced and the trench was here captured.

McDonald, though unaware that wire had been met, had noticed his two centre platoons sagging back. Three German machine-gun crews were thus enabled to get their guns into action, and opened vigorously, hitting both the platoon com-

<sup>37</sup> More than one Australian leader at this time strongly recommended the pairing of men in the widely extended skirmishing lines then necessary. Troops thus disposed lost the feeling of isolation and were less inclined to bunch.

<sup>38</sup> By Capt. E. K. Keys (Dandenong, Vic.) of the 57th, through whose line the company of the 58th attacked. The barrage was laid by the left group of the 5th Div's. artillery—6th (Army) and 4th Bdes., A.F.A., and 5th (Army) Bde., R.H.A., together with the 3rd Aust. L.T.M. Bty. and Stokes mortars of the 15th and 8th Aust. L.T.M. Batteries. The III Corps supplied the heavy artillery.

<sup>39</sup> Lt. S. G. Facey, D.C.M.: 50th Bn. Farmer; of Mansfield, Vic.; b. Carag Carag, Vic., 27 Apr. 1887. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

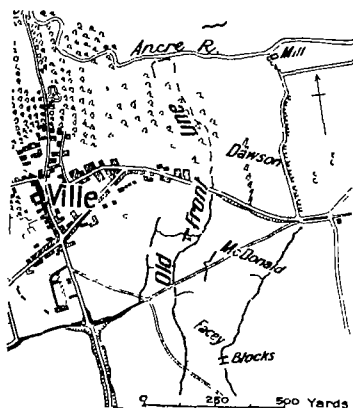
<sup>40</sup> Lt. W. J. McPherson, 59th Bn. Clerk, of Melbourne; b. South Yarra, Vic., 10 July 1891.

manders, their sergeants, and half their men. A corporal, A. Ibbotson,<sup>41</sup> then made his way to McDonald, who instructed him to bring his men round through McPherson's trench. The left platoon also had reached the trench, and, by arrangement, a bombing attack was made on the enemy from both flanks and the trench cleared. As this attack was proceeding, there was seen, 200 yards ahead of the trench, a body of fifty Germans, evidently the enemy's supports, coming up at the double. The Lewis gunners on McDonald's left opened and the Germans scattered, leaving a number lying in the crop.

German records show that the Australian attack had fallen on the 52nd R.I.R., right flank regiment of the 107th Divn. holding the Morlancourt front. The troops seen at this stage appear to have been a company (5th) of its right front-line battalion attempting to retake the position.

At this stage a stiff bomb-fight could be heard in progress farther south. A forward observing officer of the 16th Battery, A.F.A., Lieut. Croughan,<sup>42</sup> then with McDonald,<sup>43</sup> told him that both Capt. Akeroyd, commander of the right company, and Lieut. Scattergood,<sup>44</sup> the next senior, had been wounded, and offered to go thither and assist.

What had happened was that while parties were barricading the southern end of the trench, Lieut. Facey, the officer-in-charge, a leader specially trusted for his bravery and capacity, was shot dead as he went along the line. His men had almost



<sup>41</sup> Sgt A Ibbotson, M.M. (No. 3173; 59th Bn.). Farmer; of Learmonth, Vic.; b. Arley, Warwickshire, Eng. 13 Jan. 1888.

<sup>42</sup> Capt. J. P. Croughan, D.S.O.; 16th Bty., A.F.A. Public servant; of Hawthorn, Vic.; b. Hawthorn, 22 Sep. 1888.

<sup>43</sup> Two minutes after reaching the objective trench, Lt. Croughan spoke to battalion headquarters on the telephone and asked that the 18-pounders and 4.5-inch howitzers should fire on the lower terraces of the hill north of Morlancourt, which overlooked from south and south-east the captured ground.

<sup>44</sup> Lt. W. H. Scattergood, 59th Bn. Clerk; of Brighton, Vic.; b. St. Kilda, Vic., 4 July 1894.

finished the outer barricade when a bomb came over it to burst near their heads, immediately followed by more bombs in showers. The six Victorians in the party ran back to the first barricade, where they awaited the enemy. At this moment there came up a sergeant, P. L. Little,<sup>45</sup> looking for useful work.<sup>46</sup> He at once took charge and, finding that the small guard had few bombs, ordered them back fifty yards along the trench to await a supply already sent for. Lieut. Stavelly,<sup>47</sup> now in command of the company, Croughan, the artillery officer, and others hurriedly organised the collecting of bombs, and Sergt. Hutchinson<sup>48</sup> with a number of men carrying them quickly reached the small party. Rifle-grenadiers were sent to fire overhead and the Victorians at once attacked. The Germans fell back and, though they continued to bomb, were driven well beyond the second barricade. Sergt. Little now caused this barricade to be solidly built, and, though the Germans made a second attempt, they were henceforth kept at a distance by rifle-grenades.

The counter-attack had been made by parts of two companies (2nd and 3rd) of the left front-line battalion of the 52nd R.I.R. Like the Australians, for a time they ran short of bombs.

While these events were happening on the right, the left company—Capt. Dawson's of the 58th—was carrying through a more difficult task, and one of special interest inasmuch as this company's extension was greater than Australians had ever attempted in trench-warfare—80 rifles<sup>49</sup> attacking the German outposts on a front of 750 yards. Events started with a mishap. The company was to be furnished with a special reserve of one platoon to assist, if necessary, its left upon the Ancre. Lieut. Tasker of the 58th was selected to command this, and was instructed by his battalion commander, Lieut.-Col. Watson, to start early and get his men dug in ahead of the line before the action started. On reaching the outposts in the

<sup>45</sup> Sgt. P. L. Little D.C.M., M.M. (No. 31-1 59th Bn.). Hairdresser, of Camberwell, Vic.; b. Richmond, Vic., 18 July 1890.

<sup>46</sup> With Sgt. F. E. Ledin (of Black Flat, now Glen Waverley, Vic.) he had been occupied in "salotaging" the German flare signals in order to confuse the enemy. If the Germans fired two greens, Ledin and Little fired two reds, and so on.

<sup>47</sup> Lt. W. C. B. Stavelly, 59th Bn. Assistant shire secretary; of Avoca, Vic.; b. Wycheproof, Vic., 8 Mar. 1894.

<sup>48</sup> Sgt. W. P. Hutchinson (No. 2182, 59th Bn.). Orchardist, of Somerville, Vic.; b. Sale, Vic., 23 May 1893.

<sup>49</sup> The company was organised in three platoons, each of two bombing and two Lewis gun sections.

marshes, Tasker was told by Lieut. Fleming,<sup>50</sup> in charge there, that the ground ahead was too boggy for digging. Fleming went out with him to prove it, when a bomb suddenly exploded almost beneath them, wounding both—it had been thrown by an Australian listening post, of whose existence Tasker had been unaware. After endeavouring to carry on, Tasker telephoned for another officer to take charge, and Col. Watson sent Lieut. Flintoft.<sup>51</sup>

Meanwhile Capt. Dawson, whose company had previously held this sector for three weeks, and had since studied the operation on a relief map and daily rehearsed its tasks, had come into position.<sup>52</sup> The artillery barrage, falling at 3.10 and largely supplemented by the fire of Stokes guns and medium trench-mortars on the German front line, was excellent. Dawson, calling to his headquarters, "Come on, boys, they're off," was almost at once slightly wounded, as was Lieut. Davies<sup>53</sup> leading the right platoon, but both went on. The three platoons were widely separated, and to some of the advancing troops it appeared for a time that the operation must have failed, for flares were rising behind them<sup>54</sup> and machine-guns were cracking everywhere—the one hopeful sign was the sound of Lewis guns and Mills bombs in the general din. Sixty yards out, the centre platoon under Lieut. Willis<sup>55</sup> met and killed a German machine-gun crew, and farther on, in marshy, cratered ground, Willis's scouts overcame another, whose situation they already knew. At the main position, fortunately, this platoon met with little resistance from the Germans.

The number (of Germans) I personally saw killed and running away (said Sgt. Eales,<sup>56</sup> in charge of Willis's left party) could have thrown stones at my small crew and routed them.

The position of the centre platoon would indeed have been precarious had not the right platoon, working along the Méaulte

<sup>50</sup> Lt. J. H. Fleming, D.C.M., M.M.; 57th Bn. Plumber, of Elphinstone, Vic., b. Macorna, Vic. 3 July 1883. Died 10 Sep. 1930.

<sup>51</sup> See Capt. Dawson's and Lt. Tasker's accounts, *Reveille*, July and Aug. 1933.

<sup>52</sup> Here also the abnormal procedure was followed of issuing to the men, when waiting for the attack, a small nip of rum.

<sup>53</sup> Lt. J. E. Davies, M.C.; 58th Bn. Baker, of Ballarat, Vic.; b. Talbot, Vic., 18 June 1892.

<sup>54</sup> Some, at least, however, of the flares seen in rear were probably those fired by the Australians "sabotaging" the German signals.

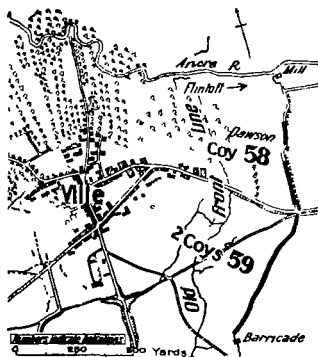
<sup>55</sup> Lt. H. D. Willis, M.C.; 58th Bn. School teacher; of Warragul and Mansfield, Vic.; b. Bendigo, Vic., 17 Apr. 1883.

<sup>56</sup> Sgt. P. W. Eales, M.M. (No. 1677; 58th Bn.). Grocer; of Hamilton, Vic.; b. Penshurst, Vic., 8 Sep. 1891.

road and getting past a wire barricade there, entered the southern flank of the German position and then bombed vigorously northward along the crossroad, shooting Germans and clearing the niches and dugouts. They were thus engaged when Capt. Dawson, his face covered with blood, came along and found both platoons on their objective.

Of his left platoon, however, Dawson could hear nothing, and therefore sent his company sergeant-major, A. E. McPhie,<sup>57</sup> with a companion to reconnoitre. McPhie found the platoon in place on its objective, a mill-house<sup>58</sup> beside the Ancre. It had encountered the hardest fighting in the battle. When eighty yards out it had been stopped by a machine-gun. Lieut.

Thompson<sup>59</sup> had immediately spread his men out and then led a charge on the post, killing the crew and capturing two machine-guns. But other gun-crews at the objective had been aroused and the advance was now met by their fire. The guns were protected by wire. Thompson placed part of his platoon to shoot at them from the front while he led a party to the flank



and charged from there. Three more machine-gun nests were thus seized and the objective was reached. Another gun ahead of his flank now opened, hitting several of his men. While organising a rush upon it this gallant officer with Corpl. Skinner<sup>60</sup> was killed. But the objective was held, though the platoon was diminished by many casualties. Hearing of this, Capt. Dawson ordered up the reserve platoon on the Ancre. Its new commander, Flintoft, had just been informed of the situation ahead by a badly wounded runner, Pte. Cook,<sup>61</sup> and

<sup>57</sup> C.S.M. A. E. McPhie (No. 4152; 58th Bn.). Farmer; of Apollo Bay, Vic.; b. St. Arnaud, Vic., 27 Mar. 1890.

<sup>58</sup> This is also referred to in the Australian records as "the estaminet."

<sup>59</sup> Lt I. G. Thompson, 58th Bn. Draughtsman, of Saddleworth, S. Aust.; b. Saddleworth, 1897. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

<sup>60</sup> Cpl. E. C. Skinner (No. 4642; 58th Bn.). Farm hand; of Baringhup, Vic.; b. Baringhup, 1889. Killed in action, 4 July 1918.

<sup>61</sup> Pte. L. A. Cook, M.M. (No. 2388, 58th Bn.). Coachsmith, of Croydon, Vic.; b. Yarra Glen, Vic., 14 Oct. 1897.

was about to advance—a step also rendered advisable by the fact that his platoon lay beneath the German barrage. Going through marshy land they reached the mill, from which Flintoft made his way to Willis's platoon, 300 yards to the south.<sup>62</sup> To fill this gap he asked Capt. Keys<sup>63</sup> of the 57th in the old front line to send a platoon, which arrived quickly and formed two posts.

The history of the 52nd R.I.R. says that on the northern flank the Australians were at first thrown out by an immediate counter-attack (apparently by the 6th Coy., whose commander, Lt. Schulze, was killed in it). The Australians, however, forced their way back to the position from the south.

The whole objective had thus been seized; of its garrison 64 prisoners were taken, with 15 machine-guns; 70 others were thought to have been killed or wounded, and many fled. To make the front secure the whole of Capt. Jennings'<sup>64</sup> company of the 60th Battalion was sent up, distributed by platoons, another company of the 60th replacing it in the old front line. No further attempt was made by the enemy to retake the position until 8.50 p.m., when the German artillery laid a bombardment on it and, as the posts on the right saw infantry assembled in the crops on the hill south of the river, Capt. McDonald fired an S.O.S. flare and the tremendous protecting barrage descended. The German bombardment ceased in fifty minutes,<sup>65</sup> the British half an hour later. No more was seen of the German assembly.<sup>66</sup>

German records say that a deliberate counter-attack with artillery preparation had been ordered and arranged for 8.30 p.m. A battalion of the 247th R.I.R., of the 54th (Württemberg) Res. Divn. which held Dernancourt, had been lent as reserve to the 107th Divn., a division which, says the Württemberg historian, "we knew . . . since the beginning of the offensive, and knew that it was not in a condition to retake a lost trench." The history of the 52nd R.I.R. says that,

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<sup>62</sup> On the way he captured six Germans calmly getting their breath in a dugout.

<sup>63</sup> Capt. E. K. Keys, 57th Bn. Farmer; of Dandenong, Vic.; b. Keysborough, Vic., 24 Oct. 1889.

<sup>64</sup> Capt. R. Jennings, V.D.; 60th Bn. Linotype operator; of Caulfield, Vic.; b. South Yarra, Vic., 28 June 1884.

<sup>65</sup> One of Flintoft's posts was blown out but was replaced by a section of the 57th who (under Cpl. F. E. Beard, of Ararat, Vic.) swam across the river.

<sup>66</sup> The German bombardment, however, caused a severe loss in the Australian front line, where Lts. J. C. Moore (Beaufort, Vic.) and J. R. Ranson (Rockdale, N.S.W.) of the 15th and 8th L.T.M. Batteries, whose Stokes mortars were in that line, were killed. Moore was a picked officer of the 60th Bn, specially transferred by Elliott to the trench-mortar battery in the difficult situation caused by the issue of the inferior "blue ring" ammunition.



when the German artillery opened, "the English immediately replied with the strongest barrage, and the counter-attack could not be carried out." The effort was abandoned and the intermingled companies of the 52nd were eventually reorganised to hold the former support position as their new front.

Brig.-Genl. Elliott had been eager to undertake at this stage a raid with a company of the 60th Battalion against a terrace footing the hill north of Morlancourt, believed to be crowded with German supports. A reconnaissance by the battalion intelligence officer, Lieut. Stillman, however, now indicated that there were few if any Germans there, and the plan was abandoned.<sup>67</sup> The captured trench was quickly connected with the old front by two communication trenches which had been partly tunnelled beforehand as "Russian" saps.

Both the Battle of Hamel and the diversion at Ville were quickly over and completely successful. The total casualties of the attacking infantry were about 1,400, of which the 4th Brigade suffered 504, the 11th 312, the 6th 131, the 7th 115, the Americans 176, and the 15th Brigade at Ville 142.<sup>68</sup>

The only German regiment on the Hamel front whose casualties are stated in the available records is that which faced the southern flank of the main attack, the 15th I.R., which lost 232 officers and men (of whom 199 were missing); all except 27 of these belonged to the forward battalion. At Ville the 52nd R.I.R. had 205 casualties (111 missing). Probably the total German loss considerably exceeded 2,000. All the battalions that had held the front line had to be temporarily reduced—in most cases to a single company. As usual

<sup>67</sup> Stillman was wounded on the reconnaissance.

<sup>68</sup> Particulars of the infantry casualties were.

4th Brigade			11th Brigade			6th Brigade		
	Oftrs.	O.R.		Oftrs.	O.R.		Oftrs.	O.R.
13 Bn.	8	118	41 Bn.	—	7	21 Bn.	3	52
14 Bn.	2	53	42 Bn.	3	48	23 Bn.	5	70
15 Bn.	9	231	43 Bn.	7	90	6 T.M.Bty.	—	1
16 Bn.	5	73	44 Bn.	5	149			
4 T.M. Bty.	—	5	11 T.M.Bty.	1	2			
Total	24	480	Total	16	296	Total	8	123
7th Brigade			15th Brigade			33rd American Divn.		
	Oftrs.	O.R.		Oftrs.	O.R.			
25 Bn.	3	90	57 Bn.	1	10			
Others	2	20	58 Bn.	2	39			
			59 Bn.	6	58			
			60 Bn.	3	20			
			15 T.M.Bty.	2	1			
Total	5	110	Total	14	128			

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at this stage of the war, some of the defeated regiments were officially thanked in orders for having prevented the British from advancing farther—an intention which, of course, had never been entertained.

Haig noted that this battle greatly strengthened the British position on the Villers-Bretonneux ridge. It also weakened the German position. The German prisoners exceeded 1,600,<sup>69</sup> with two anti-tank machine-guns, 177 machine-guns, 32 trench-mortars, and a new anti-tank weapon of the German infantry, a gigantic and cumbersome rifle of .530-inch calibre,<sup>70</sup> fired from a bipod. The German trench divisions on the Hamel-Villers-Bretonneux front, starved of reinforcements, had long been deteriorating under the nightly fire of artillery and machine-guns and the bombings of the air force. This was proved by previously unheard-of conditions found by the attacking troops in the captured German positions. Of wire-entanglements there was little more than a few weak scattered belts; the trenches seemed to have been dug without planning; few deep dugouts had been added, although many had been begun and remained unfinished; and, on the southern flank, some of the living trenches had actually been used as open latrines. Brig.-Genl. Wisdom noted that the prisoners "were the poorest lot I have seen," and conjectured that the enemy was holding his line with his poorest troops. Doubtless "peaceful penetration" had added to the strain.

You bloody Australians (said an English-speaking prisoner quoted in Wisdom's report), when you are in the line you keep us on pins and needles; we never know when you are coming over.

But these troops at Hamel had hitherto held their defence system undislocated by local thrusts like those near Morlancourt. The Battle of Hamel set up there the same condition of nervousness that had existed since April among the Germans north of the Somme, who were in constant apprehension of another sharp blow, as the instant reply of their artillery and trench-mortars this day indicated. This strain of expectation henceforth extended to the whole German garrison facing the Australian Corps.

These results, moral and tactical, were not without important influence on future events. But, when all is said, the chief importance of the Battle of Hamel lay in its being an exercise

<sup>69</sup> 43 officers and 1,562 of other ranks.

<sup>70</sup> It was 5½ feet long, weighed 36½ lb., and was sighted up to 500 metres.

for the British command and troops for the offensive which all expected to occur when, that year or next, the balance of strength finally turned against the enemy. Hamel was a lesson in how to use the Mark V tank with aggressive infantry in breaking through German trench-lines on the Western Front. The method that resulted was neither that devised by the leaders of the Tank Corps, nor, in every item, that laid down by General Monash; it was evolved from these, in the actual battle, by the Australian infantry and the tank crews themselves. Obviously it did not permanently solve the problem of co-operation between tanks and infantry; if the speed of the tanks had far exceeded that of the infantry, the Hamel method might have involved an unnecessary waste of this advantage. But it did show an effective method of using with infantry those tanks with which the B.E.F. was likely to be furnished for the remainder of the war;<sup>71</sup> and this, whether the fact was fully recognised at G.H.Q. or not, was one of the great problems then confronting the British command.

For such results as were attained at Hamel, both Tank Corps and infantry had to be daring and efficient. Hitherto it had been a definite disadvantage to the Tank Corps—and even, in some degree, to the general cause—that the Australian infantry since Bullecourt mistrusted both the tanks, and, to a certain extent, their crews. Two hours at Hamel completed a revolution in the Diggers' opinion, which never afterwards changed. Of the commanders of battalions that had suffered so disastrously at Bullecourt, Lieut.-Col. Drake Brockman (16th) reported that the tanks had, on certain occasions during the Hamel advance, proved "particularly useful and efficient." Lieut.-Col. McSharry (15th) says of one tank that it

saved us a great number of casualties at the final objective. This tank gave an ideal illustration of co-operation with infantry.

Lieut.-Col. Marks of the 13th Battalion reported:

I feel sure that tanks, when so ably used, could obviate the necessity for a final protective barrage and leave more scope for exploiting success. . . . They even appeared to anticipate the infantry's desires.

The American Capt. Gale with the 11th Brigade says that

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<sup>71</sup> The speed of the Mark V was only about five miles an hour, and that of the "Allied" tank (Mark VIII), which was to arrive in 1919, would be only about six miles.

the tanks did "wonderful work."<sup>72</sup> The diary of the 6th Brigade says of the tanks:

Having seen them in action the infantry have a very high opinion of their work.

Other observers noted the attitude of the tank crews:

These tanks (says one diarist) . . . had the pick of their officers in them.<sup>73</sup> The tanks were determined to make a success of it.

Tank officers have recorded that the time fixed for zero hour, though allowing just light enough for them to see their way, was much too early to let them use their guns with advantage. But even when it was bright there were not many targets in this battle, and the tanks used less ammunition than was expected. It was found, so General Courage reported, that they could safely venture into a shrapnel barrage—which, indeed, gave "great protection" to the tanks from anti-tank machine-gun fire and from such weapons as the new giant rifle; the tanks therefore could lead the infantry and enable it to follow the barrage at a safe distance. But he also states that the infantry, with which this experiment had been made, was of first rate quality.

All tank officers were much impressed by the superb *moral* of the Australian troops, who never considered that the presence of tanks exonerated them from fighting, and took instant advantage of any opportunity created by the tanks.

It is, indeed, certain that without first class infantry the battle would have taken a different course. At the very outset, if the 15th Battalion had been content to follow its orders literally<sup>74</sup> and on meeting strong resistance at Pear Trench had lain down and awaited its tanks, the whole action would have been imperilled. Instead the battalion went at the redoubt unassisted, and by determined and skilful fighting took the obstacle in its stride. Later, as with the 13th and 16th Battalions at Vaire Wood, so elsewhere, when a tank was handy—as one generally was—the troops called for it; when none was there, they straightway fought down the enemy themselves.

<sup>72</sup> Lt. Rinkliff and Sgt. Gottwald record that the tanks made "wonderful gaps through the wire which facilitated our advance." It was, however, noted in the 11th Bde. that in some parts, after the passage of a tank, the wire belt raised itself again sufficiently to become an obstacle.

<sup>73</sup> This was probably not the case, but tank personnel was now more carefully selected than before.

<sup>74</sup> See pp. 288-9.

In the second phase of the advance, when all the tanks had caught up and full daylight arrived, most of the obstacles were overcome by the aid of tanks, and these helped greatly in clearing the new No-Man's Land. On the other hand in much of the earliest fighting the tanks had no part. Tank Corps officers themselves extracted from prisoners of two German divisions the statement<sup>75</sup> that when the British bombardment began

they thought it was a raid and hid in their dugouts. Before the bombardment ceased, hostile infantry appeared in the trenches and called upon the men in the dugouts to surrender, which they did. None of the prisoners examined, who were in the front system, fired a shot in self-defence or saw our tanks until after they were captured.

It was noted that, the ground being dry, the smoke shells in the barrage rendered the mist unnecessarily thick. The smoke screens on the flanks, however, were invaluable and the immunity of the tanks after reaching the objective was due to them and to the protective barrage.<sup>76</sup>

The second experiment—that of using half-trained American troops—was much less decisive, although advantage might perhaps have resulted later had its true lesson been grasped. The fine physique and character of the sixteen American platoons carried these raw troops, most of whom had never before seen the front line or heard a hostile shot, through their difficult task of playing their parts as units in a highly trained force in an elaborately organised modern battle. Australian commanders were full of appreciation for their spirit.

They were a good, hardworking, keen, intelligent lot of fellows who are likely to do well in the near future (wrote Capt. Moran of the 43rd.)

The Americans deserve special mention (reported Col. McSharry). They behaved magnificently but were rather too anxious to get close to the barrage—a very common fault with new troops.

Most reports were similar and apparently gave to the higher commanders the impression that the experiment was

<sup>75</sup> Here quoted from the war diary of the Tank Corps.

<sup>76</sup> The report of the commander of the German 43rd Res. Div attributed the loss of Hamel to the lack of a good defensive system—the old French defences, he said, were unsuitable against an attack from the west. Shortage of labour had prevented the completion of a new line of resistance on the Wolfsberg. There was no lightly held forward zone ahead of the Hamel defences, and there was no word of the tanks having been seen before the action. The weakness of the troops, the thick smoke, and the continuous attacks from the air, weakening the reserves as they came up, all helped with the result. In reply to a special inquiry from the XI German Corps, the divisional commanders said that there was no need for an investigation to fix the blame on any troops or persons.

an almost unqualified success. Actually, however, some of the Americans platoons had a very trying experience. An Australian diarist says:

One American to whom we spoke (on the battlefield on July 4) seemed a little doubtful as to how his particular lot had done. He seemed to me to think that they had muddled a bit. He said, "If we had had a few more weeks of shell-fire, we might have been more used to it—I think the boys might have enjoyed themselves then."

The diarist adds, "The majority were well satisfied"; but it is certain that this man's experience was that of many. Col. Marks of the 13th, though, like all others, full of admiration for the Americans' spirit, reported that their inexperience led them to bunch together when advancing, with the result that one shell incapacitated nearly a whole squad. The men, said Marks, were well led by their officers, "cool, capable fellows," of whom at least two,<sup>77</sup> carried on to the objective after being wounded; but naturally the N.C.O's had not yet their full control, and some platoons when their officers fell were at a loss what to do. One platoon attached to the 13th strayed 100 yards into the territory of the 21st, but dug in there "most energetically"<sup>78</sup> on the objective. Some Americans, whose advance was to have ended with the ten-minutes halt and the mopping-up of Hamel, went on to the final objective.

Almost all our men were in the first wave with the Aussies (wrote the American who led another platoon) and were very much offended when told to stay thirty paces in rear of the final wave.

After the objective had been reached many Americans waited with natural anxiety for their first experience of heavy German bombardment, being specially apprehensive of being shelled during the night with gas, of which they did not even know the smell. When gas-shells did come, they soon gained confidence in their gas-masks.

As training for the Americans—which was ostensibly the whole object of their inclusion—the experience was valuable. Capt. Gale wrote:

More real good was done to this company by this small operation with the Australians than could have been accomplished in months of training behind the lines.

<sup>77</sup> Lt. A. G. Jefferson (Oak Park, U.S.A.), 131st Inf. Regt., and Lt. M. M. Komorowski (Cicero, U.S.A.), 132nd Inf. Regt. (Both were awarded the M.C. Jefferson, who died on 12 Oct. 1937, also received the D.S.C.).

<sup>78</sup> Quoted from the report of the 6th Bde.

If the lesson could have been postponed until these Americans had obtained some experience of the front, it might have resulted in more profit and slighter loss. But, as matters turned out, such an opportunity would not have arisen before the 131st Infantry had to be launched into more serious fighting at Gressaire Wood in August. For these troops the experience of Hamel therefore was all to the good. Nevertheless it did not prove that partly trained troops even of the finest quality could be wisely employed on the Western Front except in an extreme emergency.

But Hamel was more than a parcel of separate experiments with tanks, Americans, and aeroplanes; it was also a trial of a surprise offensive carried out with John Monash's methods of infinite care in co-ordination of the several arms—after preliminary discussion and his own lucid exposition in conference. Haig, who on July 1st had visited Monash to talk over the coming operation, noted:

Monash is a most capable commander, who thinks out every detail of any operation and leaves nothing to chance.

The lessons of the battle were studied afterwards at special conferences of officers who had taken part—one conference concerning the tank tactics and one the artillery arrangements. G.H.Q. eventually published two accounts of it for the guidance of commanders generally. Both these papers insist on the importance of bearing in mind, when making deductions from this experience, the high morale of the attacking infantry.<sup>79</sup> But a conviction expressed over nearly every Aus-

<sup>79</sup> S.S. No. 218, *Operations by the Australian Corps Against Hamel, Bois de Hamel, and Bois de Vaire*, published in July 1918, gives a summary of the orders and events and concludes:—

"The success of the attack was due

- (a) To the care and skill as regards every detail with which the plan was drawn up by the Corps, Division, Brigade, and Battalion staffs.
- (b) The excellent co-operation between the infantry, machine-gunners, artillery, tanks, and R.A.F.
- (c) The complete surprise of the enemy resulting from the manner in which the operation had been kept secret up till zero hour.
- (d) The precautions which were taken and successfully carried out, by which no warning was given to the enemy by any previous activity which was not normal.
- (e) The effective counter-battery work and accurate barrage.
- (f) The skill and dash with which the tanks were handled, and the care taken over details in bringing them up to the starting line.
- (g) Last, but most important of all, the skill, determination, and fine fighting spirit of the infantry carrying out the attack."

*Notes on Recent Fighting, No. 19*, a shorter account, published with G.H.Q. Intelligence Summary on 5 August 1918, concludes that success was "largely due to the determination of the infantry and to the able tactical handling of platoons. The infantry fought its way forward making use of its own weapons when the

tralian mess tin was not included in these reports—that the Diggers could now go through to the enemy's guns, and that to stop short, and allow those batteries to retire and open again on the troops digging in, was sheer waste of good effort.<sup>80</sup>

Most of the troops that had made the attack were quickly relieved<sup>81</sup>—the Americans first, on the evening of July 5th.

We hiked back (wrote Sgts. Peters<sup>82</sup> and Reece,<sup>83</sup> 131st Infantry) receiving compliments from every Aussie we met.

After a good breakfast, an Aussie stew, and speeches and cheers (says an Australian diary), the 43rd Bn. sent its American company away. . . . Some of the Americans ran away and hid when we were told to fetch them. Several put up the colours of the battalion they were with, and are wearing them still.

The Australian battalion to which that company had been attached came out of the line on the night of the 6th, "very tired," says one of its officers, "but very proud of our victory and of our Yankee pals that were with us." One Australian company commander ended his report to his colonel: "United States troops are now classified as Diggers."<sup>84</sup>

The feint attacks certainly misled the enemy at the time into the belief that he was being attacked along most of the front from Villers-Bretonneux to Ville. But as often happened it was the troops engaged in the feints that had the most severe trial. The heavy loss in the 55th Battalion's raid has been noticed. And at Ville the shallow advance of the 15th

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co-operation of other arms was not available. It is important in drawing deductions from this action to bear in mind the local and special conditions, especially the high moral of the infantry, the fact that there was not much wire, that the ground was suitable for the action of tanks, and that the objective was strictly limited and within the effective fire of the field and heavy artillery as sited for the attack."

<sup>80</sup> Gen. Cannan, for example, commented that "the minimum objective" in such an attack "should be the enemy's gun line." The diary of the 5th Bde., A.F.A., says: "It is universally felt by our officers and men engaged in this sort of operation that we do not attack on a sufficiently large scale, we never attempt to capture his artillery."

<sup>81</sup> The 4th Bde., however, continued until July 10 to hold a narrow sector facing Accroche Wood.

<sup>82</sup> Lt. W. J. Peters, 131st Amer. Inf. Regt. Clerk; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. Chicago, 17 Feb. 1896.

<sup>83</sup> Sgt. H. L. Reece, No. 1,386,777; 131st Amer. Inf. Regt. Clerk; of Chicago, U.S.A.; b. South Bend, Indiana, U.S.A., 14 July 1895.

<sup>84</sup> It appears that some Americans learned from the Australians more skills than their commanders intended. Capt. Gale reported: "In the taking of German prisoners a tendency was noted on the part of Australian troops to an entire disregard for the personal property rights of prisoners of war; they stripping them as a rule of anything of value. It is feared that some of our troops followed this along as an example." (*The History of the 33rd Division, A.E.F., Vol. II, p. 367.*) This apprehension was well grounded, an Australian diary records that two Americans asked Maj. Lott of the 43rd, when a prisoner came by, "May we have a button, sir?" Lott nodded his head, and "within a minute there was not a button on him (the German)."



Brigade in no way dislocated the local German artillery, which then for two days kept up a slow heavy bombardment of the narrow front of that operation.<sup>85</sup> Several posts were blown out on the night of the 4th,<sup>86</sup> and a bombardment during the relief of the 60th Battalion two nights later caused a number of casualties.<sup>87</sup> Like the other four Australian divisions, the 5th had been bearing the strain of an active front almost continuously since the March offensive, and there were definite signs that some of the troops were becoming seriously overdone.

The victory at Hamel, however, received wide appreciation. The stroke, though "not such a great battle,"<sup>88</sup> was the most thoroughly successful undertaken by the Allies since the German offensive—General Elles of the Tank Corps afterwards described it as "certainly the most successfully executed small battle of all arms" within his experience—and congratulations poured in. It happened that the Supreme War Council was sitting at Versailles when the news of the victory arrived. Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and Orlando were at the meeting and, at various times, Balfour, Milner, Sonnino, Pichon, Pershing, Foch, Sir Henry Wilson, and Haig. Lloyd George and the Prime Ministers of Canada, New Zealand, and Newfoundland asked Mr Hughes to telegraph to General Monash their congratulations. Clemenceau was directing a secretary to send his also, when "No," he said, "I'll go and see them and congratulate them myself." And on the following Sunday the "Tiger," then 77 years of age, made his weekly excursion with General Mordacq, not, as was his wont, to some French division, but to headquarters of the 4th Australian Division at Bussy-les-Daours near Corbie. Standing in his neat brown suit and small crumpled felt hat in the centre of a ring roughly formed by a number of the Australians<sup>89</sup> who had fought the battle, he spoke to them in English:

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<sup>85</sup> Capt. Keys reported that his company sergeant-major, R. H. Drysdale (Kallista, Vic.), was "a tower of strength" throughout this.

<sup>86</sup> One platoon, in charge of Cpl. W. W. Bennett (57th), was temporarily shelled out by the supporting artillery (The platoon commander, Lt. J. H. Fleming, and Sgt. C. J. Angus had been previously hit.) Another post, under Sgt. F. H. Tyler, was hit by a German shell, but was replaced by a section from north of the Ancre. (Bennett belonged to Melbourne Fleming to Elphinstone, Vic.; Angus to Williamstown, Vic.; Tyler to Middle Park, Vic.)

<sup>87</sup> Including the death of another of Elliott's picked young officers, Lt. M. D. Knight (St. Kilda, Vic.).

<sup>88</sup> The words are those of Clemenceau.

<sup>89</sup> With Clemenceau were Gen. Mordacq and M. René Renault, President of the French War Council. They were met at Bussy by Rawlinson, Monash, and most of the Australian leaders.

. . . . When the Australians came to France, the French people expected a great deal of you. . . . We knew that you would fight a real fight, but we did not know that from the very beginning you would astonish the whole continent. . . . I shall go back to-morrow and say to my countrymen: "I have seen the Australians. I have looked in their faces. I know that these men . . . will fight alongside of us again until the cause for which we are all fighting is safe for us and for our children."

As the old man panted, partly from emotion, partly from asthma, General MacLagan, taking up a call from one of the Diggers behind him, led three tremendous cheers for France. "De jolis enfants," said Clemenceau, as he turned to go.<sup>90</sup>

The one Allied leader who, not unnaturally, must have found his pleasure in the news of Hamel not unmixed with annoyance was General Pershing. As he had given most positive instructions that American troops were not to take part,

it was . . . somewhat of a surprise (he writes) to learn on the following day that four American companies of the 33rd Division had taken part in the attack.

To avoid his agreement with Haig being again broken by the action of their respective subordinates, he gave orders (as he informed Haig) "that until the completion of the training period all propositions concerning the use of these troops be referred to my headquarters."<sup>91</sup> Haig, on Rawlinson's asking him for a definite ruling, laid down that American units attached to the British for training would "act as integral parts of the British units to which they are attached"; they could take part in any fighting in which those units were involved, but must not be specially attached for the purpose of taking part.<sup>92</sup>

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<sup>90</sup> Gen. Mordacq (in *Le Ministère Clemenceau*, Vol. II, p. 109) says the visit was "a very great success," and Clemenceau received "an enormous ovation."

<sup>91</sup> It will be remembered that Fourth Army H.Q. understood that this had been done (*See p. 262.*)

<sup>92</sup> According to an instruction from Gen. Read to Gen. Bell the arrangement authorised by American G.H.Q. was that "at any time in case any emergency arise" the American troops training with the British would be under British tactical command.