

THE HORROR OF POZIERES

Signaller Cyril Hamilton Marsh of Clyde, who was wounded at Pozieres on 23 July 1916, writing to his brother Claude in August 1916:

'Just a few lines to let you know I am at present in Hope Auxiliary Hospital, Manchester. I have concussion of the spine this time. The rest of the Signal Section and myself were making good our position taken from Fritz that night. We had just got the telephone and Morse lamp going when a big 8.2 shell uninvitingly came through the top of our dugout. I am very sorry to say it killed my two mates and the Corporal lost his leg, while I was buried completely. I had a terrible time I can tell you but was glad when I woke up in the dressing station along with the poor unfortunate corporal. I don't think he will live. He was taken to a different hospital.

We had a much rougher time than ever we had on Gallipoli. We had 2000 guns supporting us here, and we were with the 7th Black Watch, Camerons and Gordons, who joined us when we had taken the village of Pozieres. Here we had some very severe hand to hand fighting, but our boys were too fresh, and Went Through the Huns like wildfire. When the Kilties joined us up, there was great cheering, and on we went right through and on to the main road. I never saw such a sight in my life. Bombs, bayonets, bricks, fists, and on top of this our own artillery, which are so accurate, were lobbing great shells, and 75's from French guns were falling in a tornado just in front of us. What a mess they made! The Huns lost terribly. There were no prisoners taken. Where we could get rid of them, they were promptly put out of action. Fritz is no match for our first division. We have seen two years' active service now and know all the tricks of the trade. We gave them a terrible time, and I am not keen on seeing another sight like it again. The scene on the main road in the village we took was terrible; thousands of dead and wounded, and the awful shrieks of the men who got bayoneted was something always to remember. The dugouts we took were, in some cases up to 20 feet deep and built of concrete, so we had to resort to using sulphur and smoke bombs to force them out. They were given no mercy but were either bayoneted or shot. Every stretcher bearer was worthy of the V. C. in this battle for the work they did under such terrible fire. The old 2nd Battalion is still second to none. We were fresh and had been well fed for the occasion. The Colonel received great praise for their work. The Signallers' responsibility is very great, not only in getting messages through to headquarters, but you must go out, under all the fire to mend broken wires, and Fritz keeps his eyes open for your flags and lamps.

The doctor who is attending us is a London bone specialist, so you see we are getting good attention over here. I am being massaged every morning, and hope to have a good time when I am right, which I am told will be in a month's time. I have numerous invitations to visit Scotland when I go on furlough. The English people are especially kind to us. They visit us each day and extend invitations to convalesce at their homes.'

Source: <http://nla.gov.au/nla.news-article86075088>

Footnote: Cyril Marsh was invalided to Australia in May 1917 and discharged as medically unfit on 8 August 1917.

