

OVERVIEW of Great Uncle Joseph "Sony" Moriarty...of Bondi born 1888 researched 4/2015

Joseph Fitzgerald Jordan Moriarty.....carried the name of his Grandmothers of his Father & Mother -Fitzgerald's of Kent & Jordan's of Darby Falls near Cowra.

Younger brother of my Great Grand Mother Catherine born 1882 married a McMillan, who's daughters were Dorothy & Kathleen (Kar -Kar), Dorothy my Grandmother married a Edward Minihan, they had 4 daughters ; my mother was Judith, who married a McElroy... Relatives are the Brogan, Smyth & Sullings families. Nans sister was "Kar- Kar" of which is the King Family.



Son & friend (1st war)

In photo ."Sony" on left with "friend?" (Investigations suspect "Friend" to be Dennis William Norris SN 4186.)

Served 2nd Division AIF, 5th Infantry Brigade-
10th Reinforcement of the 17th Battalion ...private Joseph Fitzgerald Jordan Moriarty --Service Number 4168



Son

Joined AIF Victoria Barracks Sydney, 3rd November 1915 aged 26.
Listed occupation as a Stage Hand.
Embarked Sydney 8th March 1916 onboard HMAT "Star of England" as part 10th reinforcements, via Alexandria Egypt -departing Alex. for England 28th May 1916.
To England Departure Depots.

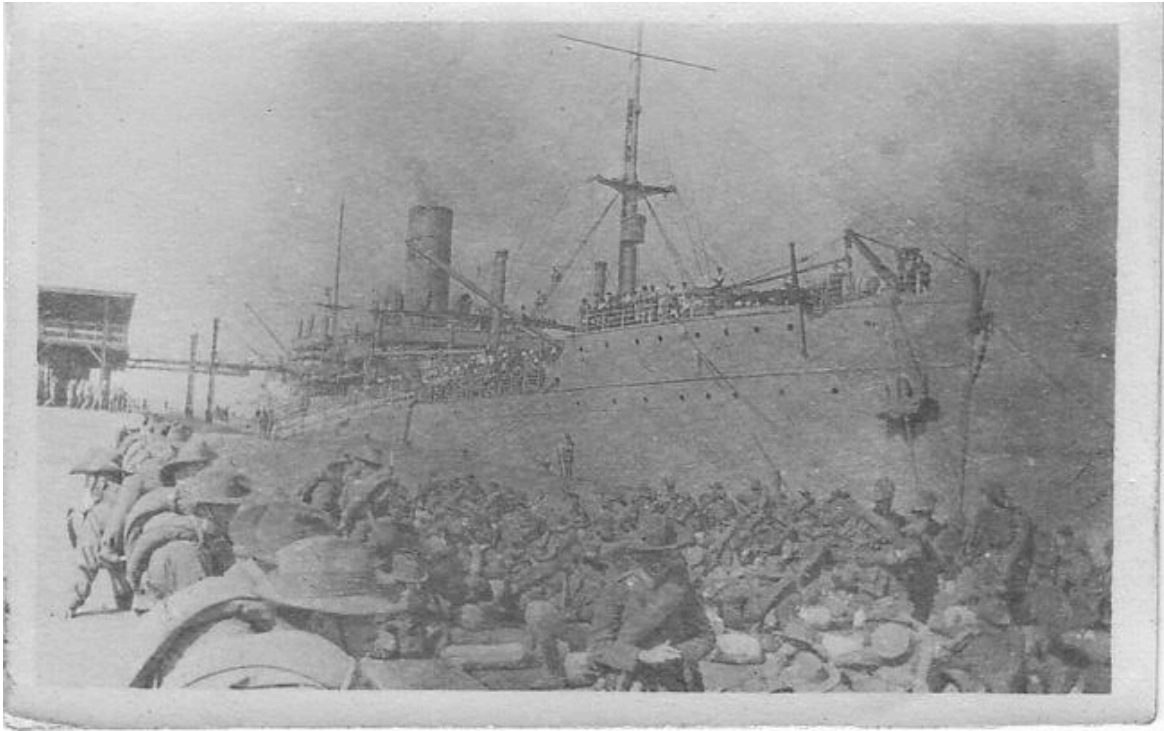


Photo of...HMAT Star of England 1916

Transferred to 18th Battalion to reinforce from 17th Battalion - 9th July 2016

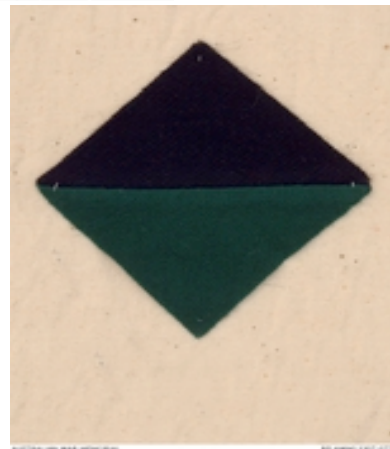
Sent to France 9th Sept 1916 arrived Le Harve France...directed to Western Front Belgium.

Transferred back to 17th Battalion 24th Sept 1916

Sent back to England on "Asturius" Hospital Ship (with Trench Foot) embarked at Le Harve France 20th November 1916.

Records show he was still in Hospital for trench foot in March 1917...(must have been horrible!!)

Recuperation in AIF army base as part of 63rd Battalion- Hurdcott/ Depot. Weymouth - Dorset England until in trouble with his CO (Lt Col P.P. Abbott in England ex Light



Horse). "Failed to turn up to a Parade order by CO"....30th July 1917..punishment 96hrs working detention.

Within a week again 5th August 1917--"struck a superior officer doing his duty".-(He punched Cpl Stewart while arresting Private Fallon)..punishment 28 days working detention...(Courtesy of Lt Col Abbott again)

{As a footnote: a Pvt Arthur John Fallon SN 2373 of the 15th Battalion AIF was ex France via South Hampton in mid July 1917 suffering from a "hernia" & unfit for duties but later revealed as Shell Shock and was discharged back to Aust. 27th September 1917)...a good chance this was the fellow ? & if so I like our Sony even more !!!}

3rd Sept 1917 out of detention.

19th September 1917 transferred back to the 17th Battalion; Sent back to France Le Harve from South Hampton...9th October 1917 to rejoin 2nd Division AIF.

As was the conditions on the Western Front he twice got sick & back to Le Harve Hospital once for boils 24th March 1918 & sick again on 4th May 1918.

He again got into trouble, this time with Lt Col J.M O'Donnell when he went AWL over night, while at Aust depot in Rouelle France on the 22nd June 1918 between 9.30pm & 12 noon 23rd June 1918...of which he was to forfeit 7 days pay for the 22nd + another 2 added for the 23rdTotal 9 days pay ..I hope she was worth it !!!

He was promoted to Lance Corporal "C company" on 15th August 1918.

Below are the documented planned battles (outside of the regular sustained mud trench warfare) that we know he must have been involved in..starting maybe with joining the 1st battle of Passchendaele. (it should be noted 500,000 men died in that battle)

However at the end of August 1918, unfortunately Joseph's War was about to end. After many days of continuous fighting pushing the Germans back along the Somme valley.....

The 17th Battalion was to cross the Somme river as per Gen. Monash's plan from the Nth West to secure a bridge head at Halles & proceeded to attack the high ground of Mont St Quentin which overlooked the city of Peronne, after a 5am bombardment on the 31st August with other Battalions from differing angles.

As a result we do know the location of the Australian 17th Battalion movements, therefore Joseph's location; we do know he crossed the river at Fuelliers as per a dairy entry report at about 9am on the 30th and reached the Western trenches of Clery Sur Somme at about 1.45pm after heavy fighting & heavy machine gun fire they continued in the trenches skirting the nth area of the town to area known as the Eleu Alley. (which may have been map location H.6.d)



Photo:- Nth side of River, Clery sur Somme

Dairy entry's do give us a description of that location....” During this time the 17th battalion & the 20th were subjected to continuous sniper fire, M.G & artillery fire from the high ground in map positions I.1.e, I.7.a & c and H.13.b.”

“During this time the village was being heavily barraged.”

These locations were essentially the edge of the horse shoe bend of the river east of Clery, & another position just Nth of Clery.

A dairy description below describes Sony's last hours.....

Troops then fought ~~their~~ a way into "Ofiant Alley" and " St Didier Alley" ~~and~~ subsequently clearing them of the enemy, many of whom were ~~out~~ bayoneted, or bombed in the trenches; and the dead bodies were so numerous here as to render the passage of the troops extremely difficult. It was now nearly dusk,~~and~~ Some of the companies of the 17th and 20th Battalions moved out of "St Didier Alley" , and crossing the Peronne Road worked round under cover of the high embankment of the road ~~for~~ a distance of 200 yards, the railway and the Somme being on their right. A portion of the trench system on the top of the embankment was yet occupied by the enemy. Scrambling up the embankment the troops, aided by bomb and bayonet, effected an entrance into



"Nich" trench, with the result that 70 Germans surrendered. Thus was the whole trench system East of Clery ~~was now~~ cleared of the enemy, and therefore, a line was established from which the troops might make the general attack on Mount St Quentin. The men now rested in the trenches, received their issue of rum, and smoked cigarettes, the Germans in the meantime keeping the neighbourhood in a state of illumination with ~~their~~ flares. Thus was the situation of affairs as midnight approached.

However the area that Sony & his mates in C company had taken refuge under a embankment in a chalk pit was described as heavily bombed that evening...at 11pm Joseph "Sony" Moriarty & Thomas Power were both killed instantly by a direct hit of shell fire.

Eye witness accounts supplied by the Red cross for the Power Family...

17th Battalion, A.I.F.

POWER.
Private T. 5394.

"KILLED. 30.8.18."

Informant described Power as about 5'10" high, fairly solid build, dark complexion, aged 24 or 25 years.

Informant states that they both belonged to "C" Company. On 30.8.18 the Battalion was preparing to attack Mont St. Quentin. During the night Power was sheltering under a bank when a shell came over and killed him and another soldier named Moriarty outright. Informant saw him directly afterwards. He was carried out and buried in the vicinity so far as Informant was aware.

According to Informant, Power was a cheery chap, and well thought of by his mates.

INFORMANT: Private J.T. Gregory, M.M. 5577,
C.Coy, 17th Battalion, A.I.F.

Home Address; 52 Middle Street, MARRICKVILLE.

W.E.G.
No.4 Australian General
Hospital, RANDWICK.
27.2.19.

SYDNEY BUREAU.

A.I.F.
17th Btn.

POWER.
T. 5394.

Killed 30.8.18."

I didn't see Power (C.Coy.XII) killed instantly on night of 30th near Clergy in front line of trenches about 11 p.m. by 5.9.shell. L/Cpl.J.Moriarty was killed by same shell. It was the night of before the Mont St Quentin hop-over. The Padre (Capt. Eugwell) went up to bury Power and found that he had been already buried. The men who saw Power killed have all gone away.

Description :- Power - Tall, (abt.5'9") solid build, brown hair, about 29 years.

Informant:- 3946 Cpl. R.H. Warren.
17th Btn. Q.Coy Orderly Room,
(was 17th Btn. C.Coy)
Belgium. 31.1.19.

H.P.K.
London.
19.2.19.

J.D.A.

S.

A 5.9 shell refers to the German Howitzer with a 150mm Barrel & a shell that weighed 95kg's.

This location can be identified today in the paddock/fields on the Rue d'Albert rd (D938) between the river Somme & the fork of the Pre' de Orgibet rd before the Canal du Nord East of Clery-Sur-Somme, on the way to Peronne.

Personal belongings retrieved from the field & returned to his mother Anne was:

1 Disc
1 metal watch & chain
Scapula
Cards
Photos
1 letter
buttons
German Buckle.

He was initially buried (from evidence on the 10th Sept 1918.) in Clery - Somme British Cemetery Map 62c H.11 a. 2.5 Grave A22 marked with a cross, (Map reference 62c.H. 11.a.2.5) ...2 & 1/4 miles North West of the town of Peronne.....the successful overall object of the battle.

This location can be found just nth of a still existing cemetery & just south of a island group of trees in a farmers paddock on Google Earth maps West of Clery-Sur-Somme 49Deg 57'17.62"N - 2Deg 52'30.02"

After the War there were so many military graves as result of the battles Somme he was exhumed and moved to Hem Farm Military Cemetery 4 & 3/4 miles North West of Peronne.

Plot 11(2), Row J, Grave 11.

Google Earth coordinates

49 Deg 57'13.10"N

2 Deg 49'51.26"E

Inscription :-

MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON HIS SOUL. (requested by his Mother Anne)



On the 30th the 5 Aust. divisions which included the 2nd Division collectively had 38 killed, 234 injured & 3 missing.

During this action on Mont St Quentin -2nd Division suffered the worst losses of all, with 84 Officers & 1286 soldiers KIA.

For what its worth the overall battle was a victory with the hill taken --3,500 Germans Killed & 2,600 prisoners taken.

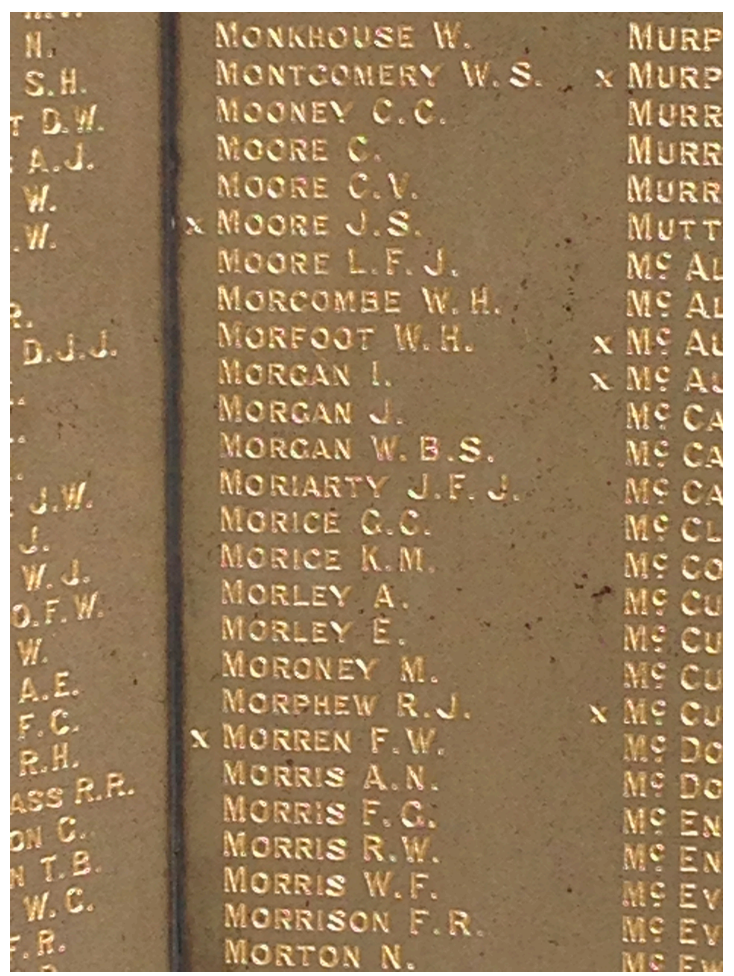


Photo of Waverly Council War Memorial---- “Waverly Park” Bondi Rd, Bondi
 His name of course also appears on the wall of the National War Memorial in Canberra.

Sony was Awarded 2 Medals.., a “British War Medal” & a “Victory Medal”
 These photos are of the originals held by the King Family...(3rd medal of the Pope ?)



For further reading ---See report of operations 27th to 31st August 1918 reference doc by... Major J.L Fussell commander 17th Battalion AIF.

<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/RCDIG1018128/?image=57#display-image>

See AIF Map 1918 WW1

Link.. <http://digitalarchive.mcmaster.ca/islandora/object/macrepo%3A69505/-/collection>

It should be noted 2nd Division last action was 5th October 1918.
War ended 11 Nov 1918.

STORY OF the 2ND DIVISION

In June 1915, the General Officer Commanding the Australian Imperial Force, Major General John Gordon Legge, put forward a proposal to form a Second Division from units training in Egypt. This proposal was accepted by the Australian government on 10 July 1915 and Legge designated Brigadier General James W. McCay to command it. Unfortunately, McCay broke his leg the next day. Legge then took on the job himself.

The Division was formed in Egypt July 1915 and moved to Gallipoli in August, serving there until the withdrawal to Egypt in December 1915. In March 1916 it was the first division to move to France, taking over part of the "nursery" sector around Armentieres. On 27 July 1916, it relieved the First Division at Pozieres and captured the Pozieres Heights at great cost. Two more tours of the Somme followed in August and November.

In March 1917 a flying column of the Second Division pursued the Germans to the Hindenburg Line. At Lagnicourt on 15 April 1917, it struck by a powerful German counterattack, which it repelled. On 3 May 1917 the Division assaulted the Hindenburg Line in the Second Battle of Bullecourt, holding the breach thus gained against furious counterattacks. During the Third Battle of Ypres, it fought with great success at Menin Road in September and Broodeseinde in October.

In March 1918 the Second Division helped halt the German offensive in the Somme region and fought in the Battle of Hamel in July and the Battle of Amiens in August.

In September 1918 it took Mont Saint Quentin by storm in one of the finest feats of fighting of the war. It fought on to the Hindenburg Line and beyond, becoming the last division to be withdrawn.

When matching dates it is believed Joseph would have been part of the following noted Battles....

Third Battle of Ypres

Conflict

[First World War, 1914-1918](#)

Date from

July 1917

Date to

10 November 1917

Description

The Third Battle of Ypres was the major British offensive in Flanders in 1917. It was planned to break through the strongly fortified and in-depth German defenses enclosing the Ypres salient, a protruding bulge in the British front line, with the intention of sweeping through to the German submarine bases on the Belgian coast. The battle comprised of a series of limited and costly offensives, often undertaken in the most difficult of waterlogged conditions - a consequence of frequent periods of rain and the destruction of the Flanders' lowlands drainage systems by intense artillery bombardment. As the opportunity for breakthrough receded, Haig still saw virtue in maintaining the offensives, hoping in the process to drain

German manpower through attrition. The main battles associated with Third Battle of Ypres were:

- Pilckem, 31 July to 2 August
- Langemarck, 16-18 August
- Menin Road, 20-25 September
- Polygon Wood, 26 September to 3 October
- Broodseinde, 4 October
- **Poelcapelle, 9 October**
- **Passchendaele (First Battle), 12 October**
- **Passchendaele (Second Battle), 26 October to 10 November.**

Australian Divisions participated in the battles of Menin Road, Polygon Wood, Broodseinde, Poelcapelle and the First Battle of Passchendaele. In eight weeks of fighting Australian forces incurred 38,000 casualties. The combined total of British and Dominion casualties has been estimated at 310,000 (estimated German losses were slightly lower) and no breakthrough was achieved. The costly offensives, ending with the capture of Passchendaele village, merely widened the Ypres salient by a few kilometres.

With rain starting to fall heavier and heavier, the conditions on the ground deteriorated, so that when the next attack started on 9 October (the [Battle of Poelcappelle](#)) the ground became difficult to traverse, resulting in the troops moving up to their starting positions becoming exhausted prior to the start of the attack. The role of the 2nd Division in the [Battle of Poelcappelle](#), was for the left brigade to advance 800 yards (730 m) and so protect the flank of the [66th \(2nd East Lancashire\) Division](#) while the right brigade

would pivot on its right flank and match its left flank to the movement of the left Brigade. With an average battalion strength of only 160 men, and supported by a weak artillery barrage, the advance quickly stalled, and resulted in only small gains at a cost of 1,253 casualties. As a result of the exhaustion of the troops, the 2nd Division was relieved by the Australian 4th Division by 12 October.

The 2nd Division relieved the Australian 5th Division on 27 October, and continued to hold the line along the Broodseinde Ridge, until all of the Australian divisions (by now grouped into an all [Australian Corps](#)) were transferred south to [Flanders](#) (centred on the town of [Messines](#)).



1st Battle of Poelcappelle

Conflict

[First World War, 1914-1918](#)

Date from

9 October 1917

Description

Also called the first battle of Passchendaele, the battle of Poelcappelle was launched on 9 October with the ridge upon which Passchendaele stood as its objective. Like earlier battles in the Ypres offensive, the aim of the Poelcappelle attack was to secure a series of objectives in turn, protected by a heavy artillery barrage; the troops involved would be drawn from the 49th and 66th British, and 2nd Australian Divisions. Rain, however, had begun to deluge an already poorly drained battlefield, and adequate numbers of guns were unable to be brought within range. The infantry's advance also wallowed in the mud. The Australians were able to secure some of their objectives for a short time, but, with little artillery support and both flanks open, they were forced to withdraw. The



2nd Australian Division sustained 1,250 casualties in the battle.

Broodseinde and Passchendaele

The 1st, 2nd and 3rd Australian Divisions captured Broodseinde Ridge on 4 October 1917. It was a vital victory. But, then it began to rain. Five days later the 2nd Australian Division suffered heavily in a further attack in the mud. Finally, **on 12 October**, another attack, involving the 3rd Division assisted by the 4th, was made against the village of Passchendaele atop the main ridge. In the face of heavy fire, the men fought in the mire while struggling to keep up with their artillery barrages. Ground was taken but it could not be held. In wretched conditions, with casualties mounting at an appalling rate, the Australians had to fall back. The troops were finally exhausted and could do no more; by 15 November they handed over to the Canadians.

German Spring Offensive

Conflict

[First World War, 1914-1918](#)

Date from

March 1918

Date to

May 1918

Category

Attack

This term relates to the three major German attacks on the Western Front in late March, April and May 1918, known collectively as the "Kaiserschlacht" (Kaiser's Battle) offensive. Using troops released from the Eastern Front, following the revolution and collapse of the Russian Armies in late 1917, the German General Staff attempted to win the war before the Americans arrived in sufficient force to tip the strategic balance firmly in

favour of the Allies. The first German attack in March was launched against the British Fifth Army in Arras (Somme area); the second attack in April centred on Lys in Flanders, and the third offensive in May focused on the Aisne, where British Divisions recuperating from the March attacks were again subjected to severe losses. Despite sweeping early gains in each of their attacks, German forces (which incurred huge casualties in their all-out attacks) outdistanced their supply lines and became themselves exhausted by the constant fighting. The final German advances were repulsed at the Marne in mid-June 1918, and the scene was set for the Allied counter-offensives of the summer.



Photo 15th April 1918 Picardie, Somme Sailly-Le-Sec ,17th battalion Head Quarters

Battle of Amiens

Conflict

[First World War](#),
1914-1918

Date from

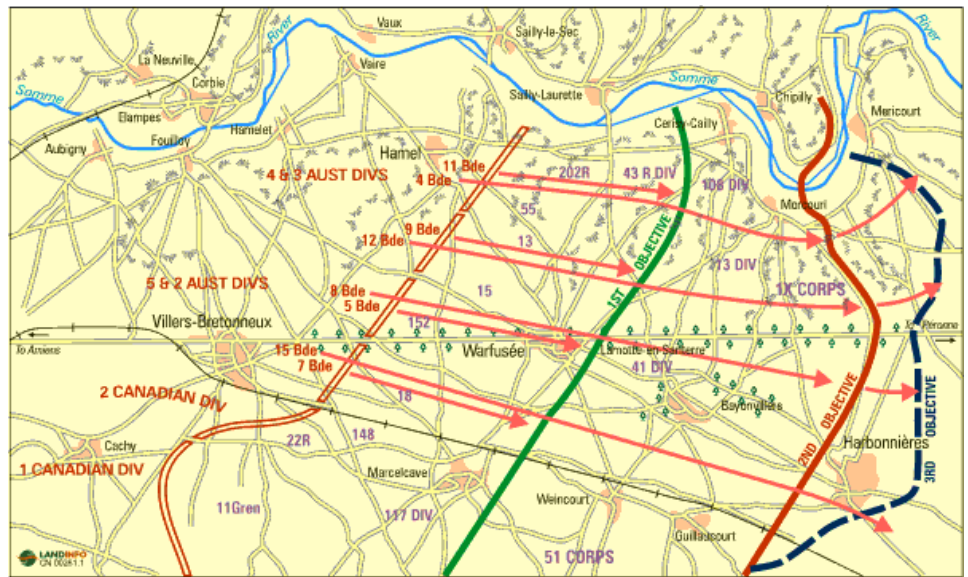
8 August 1918

Date to

11 August 1918

Category

Battle



- Advance direction →
- Australian Divisions 9 Bde
- German Divisions 22R
- Ridge line

Description

The Battle of Amiens was the crucial Allied breakthrough counter-offensive, launched on the Western Front around Amiens, in the Somme sector. An "all arms battle", the Allies made effective use of infantry, artillery tanks and aircraft, which led to an unprecedented advance (about 12 kilometres by early afternoon of the first day) and vast numbers of German prisoners.

A quote description...

At 4.20 am the next day:(8th August)

“All hell broke loose and we heard nothing more. The world was enveloped in sound and flame, and our ears just couldn't cope. The ground shook.”

A mass of assembled Allied forces, including Australians, launched an offensive to push through the German front lines to victory. It was to involve the 1st French and 4th British armies, but was led by combined Australian and Canadian forces.

There was a mist, which helped the element of surprise, and through it moved the joint forces of a line of tanks and infantry. The crucial work of the heavy artillery held off fire from German guns, so that troops could get across the land.

Setting out from the positions of [Villers-Bretonneux](#) and [Hamel](#), the Australian troops in two hours had accomplished all their objectives, and the Canadian troops that had begun the attack alongside them had advanced several kilometres. In just over 3 hours, the enemy's front line had been overrun. In total, the Allied forces captured 29,144 prisoners, 338 guns, and liberated 116 towns and villages. Ludendorff called 8 August "the black day of the German army".

Mont St. Quentin

Conflict

[First World War, 1914-1918](#)

Date from

August 1918

Date to

3 September 1918



Photo 1st September 1918

Description

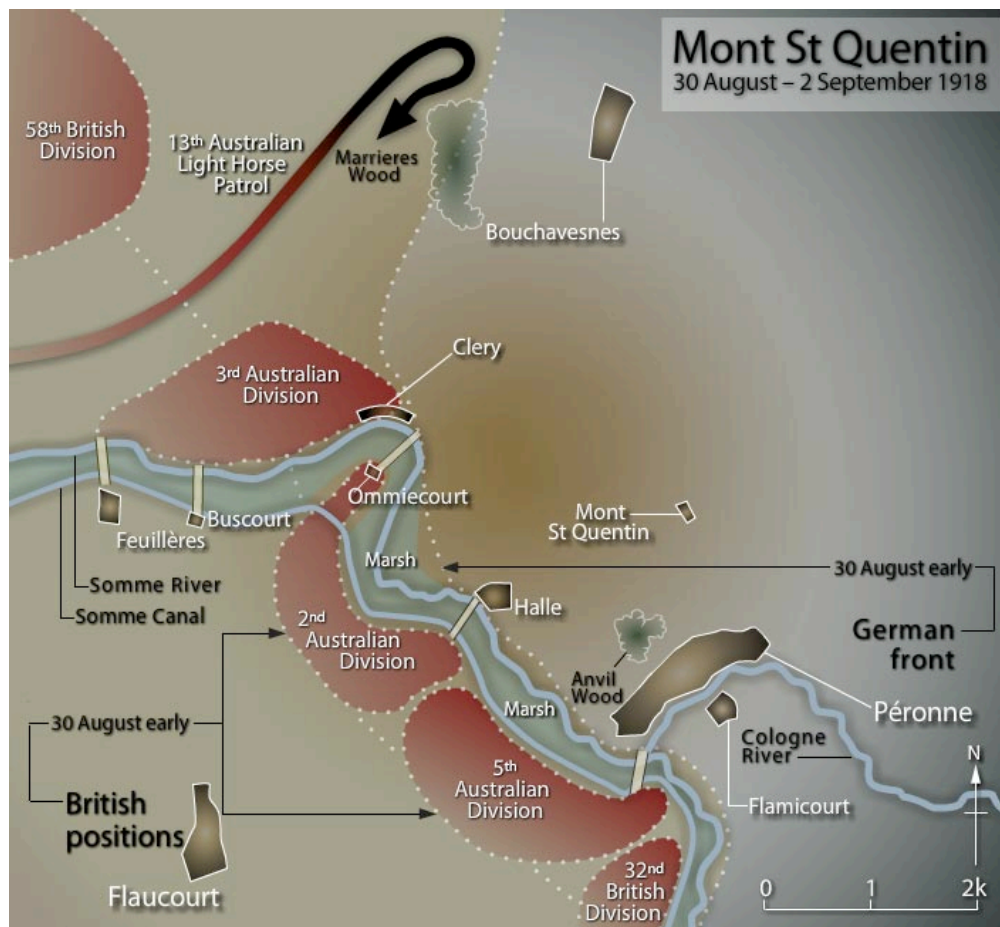
Mont St Quentin

In late August the Corps was pursuing the Germans along both sides of the Somme river. Unlike trench warfare, there was no continuous front line and Australian Light Horse scouted ahead to determine the whereabouts of the enemy. The Germans halted their retreat at Mont St Quentin, where the Somme turns south, making an obstacle for the Germans to stand behind.

As part of the Allied counter offensives on the Western Front in the late summer of 1918, the honour relates specifically to the role played by Australian troops in the storming, seizing and holding the key height of Mont St. Quentin (overlooking Peronne), a pivotal German defensive position on the line of the Somme.

On 29 August the Australian Corps commander, General Sir John Monash, ordered an attack across the Somme at Ommiecourt, Halle and Péronne, but

the attempt failed. Monash then decided to side-step left, shifting the weight of his Corps attack on Mont St Quentin from the south side of the river to the north. The next day 3rd Division, already north of the river, attacked towards Bouchavesnes to capture a ridge that overlooked the battlefield from the north. Meanwhile 2nd Division crossed the Somme on bridge repaired by Australian engineers and massed east of Clery.

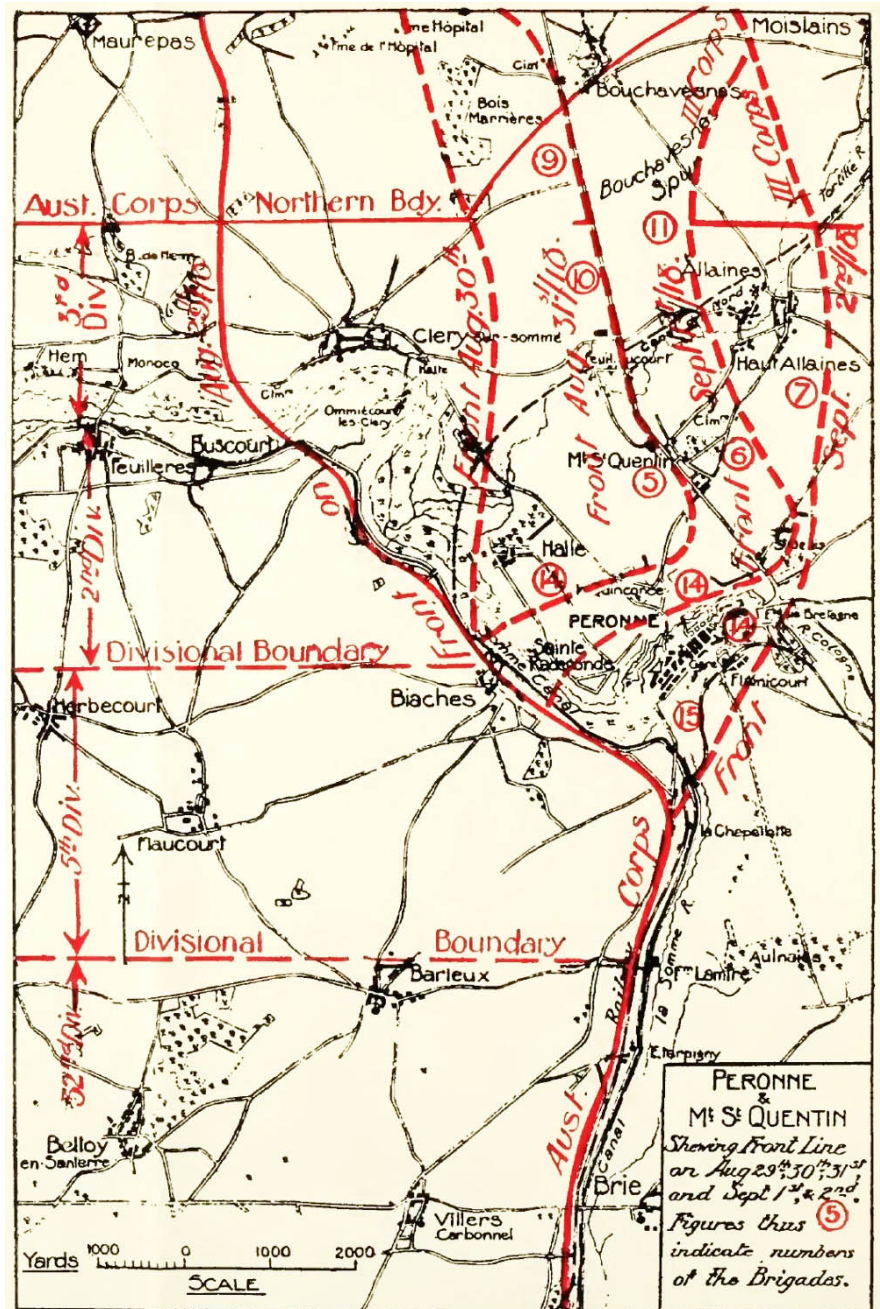


August 30, 1918 - Australian 2nd & 3rd Division commences attack of **Mont St Quentin**"

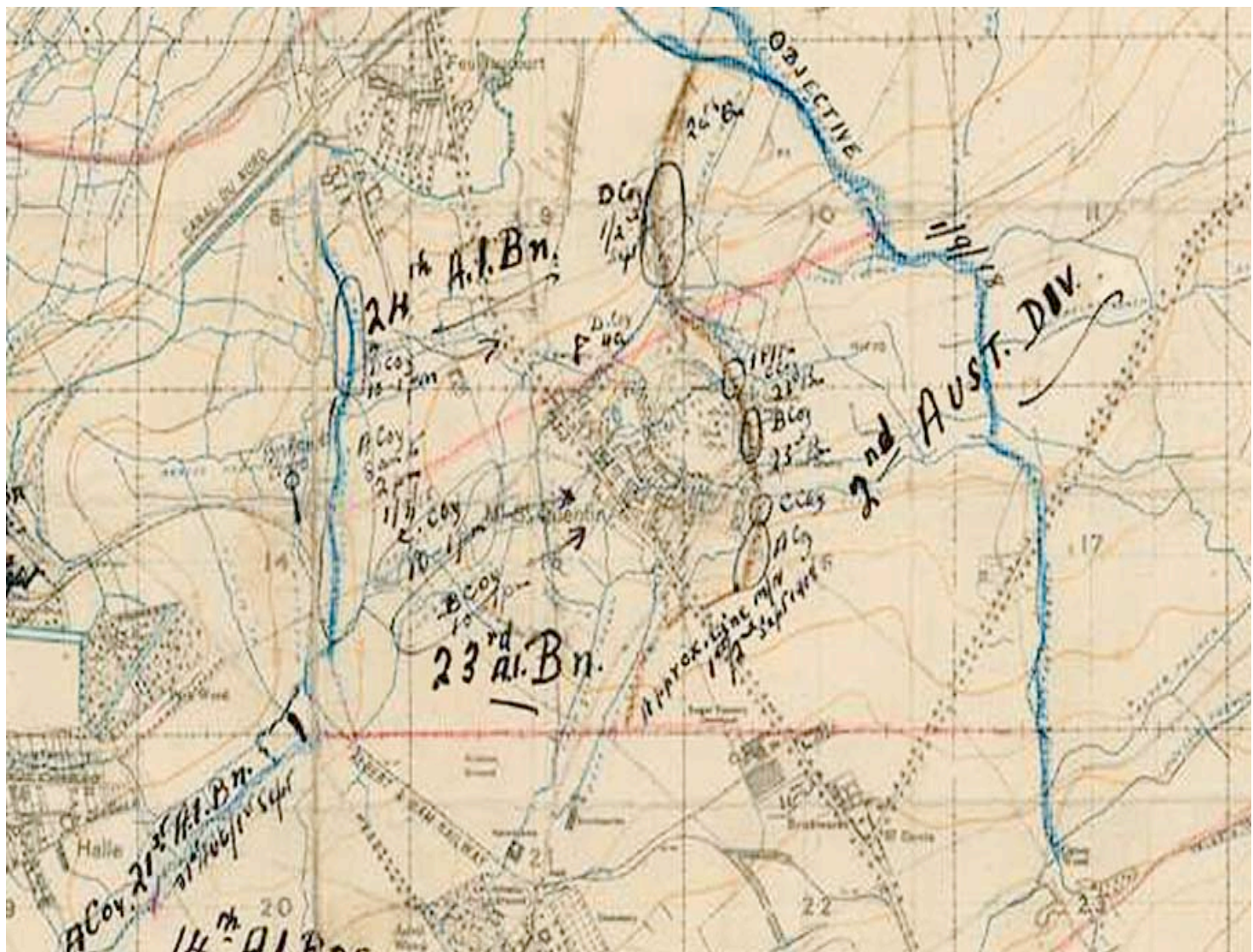
General Monash's objective was to render the line of the Somme River useless to the Germans as a defensive position and hasten their retreat to the Hindenburg Line. To achieve this called for an attack on the key position of the whole line of defence, on a hill called **Mont St Quentin**. Monash knew that his troops were

under strength and badly in need of rest, but by now he considered them "invincible".

The attack was on the key positions in the German line, a dominating hill known as **Mont St Quentin**, 1.5 kilometres from Peronne. The hill was less than 100 metres high but heavily guarded especially along the northern and westerly approaches. The Australian 5th Division objectives were the Peronne Bridges and Peronne, while the Australian 2nd Divisions was the bridgehead at Halle then Mont St Quentin and finally the Australian 3rd Division was to capture the high ground north east of Clery, then Bouchavesnes spur. Facing the Australian Divisions at Mont St Quentin was the 2nd Prussian Guards, an elite German formation, who had orders to hold the hill "to the death".



MAP E



The barrage commenced at 5am 31st August but much of the Australian's fighting reputation proceeded them with the enemy taking panic. The 5th Brigade of the Australian 2nd Division opened the attack, comprising only 70 officers and 1,250 other ranks it was less than one third of its normal strength. The 2nd Division battalions to assault [Mont St Quentin](#) were the [17th](#), [18th](#), [19th](#) and [20th](#) all from NSW. **The 17th battalion started along the Clery-Peronne road** as the Germans retreated to more defensible ground. Within a short time they had captured, with only 550 men and 220 in support, what British generals consider "impregnable". However, the 5th Brigade could not hold all of its gains and part of the 2nd Prussian Guards Division drove back scattered troops from the summit of [Mont St Quentin](#). On the left of the attack by the Australian 2nd Division, the Australian 3rd Division attacking Bouchavesnes Spur had not successfully captured its

objectives, this meant that earlier gains were threatened by German flanking moves. General Monash ordered that "Casualties no longer matter" and "We must get Bouchavesnes Spur and protect Rosenthal's left". The Spur was taken and the [Mont St Quentin](#) assault was protected.

Map appears to a 1st September map with Aust Division trenches marked.

On September 1, the 6th Australian Brigade, passing through the 5th Brigade seized in a second attempt the summit of Mont St Quentin while the Australian 14th Brigade (5th Division) captured woods north of Peronne and took the main part of the town. The following day (September 2nd, 1918) the Australian 7th Brigade (2nd Division) drove beyond the Mont and the Australian 15th Brigade (5th Division) seized the rest of Peronne.

The result was that three weakened Australian Divisions were able to defeat five German Divisions. The action saw its fair share of heroics, with eight VC's awarded, and losses, with 20% of attacking forces becoming casualties. The battle was a true infantry victory achieved without the use of tanks or creeping artillery barrage.

Losses

Australian 2nd Division 84 Officers, 1,286 others

Australian 3rd Division 43 Officers, 544 others

Australian 5th Division 44 Officers, 1,026 others

Germans 3,500 casualties and 2,600 prisoners

Memorials

Australian 2nd Division

The original [**2nd Division memorial**](#) depicted a digger bayoneting a German eagle was erected on this site in 1925. It was removed by Germans during 1940.

The current [**2nd Division memorial**](#) dates from 1971. The memorial is on the side of N17 Bapaume-Perrone road in the village of [**Mont St Quentin**](#).

Dairy Notes by Bean C.E.W Vol VI p801 - 808--- story of the 17th Battallion

On 30th August the 104th arrived at the gun pits at the Somme River where the advance had stalled. As Bean notes:

“...the 2nd Division could not cross the Somme at Clery owing to the presence of Germans immediately east of the village ... Many Germans were then in that area and the fact that all parties of Australians crossing the valley behind Clery were heavily shelled - as were the riverside road and all rear slopes - indicated that they had observers looking down that valley”

“...the pause in the infantry’s attack was less noticeable because of the aggression of the supporting guns. The 5th Infantry Brigade had been given the 4th Brigade AFA, and, Feuilleres bridge having been repaired sufficiently for guns to cross, about 3pm the 11th and 12th Batteries did so and took position on the riverside west of Clery, being attached to the 17th and 20th Battalions. South of the river the 10th and 104th Batteries of the same brigade were pushed into a dip on the high ground in the Somme angle.”



Gunner Anderson describes this harrowing experience in his diary:

“After leaving Somme River we came to the village of Clery, by name only then, as one could see no sign of a building anywhere, just a mass of wreckage. Whilst passing through this village we had the liveliest time experienced in the war. We rode through at the gallop, shells and shrapnel bursting continuously, our horses were just as scared as we were, an awful ordeal it was and the one place I will always remember. It took some manoeuvring to get through as the road was blocked with debris, men, horses, guns and wagons strewn everywhere. Shells were bursting almost at our feet and how lucky we were to get through that dreadful barrage, an experience which I never want to go through again”

Diary Reports of Clery Sur Somme on 30th August 1918

It should be remembered the 17,18, 19 & 20th Battalions were partnering in this attack through Clery, although the 20th’s objective was Nth to Feuillaucourt & the 17th to Mt St Quentin itself

A section of Percy Smyths Diary as he past through Clearly Sur Somme on the 31st of August gives a description of the Location.

After waiting some time, we moved on around the guns and advanced along the flat, following the railway line.

Before retreating, the Huns had systematically destroyed this line, having blown it up with a charge of high-explosive about every twenty yards. Hardly a rail was left intact. As we moved in artillery formation along the strip of flat ground below the hill on which Cléry is situated, the village was being subjected to a rather heavy bombardment from all calibres.

It made one look askance, with a sort of nervous twitch about the heart, at the significant clouds of black smoke and red brick-dust that kept spurting up from among the ruins. Some of the shells, the fringe of the bombardment, came over the hill and made the flat look untidy, a number of them also falling in the water and shooting up tall jets of spray, like artesian bores. These latter were practically harmless, but a few fell uncomfortably close to the railway line, which we were following.

Getting past Cléry, we rested awhile under a steep bank which rose up like a small precipice from the roadside. Pushed on again and came to a definite halt under the shelter of a long chalk bank, where the lower portion of the hillside had evidently been cut away to accommodate the Albert-Ham railway. There we lunched, and then proceeded to wait developments. No.1 Platoon, under George Ingram, was sent forward to reconnoitre the positions we were to occupy.



The enemy continued his spasmodic bombardment, though at times he left us in peace for half an hour at a stretch. Besides high-explosive, quite a lot of gas shells fell into the river marshes. The spot where the heaviest shelling took place was at the far end of the chalk bank, near Cléry, where the road crossed the railway line to run across the marshes to Omniécourt-les-Cléry.

Dairy of Pte. F.J. Brewer 20th Battalion AIF -29th to the 30th August 1918 Clery Le Sur Somme. (selected pieces)

On August 29th, 1918, these two strong positions, and the famous bridges of the Somme in these parts, were held by the Germans in great force.

Taking Clery-Sur-Somme, Feullaucourt, and Peronne, as the three points of a triangle, the battle, as far as the 5th Brigade was concerned, took place almost within the area the sides of that imaginary triangle would enclose. The Somme flows between Clery and the village of Ommiecourt-les-Clery, which is opposite the former, and Ommiecourt is approached by a bridge over the Canal de la Somme.

Below Ommiecourt three bridges spanning the Somme established the communication with Clery. At the end of August 1918, these structures were in a very delapsed~~ted~~ condition, and ~~the village~~ but piles of dust and bricks distinguished the site of Clery and Ommiecourt. Two miles to the westward of Clery stood the shattered village of Feuillieres, while to the eastward of Clery there was a string system of German trenches, known as "the Elen System" . Northwards nearly parallel with Peronne Road, ran the Sap, marked on the map "Eleu Alley" , for a distance of 1000 yards, and then led into "Barge Alley" which in turn conducted into~~offlant~~ "Oflant Alley" , and "St Didier Alley" . All these alleys led up to the high ground which dominates the Albert and Ham railway, the road and the bridges connecting Clery with Ommiecourt: The surrounding country was bleak, uneven, and broken by thousands of holes made by the showers of shells that had fallen on this cursed area at different periods of the war; for, across this spot, great armies made their passage. Westward and then eastward again. When going to inspect the battlefield a couple of weeks after the victory, I crossed the bridges from Ommiecourt, climbed up the side of the sunken road into the "Elen Trench" system, and then proceeded to walk across the 2500 yards of open country intervening between Clery and Mount St Quentin. I experienced even then the greatest difficulty in getting through the barbed wire which encumbered the ground almost as thickly as the entanglements I afterwards encountered in the Hindenburg Line. Besides the numerous strands of wire, trained on iron and wood stakes, vast quantities of the material were wound into circular forms some seeming like huge burrs, and others, so fantastic in shape to suggest some gigantic spiders had crawled up from the slime of the Somme and had there spun these meshes of wire to trap men, as the web of the house spider is set to catch flies

To these considerations the most important must be added; and it is this, the 5th Brigade had, since 8th of August, sustained the shock of battle almost continuously so that it was now reduced to a 1000 strong; a fourth of its normal strength! Therefore, the task of this withered Brigade was to capture an "unattackable" position, defended by superior enemy forces, comprising German units who had volunteered to stop the Australians from capturing Peronne. Documents found on some German Officers who were ~~taken~~ made prisoners included an order warning the Germans to be prepared for an attack by Australian storm troops. I believe the German troops were comprised principally of the 2nd Guards Division, and the 21st Division. On the 30th August I assume the "Elen Trench" System was held by the "Ersatry Bataillon" of the No 6 Reserve Infanteril Regiment as I found near those trenches a German paybook (Soldbuch) some of the leaves of which contained the official stamp of that Regiment .

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The variation of the original plans evidently was contained in orders received early in the morning of the 30th August- the 5th Brigade to deploy across the Somme bridge at Feuillieres, to occupy the "Ellen" system, and then to storm the ultimate objective.

At 10.30 am the 5th Brigade moved out of billets, and ~~after~~ crossing the bridge at Feuilliers, resumed the action on the other side of the Somme, marching up hill and down dale, through marshy and boggy ground, until a main road was struck, along which progress was made until a linking up with the Third Division troops was accomplished. Companies of the 20th Battalion crawled down the Sap called "Ellen Alley" , a distance of 1000 yards under machine gunfire and a shower of shells from the enemy's Howitzer batteries. Not much cover was available, the sap was hardly 3 feet deep. Very soon the fight for the trench system East of Clery commenced.

At 2 pm several companies of the 20th Battalion were bombing away into "Barge Alley" until progress was arrested by heavy fire from some German Machine guns. A patrol from "A" Company of the 20th Battalion went forward to reconnoitre. The enemy compelled this patrol to return to " Ellen Alley" . Another attempt was met with better success, although the Germans made a firm resistance with their machine guns and stick bombs. However, the advanced platoon of the 20th Battalion put seven machine guns out of action and secured 54 prisoners. Troops then fought ~~their~~ a way into "Ofiant Alley" and " St Didier Alley" ~~and~~ subsequently clearing them of the enemy, many of whom were ~~out~~ bayoneted, or bombed in the trenches; and the dead bodies were so numerous here as to render the passage of the troops extremely difficult. It was now nearly dusk,~~and~~ Some of the companies of the 17th and 20th Battalions moved out of "St Didier Alley" , and crossing the Peronne Road worked round under cover of the high embankment of the road ~~for~~ a distance of 200 yards, the railway and the Somme being on their right. A portion of the trench system on the top of the embankment was yet occupied by the enemy. Scrambling up the embankment the troops, aided by bomb and bayonet, effected an entrance into "Nich" trench, with the result that 70 Germans surrendered. Thus was the whole trench system East of Clery ~~was~~ ~~now~~ cleared of the enemy, and therefore, a line was established from which the troops might make the general attack on Mount St Quentin. The men now rested in the trenches, received their issue of rum, and smoked cigarettes, the Germans in the meantime keeping the neighbourhood in a state of illumination with ~~their~~ flares. Thus was the situation of affairs as midnight approached.