

On arriving at Plymouth, we were sent to camp at West Downs South, Salisbury Plain. Here we remained under canvas until the middle of December, 1914. By this time a few changes had been made in the battalion, and we were all prepared for France.

Our Colonel, W. Hart-McHarg, was one of the finest officers in the service. The second in command of our regiment was Major V. W. Odlum (now Brigadier-General Odlum, C. B., C. M. G., D. S. O.), also a splendid officer.

We left England and arrived in France early in February, 1914.

Our first experiences in the firing line were at Ploegsteert, in Belgium. Afterwards we were in the trenches near Armentier, then at Fleurbay, and eventually, on April 10th, we moved into the Ypres salient. We came out of the trenches at Ypres for a short rest on April 18th, 1915; and on April 22nd, about 5 o'clock in the afternoon, the Germans heavily bombarded St. Julien, to which the guns in the rear of our billets immediately answered. We watched the burning of St. Julien, and about 6 p. m. we saw groups of Tureos and Zouaves retire from their trenches, and come in front of our guns. As the shells were falling in great numbers around our billets, most of the men were placed in the deep cellar of the farmhouse, and the rest took shelter in the various dugouts around belonging to the artillery.

A little later we received orders to stand to, and later marched towards the front line trenches, to take up a position in order to stop the advancing Germans, and there wait for further orders. About 1 o'clock on the morning of the 23rd, we received orders to again advance, and, on coming in contact with the Germans, we at once dug ourselves in. During the whole day we were heavily shelled, various attacks being made on our trenches by the enemy, who were driven off, suffering great losses.

During the night of the 23rd, we deepened our trenches, and with the aid of the Engineers, who assisted us, we placed some barbed wire in front of our trenches ready for the attack we knew would come the next morning. About 4 o'clock in the morning, the enemy made a strong attack on the 13th Battalion, on our right, and, using poisonous gas and a heavy artillery barrage, broke through what was left of the battalion, about 8 o'clock. They also succeeded in breaking through on our left, and at 9:30 in the morning I went out with a few of my men to reconnoitre, and found we were practically surrounded. A little later the Germans made another strong attack on our trenches, but were again driven out. After this we were heavily bombarded, the shells dropping in our trenches, causing very heavy casualties.

At 11 o'clock we were forced to retire in order to keep in contact with our left and right, and in passing over the ground in the rear of our trenches, we lost many more men. We, however, succeeded in connecting up with the 48th Highlanders, of Toronto, on our right, and with what remained of the other Canadian battalions on our left. The Germans, however, came in great numbers, (more than fifteen to one), and eventually, at 1 o'clock on April 24th, having no ammunition, and nearly all the men being killed or severely wounded, we were surrounded and I was taken prisoner.