

Two Bugbrooke men, died in the Great War at Auber's Ridge on the 9th May 1915. On that 9th May, 560 men of the 1st Northants Regiment and 426 men of the 2nd Northants Regiment lost their life, both battalions being in the first wave of fighting. The account below is from Albert Money of the King Royal Rifles, which were supporting the 1st Northants Regiment in the 2nd wave.

Private Albert Money's Tale

Of the King's Royal Rifles

Take it all around from the end of January (1915) until the 10th March, there was nothing doing all along the line down our way. The Germans thought it (the attack) was coming on the 1st. We were in in Richeborough St. Vaust close to Neuve Chapelle, all was very quiet. You would think there was not a Hun within miles, but one of our planes went round within 800 yards, low down, and the Huns had a go at it with rifles and machine guns. There must have been a thousand of them, that was a good way to find out, they gave themselves away well.

We left there and went back for a rest of sixteen days, marched fourteen miles but singing all the way made it easy and (so did) the rest at the other end. First day sleep; second, clean your clothes with petrol and scrub your equipment; next day, nine hours parade and then there was some grumbling. I myself went and got inoculated for fever, fortyeight hours excused duty but next day orders came out. We had to go back, did not know what for, marched back ten miles, camped in the open. There were billets, but I and my mate preferred the open with waterproof sheets. Too many rats in the barn. Some lost their next day's rations. That was on the 6th March.

On the 7th at night we started off to the trenches, we knew we were going to make a charge along a good bit of the line on the morning of 8th. It was raining on the night of the 7th so it was cancelled for 24 hours. That was a big mistake; they let us have a look at the map to see what we were going to do. We got up (to the front line) alright on the night of the 8th, it was very cold, they gave us a good dose of rum in the morning around 5:00am. I gave my mate mine, he was shaking but not with fear, he was a brave fellow but that was his second time out, he went through all the battle of Mons and the Aisne and Marne and at Ypres. "We had a fine Captain, J.E.N. Heseltine (later Lt Col. D.S.O.), that was his second time (tour of duty), but he said to us, "We are going into this charge so we will do the best we can." None of that silly talk, we must do this and do that. He spoke like a man, they all said they would follow him to the last man and I believe them too.

The poor old Northampton's (regiment) were in the firing line and we were reinforcements. The bombardment started at 5:00am, steady for half an hour and 10 minutes (actually 35

minutes) as hard as they could go, about five to seven hundred guns going off, all sorts.

Just at half past five the Northhamptons had to leave their trenches and get up to the Germans under the ten minutes, heavy bombardment, as soon as they left we had to rush across the open and take them over (occupy the front line while the Northhamptons charged).

The Germans were pouring shrapnel between the reserve trenches and the firing line. We could see the Northhamptons going over the open in good order, through the smoke. It was simply raining lead, what with shells and machine guns, they had to get over a bit of a river, three or four yards wide and ten feet deep, nearly full of barbed wire.

Our engineers put small bridges over the night before, just room for one man to run over and they were made of new timber, a good target and playing on them with machine guns, not much chance to get over. Some got across and some tried to jump across the water. If you got in it, then ten to one (betting odds) you would never get out, no chance at all if you were wounded. That is where a lot of the missing of the Northhamptons are, poor fellows.

We started over (began our charge) to reinforce them when they got half way, no time to see who was dropping. I saw two of my section get hit, I got about 250 yards when I got hit, there was a young lad of about seventeen of my section, we had been telling him what to do if he were hit, if there was no shell hole or cover, to keep still all day in the open because if you move you stop one (a bullet) he said he would. He was about twenty yards in front of me, he got over a small ditch about ten yards. I saw him spin around and he smiled back at me. I was going to tell him to roll over to the ditch as I ran past but just then I stopped one through the hip but had sense enough not to stop, the ditch was only eight yards in front. I got there and stayed, had a look to see how the wound was, cut all my equipment off and had a rest.

The ditch was full of wounded and dead. My leg was dead, could not move it, fellow nearly blind with blood got my waterproof off to cover me up with and then the order came along to tell the Northhamptons and the King's Royal Rifles to get back the best way they could. Couldn't take the position and no more reinforcements. They were coming back one at a time, those wounded in the ditch where I was all started back, crowding over me so I was left with the dead. The ditch was very narrow and only two feet deep and I was lying the wrong way around to get out. Tried to turn around but no hope, put the waterproof sheet over me and had another rest. I knew it was no use staying there if they (the Germans) made a counter charge so had another try and got around and pulled myself along the ditch hand over hand and into the one with water; had a rest every ten or fifteen yards. Got out once but could not get the leg out hanging over the side, but the Germans saw me and the bullets started spitting all around, so just rolled in again. I got up to our wire entanglement and there was a great shell hole so could get no nearer.

One of the Black Watch (The Royal Highland Regiment) had been watching me coming along, he called over to me and asked if I could get any nearer. I said "No", and he said "Right, I will come and get you over the top. He came, got in the shell hole and pulled me over his back and up to the parapet and dumped me on the top and some others pulled me over, no time for gentle handling. Then he went over again and brought in another, he went over himself then went under fire again in the open and went to some of the dead and got four (waterproof) sheets, overcoats and water bottles and fixed the two of us up. I will never forget (his bravery and kindness). The last I saw of him he said "I am going in this next charge." I wished him luck, but before he went I know for a fact he went back and brought four more fellows who were wounded. I am sorry I did not ask his name.

I stayed behind the breastworks eighteen hours, did not see any stretcher bearer all that time, shell was falling all around, simply ploughing the ground up, all kinds of them.

My head had (a covering of) an inch of mud by the time I was picked up. I was propping the waterproof sheet up to keep the dirt off, and moving my head out of the way of the bigger pieces (of flying mud). "A doctor came around at night and injected two lots of morphia into me, I was picked up at last and taken to the dressing station. Stayed there some time. The cars came and took me to Bethune. No. 5 would not keep us there, went to Choutz. They operated on me as soon as I got there. I was not so bad, inoculated for fever, three or four injections of morphia, operation, wounded, inoculated for lockjaw (tetanus) in three days, but there are plenty worse than me, I consider myself lucky. Out of my section that morning the sergeant and twelve men started, six were killed and the other six wounded.

After the war

Albert Money survived the war. Spending months in rehabilitation hospitals he eventually returned to Australia. He met my grandmother while he was a patient in the rehab hospital at Fort Lytton in Brisbane and she was a volunteer visitor.

When he was well enough, he went back to work for Queensland Rail, though he walked with a calliper on his leg and his lungs had been permanently damaged by mustard gas in the trenches of France. I knew him as a kind, good-humoured man with whom I would spend my Sunday's as a child in the 1960's. I recall some happy times as we talked about many things and he showed me how to use the tools in his well-equipped carpentry workshop. Though he died suddenly of a heart attack when I was eight, in 1964, the force of his personality made an impression on me. He was someone I wanted to be like. When I read of the horrors that he suffered, and see how he managed to make a good life after the war I am filled with admiration for this man.

Extracted from - Battlefield Colloquialisms of World War I (1914-1918) David Tuffley

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