

By the end of the first week in May, the great concentration was practically complete. On the 12th. May, commenced an artillery bombardment that showed a gradually increasing intensity until the attack was launched on 7th. June, a bombardment which, up to that time, for duration, weight and thoroughness, had not been surpassed for so limited an objective.

The bombardment covering the major attack was timed to open at 3.10. a.m. on the morning of 7th. June 1917, and punctually to the second, the guns commenced firing. Every battery within hearing seemed to be having a hand in it, and the bark of the 18 - pounders, blending with the boom of the heavies, made the night a hideously memorable one. At the same moment that the attack was launched, sixteen mines at different points on the Messines, Wyttschaete, were simultaneously fired. The flashes from the innumerable guns, the lights from star shells, Verey lights and signal rockets of all colors, made the night as bright as day.

The gas that the enemy had been putting so liberally over the lines, made the gunners' task a harder one, on account of the necessity of wearing gas-masks. The firing ceased at 10.30.a.m. and the guns were then nearly red hot. The batteries were again engaged during the day, in breaking up enemy counter attacks, but our attack was splendidly successful, as the infantry gained all objectives and held them.

Some 7,000 prisoners were taken from the enemy on this day, the greater number of them being unwounded. From conversation with some of them, we learned that our attack was irresistible, as the infantry was on top of them before they could recover from the staggering shock of the tremendous explosions. The battery wagon lines were later moved to Kent Camp near the junction of the Bailleul and Neuve Anglaise Roads. It was here, on the night of the 24th. of that month, that the brigade had its first bombing raid. The long days and short nights served admirably for the bombing planes. Hardly a night passed but the heavy drone of Fritz's Gothas could be heard, sometimes during the whole night from twilight until early dawn, and when the "Cargo" was unloaded in the vicinity of the lines, the horse picquet would roar "stand to your horses," and drivers in all stages of undress would dash for the horses: and on several occasions it was necessary to temporarily evacuate the lines.

On 26th. June, the batteries drew out of action and on the 27th. during an inspection, General Monash congratulated the brigade on its good work during the Messines offensive.

On the following day, General's Monash and Grimwade attended a sports meeting arranged by the "Boys," but on the evening of the 2nd. July the batteries again went into action on Messines Ridge.

A special word must be here said for the drivers for their clever work in getting the guns into action on account of the heavy nature of the ground and the numerous muddy shell holes and the incessant shelling by the enemy.

The whole ridge looked a desolate sight. Every yard of ground bore the trace of our artillery fire, and the wonder of it all, was how any living thing could have survived the devastating onslaught. Ammunition had to be taken to the pits almost nightly, and the constant enemy shelling resulted in casualties both by night and day.

On the 27th. July, pack horses were introduced, especially for getting shells to the detached sections, and a considerable amount of labor was saved.

On the morning of the 1st. September, the batteries moved out for the second spell which was expected to cover a period of at least, four weeks.

The first night was spent at Staples, a small village some three or four kilometres from Hazebrouck, the men being billeted in the usual barns, and the horse lines being in open paddocks.

Upon the second day after a very long march of 25 miles, the destination, Merok-st-Lievain was reached. The daily routine here was the usual round of parades, grooming and harness cleaning, with picquets and guards to fill in the long hours of evening.

On 7th. September, after a very lengthy spell of five days, preparations were hastily made for a return to the line the following morning. It was an unexpected and unpopular change of arrangements, as the "Furphy" had it we were to be out for "anything up to two months." However, the fellows took it as they took most things, with a curse and a smile, and at 8 O'Clock on 8th. September, the batteries were in column of route and the first night gained Flechem, and the following night Morbecque was reached. That night the batteries were told they were going in for a warm corner, so the fellows made the most of their opportunities and made merry with wine and song in Aires and Morbecque.

Reveille sounded at 4.30 the next morning, pitch dark and in strange barns and lines, but the batteries were soon in "column of route" again, and that day passed through Hazebrouck, Abeele and Reninghelst, and Dickebusch was reached in the late afternoon of 10th. September.