

John Mogg

Attack at Lingèvres

As we crossed the start line all hell let loose from our own side, and what with Typhoons and the artillery barrage and the tanks all shooting up the enemy positions in the wood you could have seen the ground literally dance in front of you. And trees were coming down and I thought to myself "Good Lord, nobody can ever live in that thing, we must be able to walk straight on to our objective". And so we crossed right on time, 10.15, across the start line with Humphrey Woods on the left and me on the right and we went through the corn, and the Geordies are never very tall guys and the corn that year was extremely high. We advanced about halfway across the corn with still this barrage going on when suddenly saw the odd Geordie dropping in the corn, and you couldn't quite make this out where it was coming from. But, in fact, it was machine-gun fire coming from the forward edge of the wood and quite a lot of Geordies were dropping in the corn as casualties all the way along. And however we advanced and I spoke to Humphrey Woods on my radio, and this is the last time I heard him, and he said "We are running into terrible trouble here on the left, all the 'A' Company officers are casualties. I am trying to get on with 'B' Company and I will try and see how it happens. If not, if we don't make any ground, you go on, whatever you do go on to your side of the village and I will try and collect as many of our soldiers and then come round behind you, because it's obviously going to be easier your side". And, in fact, he was right it was easier our side, and apart from a fair amount of hand to hand fighting of 'C' Company on the right we got into the woods. And we had discovered afterwards that during the bombardment the Germans had got their machine-guns on fixed lines and they had a string attachment to the machine-guns so they could lie in the bottom of their foxhole and then just pull the trigger and the machine-gun shot enfilade fire right across this corn at the height of a man's body. And so they could lie in the bottom of these foxholes with all this stuff going on. Admittedly if you got a direct hit you would have had it, but otherwise, and this is really what was causing most of the casualties on the way up.