

Reported Dangerously Ill

Austen Wallis from Monkseaton in Northumberland was commissioned in 1915 as an officer in the 3rd Battalion DLI at South Shields. After training, Second Lieutenant Wallis joined the 12th (Service) Battalion DLI for active service on the Western Front.

In late June 1916, the 12th Battalion DLI was ordered south to the Somme but did not move into the front line until early July.

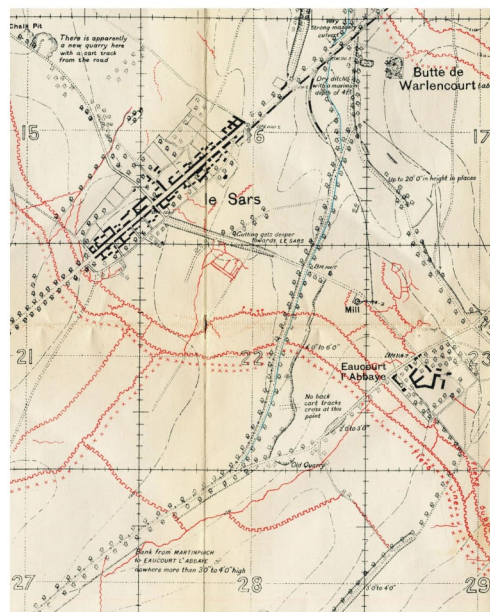
On 3rd October, the battalion marched in rain and mud to trenches south of the ruined village of Le Sars to prepare for a major attack. 12 DLI was then ordered to seize 'The Tangle' - a German strongpoint to the east of the village defended by machine-guns - and then a heavily defended sunken road.

1.45pm. 7th October 1916. 12 DLI advanced towards 'The Tangle', supported by a tank armed with two machine-guns. Although the tank was destroyed, the attack was successful and 70 German prisoners were captured but 30 DLI soldiers died in the attack and many more were wounded.

Among the wounded was Second Lieutenant Wallis, who had been hit in both legs by a rifle bullet. Over the next two weeks, his father received a number of telegrams and letters explaining what had happened to his son. These documents were preserved by his family and presented with his campaign medals to the DLI Museum. They are now held at Durham County Record Office.

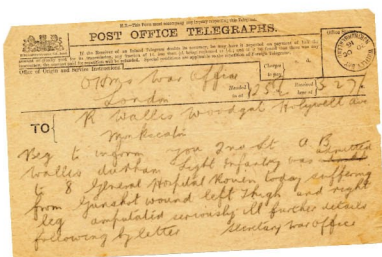


Second Lieutenant Austen Wallis, 12th Battalion DLI
[Ref No: D/DLI Acc 2939(D) Box 1/14/1]



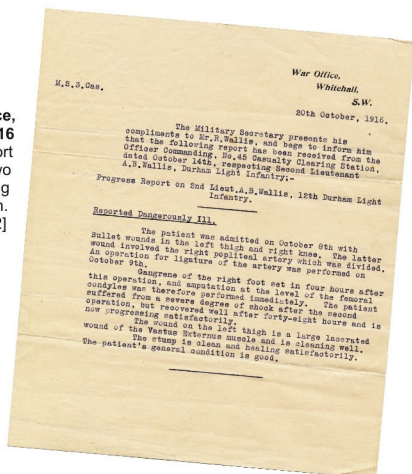
British Trench Map, Le Sars, 1916
The sunken road and the German trenches called 'The Tangle' are clearly shown to the east of the village of Le Sars. These were attacked by the 12th Battalion DLI on 7th October 1916.
[Ref No: D/DLI 2/9/244]

Telegram from the War Office, 10th October 1916
This telegram brought the first news that Austen Wallis had been wounded and was dangerously ill. [Ref No: D/DLI Acc 2939(D) Box 1/14/20(1-2)]



Telegram from the War Office, 20th October 1916
This telegram probably arrived before the letter dated 10th October.
[Ref No: D/DLI Acc 2939(D) Box 1/14/21]

Letter from the War Office, 20th October 1916
This letter gave a detailed progress report on Austen Wallis following his two operations at the Casualty Clearing Station.
[Ref No: D/DLI Acc 2939(D) Box 1/14/12]



Letter from the 45th Casualty Clearing Station, 10th October 1916
This Casualty Clearing Station was at a railway siding near the village of Dernancourt. The first operation there on Austen Wallis was unsuccessful and a second was needed to stop gangrene spreading. [Ref No: D/DLI Acc 2939(D) Box 1/14/8]

