

from east of Gonnellieu to the Canal du Nord opposite Hermies.

At the same hour, demonstrations with gas, smoke and artillery took place on practically the whole of the British front south of the Scarpe, and subsidiary attacks were launched east of Epehy and between Bullecourt and Fontaine-lez-Croisilles.

On the principal front of attack, the tanks moved forward in advance of the infantry, crushing down the enemy's wire and forming great lanes through which our infantry could pass. Protected by smoke barrages from the view of the enemy's artillery, they rolled on across the German trenches, smashing up the enemy's machine guns and driving his infantry to ground. Close behind our tanks our own infantry followed and, while the tanks patrolled the line of hostile trenches, cleared the German infantry from their dug-outs and shelters.

In this way, both the main system of the Hindenburg Line and its outer defences were rapidly overrun, and tanks and infantry proceeded in accordance with programme to the attack upon the Hindenburg Reserve Line.

In this advance, the 12th (Eastern) Division, moving along the Bonavis Ridge on the right of our attack, encountered obstinate resistance at Lateau Wood, which sheltered a number of German batteries. Fierce fighting, in which infantry and tank crews displayed the greatest gallantry, continued throughout the morning at this point, and ended in the capture of the position, together with the enemy's guns.

Meanwhile, the 20th (Light) Division, which had captured La Vacquerie at the opening of its attack, stormed the powerful defences of Welsh Ridge. The 6th Division carried the village of Ribecourt, after sharp fighting among the streets and houses, while the 62nd (West Riding) Division (T.) stormed Havrincourt, where also parties of the enemy held out for a time.

The capture of these two villages secured the flanks of the 51st (Highland) Division (T.), advancing on the left centre of our attack up the slopes of Flesquieres Hill against the German trench lines on the southern side of Flesquieres village. Here very heavy fighting took place. The stout brick wall skirting the Chateau grounds opposed a formidable obstacle to our advance, while German machine guns swept the approaches. A number of tanks were knocked out by direct hits from German field batteries in position beyond the crest of the hill. None the less, with the exception of the village itself, our second objectives in this area were gained before midday.

Many of the hits upon our tanks at Flesquieres were obtained by a German artillery officer who, remaining alone at his battery, served a field gun single-handed until killed at his gun. The great bravery of this officer aroused the admiration of all ranks.

On the left of our attack west of the Canal du Nord, the 36th (Ulster) Division captured a German strong point on the spoil bank of the canal and pushed northwards in touch with the West Riding troops, who, as the first stage in a most gallant and remarkably successful advance, had taken Havrincourt. By 10.30 a.m. the general advance beyond the Hindenburg Reserve Line to our final objectives had begun and cavalry were moving up behind our infantry.

In this period of the attack tanks and British infantry battalions of the 29th Divi-

sion entered Masnieres and captured Marcoing and Neuf Wood, securing the passages of the Canal de l'Escaut at both villages.

At Marcoing the tanks arrived at the moment when a party of the enemy were in the act running out an electrical connection to blow up one of the bridges. This party was fired on by a tank and the bridge secured intact. At Masnieres, however, the retreating enemy succeeded in destroying partially the bridge carrying the main road. In consequence the first tank which endeavoured to cross at this point fell through the bridge, completing its destruction.

The advance of a number of our guns had been unavoidably delayed in the sunken roads which served this part of the battlefield, and though our infantry continued their progress beyond Masnieres, without the assistance of tanks and artillery they were not able at first to clear the enemy entirely from the northern portion of the village. Here parties of Germans held out during the afternoon, and gave the enemy time to occupy Rumilly and the section of the Beaufeuve-Masnieres line south of it; while the destruction of the bridge also prevented the cavalry from crossing the canal in sufficient strength to overcome his resistance.

In spite of this difficulty, a squadron of the Fort Garry Horse, Canadian Cavalry Brigade, succeeded during the afternoon in crossing the canal by a temporary bridge constructed during the day. This squadron passed through the Beaufeuve-Masnieres line and charged and captured a German battery in position to the east of it. Continuing its advance, it dispersed a body of about 300 German infantry, and did not cease its progress until the greater part of its horses had been killed or wounded. The squadron thereupon took up a position in a sunken road, where it maintained itself until night fell. It then withdrew to our lines, bringing with it several prisoners taken in the course of a most gallant exploit.

Meanwhile, west of the Canal de l'Escaut patrols of the 6th Division during the afternoon entered Noyelles-sur-l'Escaut, where they were reinforced by cavalry, and other cavalry units pushed out towards Cantaing. West of Flesquieres, the 62nd Division, operating northwards from Havrincourt, made important progress. Having carried the Hindenburg Reserve Line north of that village, it rapidly continued its attack and captured Graincourt, where two anti-tank guns were destroyed by the tanks accompanying our infantry. Before nightfall infantry and cavalry had entered Anneux, though the enemy's resistance in this village does not appear to have been entirely overcome until the following morning.

This attack of the 62nd (West Riding) Division constitutes a brilliant achievement, in which the troops concerned completed an advance of four and a half miles from their original front, over-running two German systems of defence and gaining possession of three villages.

On the left flank of our attack Ulster battalions pushed northwards along the Hindenburg Line and its forward defences, maintaining touch with the West Riding troops, and carried the whole of the German trench systems west of the Canal du Nord as far north as the Bapaume-Cambrai road.

At the end of the first day of the attack, therefore, three German systems of defence had