

**2/5<sup>th</sup> Sherwood Foresters [Notts and Derby Regt]**  
**Extract from Battalion War Diary held at NA Kew in WO95/3025**

Letter from Lt. Col Gadd to Brigadier Gen. T. W. Stansfield

Hertford  
19 December 1918

Dear General

I returned from Germany early last week and very pleased was I to do so. I met Hodgson yesterday and he told me you were still commanding the 178<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade and so I am not quite certain of all the times etc. as my memory got very bad in Germany.

About 5am the German barrage and bombardment started and they filled the sunken road with gas shells at the same time. There was little doubt that this was the preliminary of the big show, and I posted my Intelligence Officer where he could see most of our front telling him to look out for the SOS. As you know it was very misty and the SOS was never seen. In fact there was no indication when the enemy attacked. Soon after 9am the enemy was first seen in masses moving on the ridge South of Noreuil in the 6<sup>th</sup> Div. area. We took them on with two L.G.'s but they were a long way off. About the same time the Brigade Signallers intercepted a message on the Power Buzzer from Hodgkin [Lt. Col. Commanding 2/6 S. F.'s] saying his front line had been penetrated. Between 10 and 11am my front Coy's. became engaged, not by a large attack from the front, but by the enemy working up the valleys on either side, especially the Noreuil side. They also came down Sydney St. These Coys. put up a good fight I think, as I had messages from them during the fighting but in the end each case was the same. They were attacked from the rear and the front and bombed up from the flanks. I had no news from my Coy. in Noreuil Switch, but judging from the shell fire I think they had little chance, and probably went the way of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> Battalions. Meanwhile I had moved my Reserve Coy., sending some to garrison Noreuil Switch near the Sunken Rd., and the others along the Sunken Rd. We commanded the Noreuil Valley on the right and I had the valley on the left watched by patrols.

After about 11 o'clock everything became very quiet and we spent the time organizing the defence of the Sunken Rd. There was a lot of sniping and now French was hit for the second time in the head, after which he soon died. In spite of everything I was feeling very optimistic, thinking we had stopped the advance. There was, however, a continual enemy movement in the 6<sup>th</sup> Division area. The enemy could be seen digging in on the ridge near Toller's [Lt. Col. Commanding 2/7<sup>th</sup> Scottish Fusiliers] HQ which strengthened the idea that he had been stopped. Out left seemed pretty quiet.

About 1pm I got your message saying that the Lincolns were occupying the trench about 400 yds to our rear, and the runner who brought the message said that he had seen them there.

Shortly after this I became aware that the enemy had got Ecourt, although they had had it apparently for some time. I ought to have found this out sooner.

This news, and the fact that the movement on the right continued, made me decide to go back to the trench 400 yards to the rear, now occupied by the Lincolns. I ordered men to get back in small groups, and about 2pm started back with Andrews, but ran slap into about 200 Bosche's coming straight up from the rear and we were caught. I believe the Lincolns had been mopped up about 2 hours before, anyhow, I saw them as prisoners afterwards.

So ended the 21<sup>st</sup> March as far as the 2/5<sup>th</sup> was concerned. How much we did to stop the advance I don't know, but I think we succeeded in spreading our departure over a considerable time. I was sorry to lose Trench, he was doing very brave things at the time, organizing the defences etc.

There are a few more details I could give and I should like to see you when you are home

Yours sincerely

*[signed]* H. R. Gadd