

Private Albert Edward McLenaghan

Private Albert Edward McLenaghan served in the 27th Field Ambulance, Royal Army Medical Corps, of the 9th (Scottish) Division.

The 9th Division participated in the Fifth Battle of Ypres, also known as the Advance of Flanders (28 September – 2 October 1918) on the 28th of September 1918.

The Division’s attack was carried by the 26th and 28th Brigades. Three hours before zero, the Belgian artillery started firing on the German positions. The bombardment lasted till zero hour. The attack was launched at 5.30 a.m. Belgian troops advanced on the left and the Black Watch and Seaforth Highlanders took the Frezenberg Ridge.

At 8.35 a.m. the advance from Frezenberg Ridge was resumed in the direction of Anzac ridge, and the 5th Camerons moved forward behind the creeping barrage in conjunction with the Belgians on their left. Anzac ridge was the first real dangerous obstacle.

Despite fierce German opposition, causing considerable casualties, the strongpoint fell to Camerons. Most defenders didn’t survived the fighting. The Camerons rushed forward and regained the pace of the barrage, which they had lost during the fighting on Anzac ridge. Now the troops resumed the advance in the direction of the Broodseinde Ridge, a part of the Passchendaele Ridge. Although they encountered some German fire, the men had almost no trouble in capturing and consolidating the ridge, which was the fourth and last objective. Now they formed a line in touch with the Belgians. The attack had been a huge success. In a single day the troops of the Army Group of Flanders recaptured a stretch of ground, which roughly corresponds with the terrain captured during almost three months of fighting during the Third Battle of Ypres.

The 27th brigade of the 9th (Division) moved up from camps west of Ypres early on the 28th, and proceeded steadily to the Polygon Butte. At 12.30 it became clear that the Broodseinde Ridge was firmly held by the Belgians and the men of the 9th Division. The resistance of the German infantry and artillery had been feeble. Geluveld had already fallen to the 29th Division. So it was therefore decided to exploit the attack and the 27th (Lowland) Brigade was to advance against the village of Beselare on the Broodseinde Ridge.

The 12th and 11th Royal Scots, which carried the attack, advanced from positions near the Butte around 02.30 p.m. Beselare was still firmly held by the Germans and the Battalions encountered stiff opposition while advancing to the higher lying village. German machine-gun positions on the edge of the village were only silenced after strenuous combat. The Royals Scots finally captured and consolidated positions around the hamlets Zwaanhoek en Molenhoek near Beselare around 04.00 p.m.

The attack was resumed at 9 a.m. on the following day. The 28th Brigade would lead the attack; followed by the 27th and 26th Brigades. The men advanced towards the Keiberg Spur, while the artillery deployed smokescreens between the Broodseinde Ridge and the Keiberg to cover the advance of the troops. The men advanced between desultory shell and considerable machine-gun fire. By 10 a.m. the Keiberg had fallen. Waterdamhoek was reached at 11.25 a.m. But just east of Waterdamhoek the 28th brigade was held up by the Flanders I Stellung, a well build out German defensive line. The 27th brigade was sent up to assist the attack and together the 27th and 28th Brigades broke through the defensive line, entering the village of Dadizele at about 4 p.m. Where they consolidated positions along the Menin-Roulers Road.

Private Albert Edward McLenaghan of the 27th Field Ambulance tended for the wounded of the 27th Brigade. He was killed in action on the 29th of September 1918 at the hamlet of Zwaanhoek, where the 27th Brigade had consolidated their positions on the 28th of October. He was possibly killed by German shell fire on Beselare when the 9th (Scottish) Division resumed their attack on the Keiberg Spur. Private Albert Edward McLenaghan was buried near the Zwaanhoek in Beselare. His remains were exhumed after the war and reinterred in Buttes New British Cemetery, Polygon Wood.

*If the attached map mentions a coordinate (e.g. 28 D 21 a 30.50.) this refers to the Bureal Return Sheet, which mentions where the remains of the fallen soldier were exhumed after the war.*

*This fallen soldier was also added to the Passchendaele Archives online database: archives.passchendaele.be*

