

Their opening success was followed up by the troops of the First Army with the greatest energy, and on the following day Cherisy, Vis-en-Artois, the Bois du Sart, Roeux and Gavrelle were taken. By the end of the month they had gained the high ground East of Cherisy and Haucourt, had captured Eterpigny, and cleared the area between the Sensee and Scarpe rivers West of the Trinquis Brook. North of the Scarpe, Plouvain was held by us. Our progress brought our troops to within assaulting distance of the powerful trench system running from the Hindenburg line at Queant to the Lens defences about Drocourt, the breaking of which would turn the whole of the enemy's organised positions on a wide front southwards.

(28) *The Storming of the Drocourt-Queant Line.*

On the 2nd September the Drocourt-Queant Line was broken, the maze of trenches at the junction of that line and the Hindenburg System was stormed and the enemy was thrown into precipitate retreat on the whole front to the South of it. This gallant feat of arms was carried out by the Canadian Corps of the First Army, employing the 1st and 4th Canadian Divisions and the 4th English Division, and the XVII. Corps of the Third Army, employing the 52nd, 57th and 63rd Divisions.

The assault of the Canadians was launched at 5 a.m. on a front of about 4½ miles South of the Trinquis Brook, our infantry being supported by 40 tanks of the 3rd Tank Brigade and assisted by a mobile force of motor machine gun units, Canadian Cavalry and armoured cars. The attack was a complete success, and by noon the whole of the elaborate system of wire, trenches and strong points constituting the Drocourt-Queant Line on the front of our advance was in our hands.

On the right the attack of the XVII. Corps, launched at the same hour by the 52nd and 57th Divisions, directed its main force on the triangle of fortifications marking the junction of the Hindenburg and Drocourt-Queant lines North-west of the village of Queant. Pressed with equal vigour it met with success equally complete. There was stern fighting in the network of trenches both North and South of Queant, in which neighbourhood the 52nd (Lowland) Division performed distinguished service and by the progress they made greatly assisted our advance farther North. Early in the afternoon our troops had cleared the triangle, and the 63rd Division (Major-General C. A. Blacklock) had passed through to exploit the success thus gained.

During the afternoon our further progress met with considerable resistance from machine-gun nests sited in woods and villages and on the reverse slopes of the Dury Ridge. There was hard fighting until dusk, especially on the front of the 63rd Division and of the 4th Division (Major-General L. J. Lipsett). By nightfall this opposition had been overcome, the 63rd Division had reached the railway east of Queant, and the 57th Division, swinging to the right, was threatening that village and Pronville from the north. Our troops had pushed forward to a depth of over three miles along the Arras-Cambrai road, and had reached the outskirts of Buissy. Cagnicourt, Villers-les-Cagnicourt and Dury were in our

hands. During the day 8,000 prisoners had been taken and many guns.

Troops of the Third and Fourth Armies prolonged the line of attack as far south as Peronne. At all points important progress was made, though fighting was severe.

In the battle of the Scarpe, as in the battles of Amiens and Bapaume and the victories that followed them, staff work of a high order played an important part in our success. The greatest credit is due to the First Army Commander, General Horne, and his staff for the excellence of their arrangements.

(29) *The Enemy in Retreat.*

The result of the battles of Amiens, Bapaume and the Scarpe now declared itself.

During the night of the 2nd/3rd September the enemy fell back rapidly on the whole front of the Third Army and the right of the First Army. By the end of the day he had taken up positions along the general line of the Canal du Nord from Peronne to Ypres and thence east of Hermies, Inchy-en-Artois and Ecourt St. Quentin to the Sensee east of Lecluse. On the following day he commenced to withdraw also from the east bank of the Somme south of Peronne, and by the night of the 8th September was holding the general line Vermand, Epehy, Havrincourt, and thence along the east bank of the Canal du Nord.

The withdrawal was continued on the front of the French forces on our right. On the 6th September French troops occupied Ham and Chauny, and by 8th September had reached the line of the Crozat Canal.

Throughout this hasty retreat our troops followed up the enemy closely. Many of his rear-guards were cut off and taken prisoner; on numerous occasions our forward guns did great execution among his retiring columns, while our airmen took full advantage of the remarkable targets offered them. Great quantities of material and many guns fell into our hands.

In the battle of the Scarpe itself, in which ten British divisions attacked and overthrew thirteen German divisions, thereby giving the signal for this general retreat, our total captures amounted to over 16,000 prisoners and about 200 guns.

(30) *The Battle of Havrincourt and Epehy. 12th-18th September.*

North of Havrincourt, the Canal du Nord, behind which the enemy had taken shelter, with the open slopes leading down to it swept by the fire of the German positions on the east bank, could scarcely be taken except by a carefully organised attack.

From the neighbourhood of Havrincourt, southwards, the enemy's main line of resistance was the well-known Hindenburg Line, which, after passing through that village, ran south-east across the Beaucamp, La Vacquerie and Bonavis Ridges to the Scheldt Canal at Bantouzele, whence it followed the line of the canal to St. Quentin. In front of this trench system strong German forces held formidable positions about Havrincourt and Epehy, which had to be taken before a final attack on the Hindenburg Line could be undertaken. By successful operations carried out during the second and third weeks of September these different defences were secured and our line advanced to within assaulting distance of the enemy's main line of resistance.