

into history books



ONWARD TO BATTLE: the 36th (Ulster) Division leaving Clondeboye Camp, Co Down for the last time

firing from Thiepval village to the right and the high ground of Beaumont Hamel on the left.

The Germans were reinforcing, with fresh troops arriving at Grandcourt by train. The enemy counterattacked, pushing down from St-Pierre-Divion.

Inch by inch the division was forced back, giving up its hard won gains. The survivors found themselves pinned down in a segment of the German frontline trenches.

The 16th Royal Irish Rifles (2nd County Down), the division's

Pioneers, attempted to cut a trench across No-Man's-Land but were forced to give up the task because of the weight of enemy fire.

When the division was relieved on July 2-3, it had suffered some 5,500 casualties in dead, wounded and missing, including more than 200 officers. The 8th and 9th Royal Irish Rifles both lost 20 each and none of the remaining battalions, with the exception of the Pioneers, suffered less than a dozen officer casualties.

Divisional commander Major-General Oliver Nugent, from a long-established Co Cavan family, in his Special Order of the Day of July 3, 1916, recorded that, in his opinion, "nothing finer has been done in the war than the attack by the Ulster Division on the 1st July".

He added: "The advance across the open to the German line was carried out with the steadiness of a parade movement, under a fire both from front and flanks, which could only have been faced by troops of the highest quality."



ACCOUNT: Frank Percy Crozier of the 9th Royal Irish Rifles

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