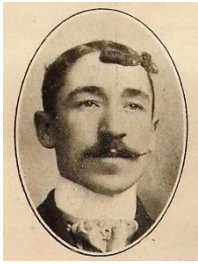


The Battles of the Somme, August 1916



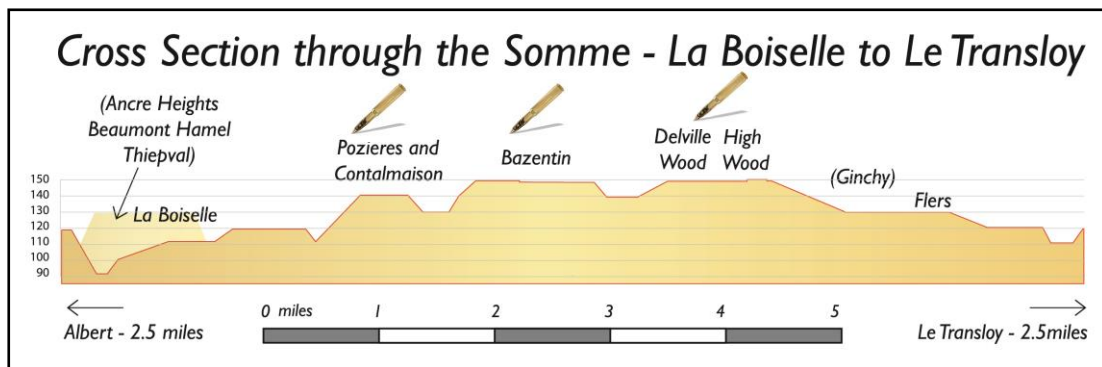
L/Cpl Dickinson

After July, never again was a month to consume so many British lives –the 196,240 deaths were reduced to 75,279 and Tewkesbury deaths from 12 to 8. (Battles are no respecters of dates and it makes military sense to extend August to the 3 September.)

Progress at the Somme was always slow but the battles of August reflected a consolidation of ground captured in the face of ferocious German counter attacks. No new battles started in August but both sides wished to command the higher ground.



Lt. L.W. Moore



Cross-Section through the Somme Battlefields [P. Finnigan & S. Eedle]

Bazentin Ridge had (in theory) been captured on 17 July but, on 1 August, **Pte. W. H. Sheldon** [V] was one of “a large number of men buried by HE (High Explosive) shell”. His death was not confirmed until 3 March and his body - like so many - was never recovered. (His brother, a Regular was badly wounded in August and was tended by Tewkesbury Nurse, **Miss M.E. Merell**.) Boer War veteran **Sgt. L. V. Mann** [R] suffered a similar fate when a local attack tried to capture a remaining German trench. The 10th Gloucesters were still trying to capture that same concrete strongpoint and **Pte. James Jeynes** [V] disappeared in another unsuccessful attack.

After fighting in all the major battles of 1914-15, what was left of our regular 1st Gloucesters had been rested until 20 August, when more troops were needed to hold *Pozieres*. **L/Cpl. F. Dickenson** [R] disappeared in yet another German counter attack. On 25 August the 5th Glosters were thrown into the attack and **Lt. Lionel Watson Moore** [TA] was killed somewhat heroically leading a trench raid. (His body, however, disappeared in the second Battle of the Somme, 1918.) On the last day of the battle, back at *Delville Wood* on 3 September Tewkesbury lost its first conscript, **Pte. H. A. Greening** [C]. **Gunner William Henry Jones** [V] then succumbed after fighting through the 65-day slog on the Somme.

The last August death was that of **Cpl. A. H. Askew** [TA] during a diversionary attack to the north at *Fromelles*. Using less experienced Territorial soldiers to assist Australians, it was a costly failure.

Yet the 65 days had resulted in some success – the capture of the higher ground. The advance, however, had to continue for another 76 days, costing the lives of 8 more local men.

John Dixon. [For more information, see THS Publication 9, “A Noble band of Heroes”]