

The Battles of the Somme, September 1916



L/Cpl. G.T. Mann

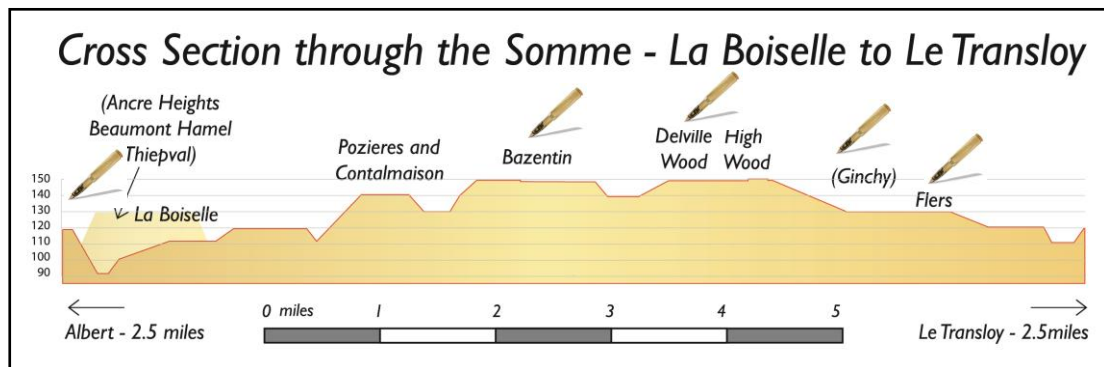
After capturing the higher ground in the two-month battle, September saw four attacks in an attempt to break through to the flatter land beyond. Accordingly the British lost 115,056 men - but only 3 from Tewkesbury.

The Allies could not rest on their laurels after the costly seizures of firstly *Battle of Bazentin Ridge* and subsequently *High* and *Delville Woods* because the Germans were still able to bombard them.



Pte. R.C. Sayer

The attack had to continue, therefore, towards the village strongpoint of *Ginchy* between 3-9 September. *Although* claimed by the British as “*the best performance of the war by the German army on the Western Front*”, *Ginchy* was captured, thus depriving the Germans of observation posts, over the entire battlefield. **No local men lost their lives.**



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

As a result of capturing *Ginchy*, the Allies were then ready to continue the offensive in the historic *Battle of Flers*, [15-22 September] - a few highly secret ‘*tanks*’ were deployed for the first time. The *1st Gloucesters* moved up but were not directly involved in consolidating captured positions. Vulnerable to artillery attack, a *Mons* veteran, **L/Cpl. George T. Mann** [R], again just disappeared. Having broken through the prepared lines of German defences at long last, the British now faced a new set of challenges, as it approached yet more lethal gradients.

Thiepval had been one of the strong-points in the German first line and, thus, a target from the first day but it proved impossible to take. After successes elsewhere, it was far behind the main British attack but, at long last, it fell to an efficient attack. This was the place where the ***Thiepval Memorial to the Missing*** was built after the war. 19 men from Tewkesbury – whose bodies were never recovered nor identified – are among the 72,190 remembered here.

Not all soldiers, of course, die immediately from wounds and two of the local men who died in September succumbed to wounds sustained earlier. **Pte. R. C. Sayer** [TA] died officially on 8 September at *Abbeville Base Hospital*, having been wounded on 21 July when “*he was hit shortly after carrying in Lt Percy Badham*” [son of the Town Clerk]. On 25 September, **Pte. William Herbert Jones** [V] of the Canadian *10th Alberta Battalion* died from severe wounds on 25 September. He was the first emigrant to Canada from Tewkesbury to be killed in the war.

Progress was at last clearly being made - but there were still 49 days to fight in the Battles of the Somme, with the town losing another 5 men.

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