

"OUR SERGEANT"

The photograph collection of Corporal Albert Anderson continues to release its secrets. Albert has written on this image "Our Sergeant". The name of the Mounted Rifleman on the wooden cross is obscured in the over developed photograph, but fortunately the lower two lines are just legible - they read: "Killed in Action - 9th August 1916".

To find out the name of the man that Albert held in such high regard I needed to research events that took place in the Auckland Mounted Rifles Regiment for that day.

The hand written War Diary of the Regiment shows that the NZMR Brigade was involved in its advance after defeating the enemy at Romani, and had pushed on to Katia, and now on the 8th August the Brigade was preparing to attack Bir El Abd early the next day.

The attack was to be a failure when the 3rd Light Horse Brigade failed to appear at the start time of the attack, leaving the Brigades flank exposed. The Turks counter attacked and after a day of heavy fighting and great heroism by the Machine Gunners the attack was able to be broken off with relative little loss of life considering the intensity of the counter attack.

Sergeant Mark Vipond from Matakana in Rodney, North Auckland, was Albert's Sergeant and one of eleven Aucklanders to fall in action that day. Others were to die later of wounds received. One trooper wrote:

"Chaps who had been on Gallipoli had not seen [action] hotter, I do not want to go through it again..."

In total 30 members of the NZMR Brigade were killed this day the 9th August 1916. 73 Anzacs in all.



Below: The Auckland Mounted Rifles War Diary transcribed from the hand written document held in Archives, reference 35/2/15 part 1 - Aug1916. These dates cover the events leading to Mark's death.

Note that items enclosed in straight brackets are mine, the transcriber, and are from the dates 8th and 9th August 1916 only, transcribed 3rd June 2010.

Sadly Sergeant Mark Vipond's name is not notated in the War Diary - convention of the day listed only names of Officers killed. Men Killed in Action (KIA) from the "Other Ranks" were only recorded by their numbers.

8th August 1916

RABAH Regiment [AMR] moved out with Brigade at 0430 and moved right onto OGHRAITINA – the enemy having retired during the night. Patrols were sent forward and got into touch with the enemy patrols at DEBABIS. Regiment left OGHRAITINA with the Brigade at 1115 and arrived at DEBABIS at 1330 and bivouacked for the night. Enemy patrols pushed in, reports received that they were holding BIR EL ABD in force – No Casualties. Message (written on board) found at OGHRAITINA cordially written by a German Artillery Officer or N.C.O. stating that 2nd Lieutenant Allsopp was a prisoner of war. [Note: a longer version of this message written sideways into the margin of the War Diary and states:]

Copy of Message found at OGHRAITINA written on a board – *“Here was a German Artillerie Observation Poste and had seen all the movements of the English Cavalarie – Lieut Allsopp A.M. Rifles now a Prisoner of War – a Gentleman – had eaten in our Batterie. Dates 5/6 VIII.16.”*

Operation order by Brigadier General Chaytor issued at 1700. The intention of G.O.C. being to attack BIR EL ABD at 0630 on the 9th instant with 3rd Brigade on the right flank and the 2nd Brigade on left.

9th August 1916

DEBABIS Regiment moved out of DEBABIS with the Brigade at 0430 and furnished the Advance Guard to the Brigade. Lieutenant Coates and Reid being sent out as Advance Patrols. Patrols and Advance Screen got into touch with the enemy ay 0515.

Orders received at 0545 from G.O.C. for Regiment to withdraw the Advance Screen and attack BIR EL ABD on the South Telegraph line at 0630 and that the 3rd Brigade would support on the right flank.

3rd Squadron [AMR] on the left and 2 troops of the 11th Squadron [NAMR] and one section of Machine Guns under Lieutenant McCarroll on the right commenced to advance at 0620. One section of Machine Guns under Lieutenant Hinman covered the 3rd Squadron's advance.

Reports received at 0645 that the enemy were bringing up large reinforcements over the long ridge S.E. of BIR EL ABD and the Regiment was compelled to extend its front on the right as the 3rd Brigade [ALH] had not yet arrived.

At 0700 Major McCarroll went on 9th August to command the right of the sector held by the Regiment and also took up 2 Troops (4th Squadron [Waikato]) in support.

The C.M.R. [Canterburys] who were on the left and the Regiment made steady advance and the enemy were pushed back.

At 0900 our right flank was reinforced with one Squadron of the 5th Light Horse as the 3rd Brigade [Light Horse] had not arrived.

Steady advances were made both by the C.M.R. and the left flank and at 1100 we held a line running S.E. and N.W. across Telegraph line. At 1120 CMR and 2 Troops 3rd Squadron on the left were compelled to retire on account of heavy enfilade fire and we were compelled to withdraw to the left flank back to the Telegraph line which left us with two exposed flanks as the 3rd Brigade had not yet been reported. The enemy attacked our position strongly at 1145 but we were able to hold them with reinforcements [that] arrived at 1200 (2 troops Warwick Yeomanry, 1 Troop 5th Light Horse and one section W.M.R. [Wellington] Machine Guns).

Further reinforcements arrived at 1430 and were sent out to reinforce the right flank as the 5th Light Horse on the extreme right flank reported the enemy were advancing in force on the ridge held by them.

Report received by Major McCarroll at 1350 that 2 Troop of 3rd Brigade had been seen within a 1000 yards of our right flank at 1200 but they had since disappeared. At 1500 we were holding the enemy well. At 1615 orders were received from G.O.C. to withdraw to a position 1000yards W on line running North and South over Telegraph line.

Major McCarroll took charge of the withdrawal on the right flank of the sector and on receipt of his report at 1800 that the right flank had started to withdraw the Warwick Yeomanry and the 5th Light Horse troops were withdrawn on the left flank followed by the WMR Machine Gun section and then the 3rd and 4th Squadrons.

At 1830 the whole of the Regiment including all troops that had been sent up to reinforce had been successfully withdrawn with few casualties, considering the way the enemy advanced when they saw the withdrawal taking place and the exceptionally heavy rifle and machine gun fire which was brought to bear on us.

Lieutenant Hinman and his section of Machine Guns did very good work in covering the retirement from the left flank, as did Lieutenant McCarroll with his Machine Gun section in covering the retirement on the right flank. The final withdrawal was delayed on account of shortage in sand carts for evacuating the wounded, but the latter were all successfully got out before the withdrawal actually started.

The Brigade rendezvoused at DEBABIS and when all units were reported present at 1930 – the Brigade moved back to OGHRAITINA and bivouacked for the night.

Casualties –

Killed in Action: Captain O. Johnson.

Wounded in Action: Captain Aldred, 2nd Lieutenant A.M. Martin

Killed in Action: (3rd Squadron) 4 O/R [Ordinary Ranks]

Killed in Action: (4th Squadron) 6 O/R

Wounded in Action: (3rd Squadron) 10 O/R

Wounded in Action: (4th Squadron) 7 O/R

Wounded in Action: (11th Squadron) 2 O/R

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SOURCE: http://www.nzmr.org/archive/updates2010_jun17.html