

RECIPIENT	W N ELLIOTT
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Serial No. ¹	11572
Rank	2 nd Lieutenant (rank on embarkation)
Full Name	William Nixon ELLIOTT
Status / Occupation	-- / Carpenter
Body	12 th Reinforcement (First Draft), New Zealand Expeditionary Force
Unit	Canterbury Infantry Regiment
Last Address	--
Next of Kin	Mrs William Elliott (Mother), Lakeside, Lovell's Flat, OTAGO

WW1 MEDAL ENTITLEMENT	British War Medal 1914-19 Victory Medal (No awards, including m.i.d., were made to this officer)
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EMBARKED ²	Embarked	1 st May 1916
	aboard	HMNZT 51 (ss Ulimaroa)
	and disembarked	9 th June 1916 at Port Suez, EGYPT

CASUALTY LIST ³	1	Book XI, Page 1377 1 st Battalion, Canterbury Infantry Regiment, Killed in Action Officers "... Lieut Elliott, W.N. Date Reported 12 th December 1917; Casualty List No 746/1; Force 12 th Reinforcement"
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ROLL OF HONOUR ⁴	11572 Lieut. Elliott, William Nixon C.I.R. Killed in Action, France, 3 rd December 1917
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SERVICE SUMMARY	Attested	6 th September 1915
	Promoted from ranks	29 th April 1916 (2 nd Lieutenant)
	Promoted	15 th March 1917 (Lieutenant)
	KIA	3 rd December 1917

¹ New Zealand Expeditionary Force - Embarkation Roll 1914-1918

² Studholme, J. Some Records of the N.Z. Expeditionary Force

³ New Zealand Expeditionary Force - List of Casualties

⁴ New Zealand Expeditionary Force - Roll of Honour

COMMEMORATIVE INFORMATION

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Cemetery:	Menin Rd South Military Cemetery, Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium
Grave Number:	111. I. 22.
Location:	Menin Road South Military Cemetery is located 2 kilometres east of Ieper town centre, on the Meenseweg (N8), connecting Ieper to Menen. From Ieper town centre the Meenseweg is located via Torhoutstraat and right onto Basculestraat. Basculestraat ends at a main crossroads, directly over which begins the Meenseweg. The Cemetery is located 800 metres along the Meenseweg on the right hand side of the road.
Historical Information:	<p>The Menin Road ran East and a little South from Ypres to a front line which varied but a few kilometres during the greater part of the war. The position of this cemetery was always within the Allied lines. It was first used in January, 1916, by the 8th South Staffords and the 9th East Surreys; it continued in use, by units and Field Ambulances, until the summer of 1918; and it was increased after the Armistice by the concentration of graves from Menin Road North Military Cemetery and from isolated positions on the battlefields to the East.</p> <p>There are now over 1,500, 1914-18 war casualties commemorated in this site. Of these, over 100 are unidentified and memorials are erected to 20 soldiers from the United Kingdom and four from Australia, known or believed to be buried among them. In addition, special memorials have been erected to 52 soldiers from the United Kingdom and three from Newfoundland, who were buried in Menin Road North Military Cemetery, but whose graves (probably owing to shellfire) could not be found on concentration. The Royal Canadian Regiment and the Royal Highlanders of Canada set up wooden memorials in this cemetery to their dead in the Battle of Mount Sorrel, June, 1916. There is one unknown German Soldier buried in this cemetery.</p> <p>The cemetery covers an area of 6,345 square metres and is enclosed by a rubble wall. Menin Road North Military Cemetery was on the North side of the road at almost the same point. It was used by the units and Field Ambulances of another Corps from May, 1915, to August, 1916, and again to a small extent in 1917 and 1918. It contained the graves of 130 soldiers from the United Kingdom, three from Canada, and three from Newfoundland.</p>



In Memory of

LIEUTENANT WILLIAM NIXON ELLIOTT

1st Bn., Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F.
who died aged 24 on Monday, 3rd December 1917.

Lieutenant Elliott was the son of William and Katherine Elliott, of Tay St., Mosgiel, New Zealand. Native of Lovell's Flat, New Zealand.

Remembered with honour
Menin Road South Military Cemetery,
Ieper, West-Vlaanderen, Belgium.



In the perpetual care of
the Commonwealth War Graves Commission

The History of the Canterbury Regiment, N.Z.E.F.

1914 - 1919

BY

CAPTAIN DAVID FERGUSON, M.C.

(Late of the 2nd Battalion, Canterbury Regiment).

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1921

CHAPTER XII THE POLYGON WOOD SECTOR AND THE POLDERHOEK CHATEAU ATTACK.

On October 21st the 2nd Brigade marched to Ypres, and there entrained for Wizernes, three miles south-west of St. Omer. On detraining, the 1st and 2nd Canterbury Battalions marched the same day to billets at Coulomby and Bayenghem respectively. There they spent the whole of the 22nd in resting and re-equip-ping, and the following day marched to their permanent billet the 1st Battalion's at Leittinhem and the 2nd Battalion's at Quesques. Both these villages lie between the St. Omer-Boulogne railway (which runs south of Lottinghem) and the main road between those towns which runs north of Quesques), and are about fifteen miles east of Boulogne.

Meanwhile, the 4th Brigade had been relieved on the 21st by the 1st Battalion of each of the 5th and 9th Brigades of the 3rd Canadian Division; and after spending the night in bivouacs in the St. Jean area, a mile north-east of Ypres, on the morning of the 22nd marched to Dickebuseh, three miles south-west of Ypres, to entrain there on its way to join the rest of the Division. The headquarters and the 1st and 2nd Companies of the 3rd Canterbury Battalion detrained at Nielles, fifteen miles by rail south-west of St. Omer, and marched the same day to their billets at Journy, four miles north-east of Quesques; but the 12th and 13th Companies missed the train, and did not arrive at Journy till the 23rd.

After arrival at their permanent billets, all three battalions were rejoined by their "B" teams, received reinforcements, and began training.

The 2nd Brigade had suffered severely in the attack- on Passchendaele; its losses had been greater than in any attack in the Messines or Somme battles, and it had failed for the first time in its history. It is true that the failure carried no disgrace with it, that the brigade had been held up by impassable mud and uncut wire rather than by the enemy's troops: but the fact of the failure was there, and it was some months before the brigade fully recovered its morale.

The lines on which the training was carried on in the rest, area showed that the chief aim of the Divisional commander was to re-establish the brigade's self-respect. The hours of the morning, usually strictly reserved for purely military work, were partly devoted to recreational training, and the mental condition of the troops received a large share of the attention which hither-to had rightly been directed mainly to their physical fitness.

In other respects the training was on the usual lines, except that no brigade operations were practised, and even battalion days were not as numerous as usual. The reinforcements received at this time had had very little training: most of them had not, fired more than twenty rounds with the short Lee-Enfield rifle, and required special musketry instruction. As usual, also, the specialists, particularly Lewis-gunners and signallers, had suffered severe casualties, and men to take their places had to be specially trained. Wet weather interfered greatly with training during this period.

Early in November, the New Zealand Division received orders to relieve the 21st Division in the line in the Ypres salient, in a sector east of Polygon Wood and south of Zonnebeeke. The right boundary of the sector was a small stream, the Reutelbeek, which, rising on the north of the Ypres-Menin road, near the top of the eastern slope of the ridge, flows into the river Lys at Menin. Months of continual shelling had made the original course of the Reutelbeek

unrecognisable and had dammed its flow; and its overflowing waters had converted the low ground about it into an impassable morass.

With its right flank in Cameron Covert protected by the Reutelbeek against the enemy in Polderhoek Chateau, the line crossed the Polygonbeek (a tributary of the Reutelbeek) and ran across the forward slopes of a short spur, at the southern end of which lay the village of Becelaere. At a point about a thousand yards north-west of this village, the line crossed the road leading to Passchendaele, and then ran north, roughly parallel to the road, and at about two hundred yards to the east of it. The Divisional sector ended east of the scattered hamlet of Molen-aarelsthoek.

The relief was due on November 13th, 14th, and 15th, when the 3rd and 4th Brigades were to take over the front line and the 1st and 2nd Brigades were to remain in reserve. Movili- with the 4th Brigade on the 12th, the 3rd Canterbury Battalion marched from Journy to Wizernes, travelled from there by train to Houputre on the outskirts of Poperinghe, and the same day marched to a camp at Cafe Belge, on the Dickebusch-Ypres road, midway between those two places. There it continued training for a few days.

The 2nd Brigade remained at its billets till November 13th, when the 1st Canterbury Battalion left for Coulomby and the 2nd Battalion for Setques. The following day they marched to Wizernes, where they entrained for Houputre. Arriving there late in the afternoon, both battalions marched to Reninghelst, three miles south-east of Poperinghe, where they arrived after dark and were accommodated in huts and billets. On this date Lieutenant-Colonel H. Stewart joined the 2nd Battalion for the first time since he was wounded at Messines, and resumed command.

Both battalions remained at Reninghelst till the 16th, and then marched to join the rest of the Division, which had established its headquarters at Chateau Segard Camp, near Cafe Belge. The 1st Battalion went into bivouacs at Kruistraathoek, near Divisional headquarters, on a very muddy area which provided damp and uncomfortable quarters. The 2nd Battalion was luckier, as it was sent to Forrester Camp, on the eastern side of the Neuve Eglise-Ypres road, opposite the Chateau Segard. Both battalions settled down to training at once; but on the 21st the 2nd Battalion was put on to salvage work on a large area between Cafe Belge and Hell Fire Corner, on the Ypres-Menin road.

On the night of November 14th/15th, the 3rd Wellington and Auckland Battalions of the 4th Brigade relieved the 110th Brigade in the left of the Divisional sector, having the 49th Division on their left; and on the 16th the 3rd Canterbury Battalion, in reserve, took over from the 6th Battalion Leicestershire Regiment the Railway Dug-outs in the embankment of the Ypres-Menin railway line, just east of where it crosses the Ypres-Messines road.

On the night of the 21st/22nd, the battalion relieved the 3rd Auckland Battalion in the left of the brigade sector, with its right flank at the ruined buildings called Joiner's Rest. The trenches were incomplete and unprotected by wire; but before the battalion was relieved it had completed both front line and support, trenches, and wired -with a single belt the whole of its frontage.

On the night of November 26th/27th, the 4th Brigade took over the whole Divisional front, having the 1st Wellington Battalion attached to it for this purpose. Each of the two battalions already in the line (the 3rd Canterbury and 3rd Otago Battalions) took over an additional length of front line trenches, the,, 3rd Canterbury Battalion's portion of the line

now extending from where the line crossed the Becelaere-Passchendaele road to the left of the Divisional sector. On relief on the night of December 1st/2nd by the 4th Battalion of the 3rd (Rifle) Brigade, the 3rd Canterbury Battalion moved back to billets in Diekebusch huts, near the Dickebusch-Ouderdom road, and about a mile north-west of Diekebusch.

One of the highest points in the neighbourhood of the New Zealand Division's sector was the spur to the south of the Reutelbeek. Most of this spur was within the British lines; but though the eastern end, on which stood the ruins of the Polderhoek Chateau, had been captured in the advance of October 4th, it had been re-taken by the enemy the same day, and still remained in his hands. The chateau, on account of its high position, gave the enemy excellent observation, not only on the British line and its approaches on the spur itself, but also on the New Zealand Division's sector on the opposite side of the Reutelbeek.

The portions of the Division's front line most seriously affected were the posts in Cameron Covert (between the Reutelbeek and the Polygonbeek) and the right flank of the trenches north of the Polygonbeek; but in addition the chateau enfiladed the depression behind the Division's line, down which the Polygonbeek flowed, and across which was the most direct approach from the reserve positions to the front line. Consequently, the possession by British troops of the Polderhoek Chateau would render easier the defence of the sector: it would also greatly improve our ground observation on Gheluvelt and Becelaere.

The British trenches immediately opposite the, chateau were not in the New Zealand Division's sector, but were in the sector of the IX Corps, on the right of the New Zealand Division. The consideration that the part of the line held by the latter Division would derive the greater part of the benefit arising from the capture of the chateau, was doubtless the main reason for the decision of the General Officer commanding the Second Army that the II Anzac Corps should undertake the operation. For the same New Zealand Division was ordered to take over the part of the IX Corps' sector in front of the chateau, and to make the attack. The Divisional Commander detailed the 2nd Brigade for the operation, the assaulting battalions being the 1st Canterbury and 1st Otago Battalions.

These battalions began to train for the assault in the middle of November; but owing to the congestion of troops in the area, the ground available for training was very limited, and wet weather interfered with its progress. On November 18th, Major A. D. Stitt relinquished the command of the 1st Canterbury Battalion and took command of the 2nd Brigade School at Ottawa Camp, Ouderdom, two miles west of Diekebusch, which had been established for the purpose of resting and training a proportion of the officers and other ranks of the front line battalions. Major (temporary Lieutenant-Colonel) O. H. Mead took command of the battalion, which on the 23rd and 24th marched to the Ouderdom- Diekebusch area to continue its training.

On November 25th the battalion moved to Walker's Camp at Dickebuseh, where the brigade-major laid out a full scale model of Polderhoek Chateau and its defences. Buildings and pill-boxes were shown in their proper relative positions, and were numbered to correspond with the numbers on the maps which had been prepared for the attack. On the 30th two practice attacks were carried out, in conjunction with the 1st Otago Battalion, and with the co-operation of contact aeroplanes. The General Officer commanding the New Zealand Division watched the morning attack, and in the afternoon the General Officer commanding the II Anzac Corps was present.

The 2nd Canterbury Battalion was to take no part in the attack; nor was it to be held in reserve near the scene of the attack. It was detailed, however, for the important work of digging the assembly trenches and making the reconnaissances of No-Man's Land for the operation. It has been mentioned that the trenches opposite the chateau were not in the New Zealand Division's sector; on the night of November 25th/26th the 2nd Brigade took over from the 118th Brigade the line from the Reutelbeek to as far south as the Scherriabeek, and the 2nd Canterbury Battalion relieved the 1st/1st Battalion Hertfordshire Regiment and a company of the 4th/5th Battalion Black Watch Regiment. It at once began work on the assembly trenches, which were called Chord and Timaru.

The line was in poor condition, and the wet weather experienced during the spell in the trenches made it an unpleasant one. The enemy's artillery was more active on the areas of the, support and reserve companies (the 1st and 2nd Companies) and the overland approaches-there were no communication trenches except in the near neighbourhood of the line-than. on the front line trenches. The troops here suffered mainly from the attentions of low-flying aeroplanes, which attacked them with bombs and machine-guns; and from some of our own shells falling- short of the enemy's line, which was very close. An inter-company relief took place on the night of November 29th/ 30th, when the 12th Company went into support and the 13th Company to reserve.

The attacking troops had been assigned two objectives. The first, or "Dotted Red" Line, ran roughly north and south at a distance of fifty yards east of the Chateau. extending to the right as far as the road which passes a hundred and fifty yards south of the chateau on its way to join the Ypres-Menin road, and to the left to within fifty yards of the Reutelbeek. The right flank of the final objective, or "Solid Red" Line, rested on the right flank of the Dotted Red Line, and thence ran north-east to include a group of ruins three hundred yards due east of the chateau. Here the line turned and ran practically due north for two hundred and fifty yards, when it turned sharply to the west, and joined the left flank of the Dotted Red Line. The flanks up to the Dotted Red Line had also, of course, to be protected during the advance.

It will be seen that the attack, had it succeeded, would have caused a very narrow and deep salient to project from our line. A straight line, running also due, east, and passing just to the south of the chateau, formed the boundary line between the 1st Battalion (on the right) and the 1st Otago Battalion. This meant that the Otago Battalion had a rather larger frontage Battalion: on the other hand, the outer flank of the Canterbury Battalion was more exposed to attack than that of the Otago Battalion, which was protected to a great extent by the muddy bed of the Reutelbeek.

Each of the two attacking battalions detailed two companies -to capture its objectives and a third company to deal with counter-attacks, and kept its remaining company in reserve. The plans of attack prepared by the brigade divided the objectives of each battalion into two, and each of the leading companies was given the task of capturing both objectives on half its battalion's front. Each of the leading, companies was to allot the whole of its first objective to two platoons, and the whole of the second objective to its remaining two platoons: all the platoons detailed to capture the first objective on the whole brigade front-age were to assemble and to attack in one "wave," and all the platoons for the final objective were to form a second wave, fifty yards behind the first wave. Each of these waves consisted of two lines of troops: the first, made up of two sections from each platoon, was to make the assault; and the remaining two sections, following close on the heels of their leading sections, were to act as "moppers-up," to deal with any pill-boxes or trenches which the first

line would be compelled to leave behind it, in keeping as close as possible to the creeping barrage. On the capture of the first objective by the first wave, it was ordered to consolidate the captured ground, while the second wave was immediately to pass through to continue the advance to the final objective.

On the leading companies leaving their assembly trenches, the counter-attack company was to move up at once and to occupy the positions vacated by them. The reserve companies, it was hoped, would not be called upon till after dark, when they would relieve the companies in the newly established front line, complete its consolidation, and erect wire in front of it.

Directly the advance should begin, the 1st Canterbury Battalion was ordered to commence to form a defensive flank facing south, and to extend this flank as the advance progressed. The 12th Company, the right attacking company of the battalion, was detailed for this duty, and the 1st Company (on the left) was accordingly allotted the whole of the battalion's share of the final objective. This departure from the brigade's plans for the attack was rendered necessary by the nature of the objectives assigned to the 1st Canterbury Battalion, as is readily seen on referring to the map.

The time fixed for the attack was noon on December 3rd. In order to give the attacking troops an opportunity of getting a thorough look at the ground by daylight, two platoons of each of the attacking companies of the 1st Canterbury and 1st Otago Battalions took over the front line on the night of December 1st - 2nd. Two platoons of the 12th Company (on the right) and two platoons of the 1st Company (on the left) of the 1st Canterbury Battalion relieved the 2nd Battalion in the right half of it., frontage, and four platoons of the 1st Otago Battalion took over the rest of the frontage. On relief, the headquarters and 12th Company of the 2nd Battalion went to Walker's Camp by light railway from Birr Cross-roads (on the Menin road, two miles east of Ypres), and the 1st and 2nd Companies marched to Forrester Camp. The 13th Company was not relieved till the following night, and then moved to Walker's Camp, whither the 1st and 2nd Companies had gone earlier in the day.

The assembly for the attack took place on the night of December 2nd/3rd, which was a quiet one. The remainder of the 1st and 12th Companies of the 1st Canterbury Battalion joined their platoons in the forward assembly trenches, and the 13th Company, in support and as counter-attack company, occupied the trenches to their rear. The 2nd Company was held in reserve, and bivouacked for the night some little distance back, round the old German pill-box known as "the Tower," west of Veldhoek. More than the usual precautions were taken to conceal the relief from the enemy: he gave no sign of having detected it, and the night passed quietly.

At noon on the 3rd the barrage opened erratically, and several shells falling in our own lines caused some confusion. The leading troops left the trenches as the barrage moved forward, and on topping a slight crest in front of our line were met by heavy machine-gun fire from pill-boxes in the chateau grounds and from Gheluvelt on the right flank. The advance faltered; but the situation was saved by Captain G. H. Gray, commanding the 12th Company, who, accompanied by Lance-Corporal Minnis, and captured a pill-box about a hundred yards line and north of the road bounding the chateau south, taking a machine-gun and eight prisoners. his company to get forward, in spite of the fact that the intensity of the machine-gun fire had increased very greatly.

Later in the advance, the company was again held up by an enemy strong-point; but Private H. J. Nicholas, by capturing the position single-handed, gained the first Victoria Cross won

by a member of the Regiment. The official account of Private Nicholas's gallant action is as follows.-

HONOURS AND AWARDS.

Extract from Sixth Supplement to the *London Gazette* dated 11th January, 1918.

War Office,

11th January, 1918.

"His Majesty the King has been pleased to approve of the award of the Victoria Cross to the under mentioned Officers, Non-commissioned Officers, and Men, for most conspicuous bravery:-

No. 24213 PTF. HENRY JAMES NICHOLAS,
NEW ZEALAND INFANTRY

"For most conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in at-tack. Pte. Nicholas, who was one of a Lewis gun section. had orders to form a defensive flank to the right of the advance which was subsequently checked by heavy machine-gun and rifle, fire from an enemy strong-point. Whereupon, followed by the remainder of his section at an interval of about twenty-five yards, Pte. Nicholas rushed forward alone, shot the officer in command of the strong-point, and overcame the remainder of the garrison of sixteen by means of bombs and bayonet, capturing four wounded prisoners and a machine-gun.

He captured this strong-point practically single-handed, and thereby saved many casualties.

Subsequently, when the advance had reached its limit, Pte. Nicholas collected ammunition under heavy machine-gun and rifle fire.

His exceptional valour and coolness throughout the operations affording an inspiring example to all."

The company was thus enabled to get forward to within fifty yards of a pill-box (numbered 19 on our maps) due south of the chateau and on the southern edge of the road above referred to, and established a line of pos along the south side of this road, protecting the right flank and facing Gheluvelt. As these posts were established they at once brought rifle and Lewis-gun fire to bear on the enemy defences, and helped the advance materially: in one post a Lewis-gun located and engaged an enemy machine-gun, and put it out of action.

The 1st Company, on the. left, had meanwhile advanced under heavy small-arms fire, but was unfortunate in losing, early in the attach, many of its most experienced officers and non-commissioned officers. Eighty yards short of a pill-box (numbered 18 on the map), which lay about seventy-five yards south of the chateau, and midway between the ruins of that building and pill-box number 19, the 1st Company was held up by mutually supporting fire from machine-guns in the chateau and these two pill-boxes. Here Lieutenant E. G. Bristed was killed, while endeavouring to rush pillbox 18.

It was new about 1 p.m. and the Commanding Officer of the battalion sent forward two strong sections of the 13th Company, to assist the 1st and 12th Companies to capture pill-box number 18; but these sections came under very heavy machine-gun fire on leaving the old front line trenches, and lost so heavily that they were unable to help on the advance. Half an hour later, on this being reported, the Commanding Officer sent up to the firing line a full platoon of the same company, but it could not -cross the attack any further.

The advance was now definitely held up. as the attacking troops had lost the protection of the creeping barrage, with the result that the enemy machine-gunners were able to continue firing without any interference from our shrapnel. The 1st Canterbury Battalion's firing line now ran about eighty yards west of the chateau and the line of pill-boxes running south from it (Nos. 18 and 19), till it crossed the road on the south of the chateau grounds, and then ran parallel to and about fifty yards of the road till it crossed our old front line. On the left, the 1st Otago Battalion had advanced its line level with the 1st Canterbury Battalion, but was also unable to move any further forward. In order to hold the little ground they had won, both battalions began to dig in on the line reached by their leading companies. The 2nd Company of the 1st Canterbury Battalion was ordered up from the tower to Chord Trench, and came through a heavy barrage of 5.9-inch shells, which, however, fortunately cost the company only one man.

At 2.30 p.m. small parties of the enemy were observed to be moving to the bed of the Scherriabeek, to the south of the front line from which our attack had been made, and to be concentrating there, apparently for a counter-attack. A light trench mortar of the 2nd Battery was promptly brought into position at the right flank of our old front line, and its fire caused the enemy to bolt from their position without waiting to take their rifle or equipment. Our Lewis-guns were trained on the enemy as he fled, and inflicted severe casualties, to judge from the activity of stretcher-bearers for some hours afterwards. About 4.30 p.m. a party of about forty of the enemy approached pillbox 18, but was scattered by Lewis-gun fire.

The work of consolidation was pushed on. During the after-noon, the brigadier sent orders that pill-boxes 18 and 19 were to be captured under cover of darkness: the Commanding Officers of the Canterbury and Otago Battalions had already discussed whether it was advisable to attempt this, and had decided against it, on account of the heavy casualties already sustained, and the risk of losing the few troops now available in reserve. On this being represented to the brigadier, he cancelled his orders. At midnight the two Commanding Officers again discussed the question of attacking the chateau and pillboxes; but by this time the moon had risen and visibility was good, and the enemy was also very much on the alert. They therefore decided that an attack could result only in additional casualties. Before dawn of the 4th the Canterbury Battalion had dug a continuous line of trenches along its whole front, and had begun a communication trench across the old No-Man's-Land, near the right flank; and this trench also was completed during the day.

Another enemy counter-attack threatened at 8.30 a.m. on the 4th, when his troops were observed massing astride the Becelaere.. Gheluvelt road, about a thousand yards east of the Polderhoek Chateau. On the artillery being informed of this, it opened fire and dispersed the enemy troops, who retreated towards Becelaere. Otherwise the day passed quietly, except for an enemy barrage on the left flank at 2 p.m., which was not, however, followed by any infantry action. During the night, the 1st and 12th Companies were relieved by the 2nd Company and a platoon of the, 13th Company, and moved back to the old front line and Chord trench. The same night a party from the Pioneer Battalion dug a support trench seventy yards in rear of the new front line.

Next day the enemy began to shell the old front line at 10.30 a.m., and continued to do so all day. During the afternoon the fire increased in volume and extent, and became intense over the whole sector. At 2.10 p.m. abnormal movement was noticed round the chateau, and a counter-attack was expected but did not take place. The enemy's shelling continued, and being well directed at our new positions caused numerous casualties; our, artillery's reply

could not lessen the enemy's fire, until at 5 p.m. it brought down a -heavy barrage on his infantry's positions. After the barrage had lasted an hour and a half, the enemy's fire ceased. From subsequent intelligence reports, it appears that this barrage caught the enemy massing for a counter-attack, caused him heavy casualties, and forced him to retire.. but apparently his movements were invisible to the front line troops.

During the night the 2nd Battalion of the Bedford Regiment relieved the two New Zealand battalions, which marched to Birr Cross road and there entrained on light railway trucks. At about, 1,30 a.m. on the 6th they arrived at Howe Camp, two miles south-west of Ypres.

The casualties of the battalion during the attack are not given its diary, but those for the month of December were as follows:

	Officers	Other Ranks
Killed	4 *	75 **
Wounded	2	1,63
Missing		
Total	6	249

There was no use attempting to disguise the fact that the attack had failed, and that on the whole the opposition encountered, though stiff, was no greater than the opposition which New Zealand troops had successfully overcome on many previous occasions. The attack had been held up neither by mud nor by wire. The 2nd Brigade official report on the operation gives the following reasons for the failure:-

- (a) Inadequacy of training. Though several days (November 27th to 30th, both inclusive) were devoted to practice over ground especially marked out for the purpose, all reports go to show that the men were not 'intensively' trained to the necessary standard. They started off with considerable elan, and there was no lack of natural courage and grit once a line was formed and the course of action obvious. But a large proportion of officers and men were reinforcement drafts quite unfamiliar with hostile shelling or our own barrage fire. When the experienced officers and other ranks became casualties, many falling in the most gallant efforts to push forward, the new hand already to some extent demoralised by the short shooting of the 18-pounder battery referred to above-were at a loss and failed to show the necessary qualities of dash, determination, and readiness for self-sacrifice which were indispensable factors for success in this operation. A glaring instance was shown by the troops of the right battalion leaving the assembly trenches too soon, by their returning to them,, and on their starting forward again by their pressing into our own barrage. All competent observers lay stress on this lack of training, and there is no question but that this is the main reason for the failure.
- (b) The strength of the enemy defences. The mutually supporting pillboxes were mostly undamaged by our artillery. The volume of machine-gun fire from in front and from Gheluvelt was heavy.
- (c) The isolated nature of the attack drew intense artillery and machine-gun fire, and its limits were still more clearly de-fined by the smoke barrage. It merits consideration as to

* Lieutenants W. N. Elliott and E. G. Bristed (on the 3rd), Lieutenant J. A. MeQueen, M.C. (on the 11th), and Captain S. L. Serpell, M.C. - Medical Officer -(on the 15th).

** including eleven died of wounds

whether a further attempt should not be part of a joint enterprise to include an attack on Gheluveld and possibly Becelaere.

Other critics add the following reasons:-

- (1) The only experienced officers and other ranks who took part in the attack were those who had been in the "B" team at Passehendaele: practically all the survivors of that battle were sent to the "B" team for the Polderhoek attack.
- (2) The period allowed for training for the attack was far too short, and gave neither officers, non-commissioned officers, nor men a chance to know and feel confidence in each other; and it had also been interrupted by wet weather.
- (3) A strong westerly breeze dissipated the artillery smoke-screen, which had been put down on the right flank of the attack in order to hide from enemy observers in Gheluveld the movement of the assaulting troops. The failure of the smoke screen enabled enemy machine-gunners in Gheluveld to inflict heavy casualties on the 1st Canterbury Battalion in particular.

It may be noted here that, nine days after the attack, the enemy re-captured the ground which the 1st Canterbury and 1st Otago Battalions had taken on December 3rd.