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TROOPER CHARMAN AND THE 1ST BATTLE OF MONS

Trooper Walter Charman of Poplar Cottage, Blindley Heath was with the British Expeditionary Force. The B.E.F. took up their positions near the fortress town of Maubeuge, some miles south of Mons on 22nd August 1914. Four enemy cavalymen of the 2nd Kuirassiers emerged from the direction of Casteau. They were spotted by the British and turned around, whereupon they were pursued by the 1st Troop and the 4th Troop of Cavalry. So began the Battle of Mons on Saturday August 23rd 1914: the first battle fought by the British Army against the Germans on the Western Front.



TROOPER WALTER CHARMAN.

Trooper Walter Charman, aged 20 was in C Squadron of the 9th Lancers. He was wounded during the withdrawal from the Battle. He gave an account of his experiences to the Surrey Mirror (published Oct 2nd 1914):

“The Commanding Officer, Colonel Campbell, gave orders to protect the infantry which was retiring and to get the guns which were firing at them.

We galloped over some cornfield, then we began to yell and shout and became furious, and so did our horses. Shrapnel was bursting over us; bullets were tearing through the lines as we faced the German guns. The rifle fire was soon silenced and I think we must have ridden over the German infantry in their trenches.

We raced on and cut down everything, smashing through barbed wire, and when we were a hundred yards from the guns the gunners ran away. A number of the gunners took shelter in the wood, but some were cut up by our chaps. We put the eleven guns out of action and then we galloped away.

From another position the Germans again fired on us and we had to ride through a hail of bursting shells. When we pulled up there were only 72 live horses left out of 100 odd which faced the guns when the trumpets rang out the charge, and of the 72 many had to be destroyed, because they were so badly wounded...

We took a breather under a railway embankment... then we could see that a battery of British Artillery was being bombarded... Captain Grenfell cried out, 'We must save those guns or the 9th Lancers will be wiped out.' We jumped into the saddles again and made for the hill where the British guns were ...we were shelled by the Germans all the way... There was only one British gunner left... we got him away and also the guns... Later in the day we received a letter from General French which was read to us... he highly praised the 9th Lancers."

A week later when we were dismounted in a small village, we were suddenly fired on. We fetched our horses and I was riding by the side of one of our officers when I was wounded, and so was the officer. They put us on fresh horses and we rode for about 1 ½ miles when our wounds were dressed and we were put down by the side of the road. The next morning we were placed in an ambulance and taken to base. It took me three weeks to get home."

M. Chappell ©2014

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