
IN THE HEAT OF THE BATTLE

“The 34th Division’s commander had decided to move all twelve of his battalions simultaneously towards the German front, the 101st and 102nd Brigades from the front trench, the 103rd from the support line [...]. This decision gave the last brigade a mile of open ground to cover before it reached its own front line, a safe enough passage if the enemy’s machine-guns had been extinguished, otherwise a funeral march. A sergeant of the 3rd Tyneside Irish (26th Northumberland Fusiliers), describes how it was: ‘ I could see, away to my left and right, long lines of distance. By the time I’d gone another ten yards there seemed to be only a few men left around me; by the time I had gone twenty yards, I seemed to be on my own. Then I was hit myself ‘. Not all went down so soon. A few heroic souls pressed the German trenches. But the Brigade was destroyed; one of its battalions had lost over six hundred men killed or wounded, another five hundred; the brigadier and two battalion commanders had been hit, a third lay dead. Militarily, the advance had achieved nothing. Most of the bodies lay on British territory before the battle had begun”.

John Keegan, *The face of Battle. A Study of Agincourt, Waterloo and the Somme*, © Pimlico, London, 2004, p. 245.



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