

Extract from the war diary of the 12th Lancers (Crown Copyright: National Archives)

The transcription below appears as an appendix in the 12th Lancers' war diary in August 1914. The appendix isn't dated nor is there any indication of who wrote it. The appendix describes the Regiment's successful attack on German cavalry near the village of Moy de L'Aisne, France on 28 August 1914.

At 3 a.m., on the morning of the 28th August, 1914, the 12th Royal Lancers was hurriedly turned out from its bivouac at Bernot, and rendezvoused on some high ground to the S.W. of St. Quentin with the rest of the 5th Cavalry Brigade, where it halted for about half an hour, allowing time to draw its rations which had been hurriedly sent up in lorries by the zealous officer in charge. Moving off again towards St. Quentin, it halted under cover, and two officers patrols were despatched to Neuville and Mesnil St Laurent. These patrols, on their return, reported that there was no sign of the enemy, and that they had been unable to obtain any news of them from the inhabitants.

About 10.30 a.m., orders were received from Brigade Headquarters that the Regiment was to go into Brigade Reserve for the day at Moy on the Oise. This was welcome news, as it was an exceedingly hot day, and men and horses would all be better for a good rest. The Regiment arrived at Moy about noon, where, after watering, the horses were off-saddled and fed in the chateau grounds of the village. Officers and men availed themselves of the lake to have a thorough wash-up and shave.

At 4.10 p.m., on hearing shots being fired from the direction of Cerizy, where the Scots Greys were providing day outposts with the 20th Hussars in close support, the Colonel at once gave orders to the Regiment to "Saddle-up" and follow, whilst he went on ahead with his Headquarters to ascertain what was happening. "C" Squadron, which had saddled up in an incredibly short space of time under Capt J. C. Mitchell, closely followed by the Machine Gun Section under Lieut W. R. Styles, whose men were overhauling their gun equipment and pack-saddlery at the time, were soon on the scene.

On getting into the open country outside the village, a Squadron of German Cavalry about 800 yards away was at once seen moving in very close formation down the hill towards Moy. "C" Squadron at once dismounted and opened fire, sending their horses into some dead ground for cover, the M.G. Section coming into action in the same way. The German Cavalry, as soon as they came under fire, at once dismounted in the open on the front face of the hill, sending their horses back over the crest under the heavy fire from "C" Squadron, and the M.G. Section, which eventually caused a stampede.

As soon as "A" & "B" Squadrons arrived a few minutes later, they were ordered to move under cover to the high ground on the enemy's left flank, and engage the enemy with dismounted fire. This manoeuvre was admirably carried out, every opportunity being taken to use the cover which the folds in the ground afforded and signaling communication being established as soon as the Squadrons were in position. In the meanwhile, whilst "A" & "B" Squadrons were moving to this flank, a Section of guns from "J" Battery arrived and came into action on "C" Squadron's left rear, shelling the dismounted German Cavalry, and a wood in their rear which was suspected to hold the rest of the German Cavalry Brigade. The Brigadier-General Sir P. Chetwode, shortly afterwards arrived on the scene, and expressed himself satisfied with Lieut-Col Wormald's action and dispositions. By this time, the enemy had retired to the crest of the hill, maintaining a brisk and accurate fire on "C" Squadron all the time.

As soon as "A" & "B" Squadrons had reached their positions, the Colonel gave orders to "C" Squadron to mount in order to move to a position nearer to the enemy for further dismounted action, covered by the fire of the flanking Squadrons at the same time despatching his Adjutant to reconnoitre the ground between him and "A" Squadron gain touch with them and return. The Adjutant found that the ground immediately in front of the position which the enemy were holding, was so dead that it was possible to approach within 50 yards of them unseen, and on his return, reported this fact to the Colonel, whom he met moving up at the head of "C" Squadron suggesting at the same time that, owing to this advantage, it would be an excellent opportunity to resort to shock tactics, as the enemy's attention was fully occupied fire of "A" & "B" Squadrons.

The Colonel at once ordered "C" Squadron forward at the walk as the ground over which they were moving was getting steeper, and he wished to keep the horses as fresh as possible for the final charge. Just before reaching the crest, he gave orders to "Form Squadrons" as the Squadron was moving.

In "Line of Troop Columns" over the rough ground, as they topped the crest and came in sight of the enemy, he gave the order "Gallop" and "Charge" the latter call being taken up by the "C" Squadron trumpeter. In a perfect line, with a ringing cheer, the Squadron, with Lieut-Col Wormald and his two orderlies and the Trumpet Major about 30 yards ahead and the Adjutant on his left, raced across the remaining 50 yards that separated them from the enemy. The German Cavalry-men for the most part fought exceedingly gallantly, though a few put up their hands or laid down in the roots.

The Colonel was immediately wounded and his horse shot dead, though not before he had trans-fixed his man so thoroughly that his sword buckled and remained firmly embedded in the German soldier's body. One of his orderlies, Pte Nolan was killed, and the other

(Pte Casey), after having his horse shot under him, extricated himself and his rifle and accounted for four Germans. Trumpet- Major Mowlam who was following the Colonel, was severely wounded in the thigh, the only one of the Headquarter Party being the Adjutant, Capt Bryant, who accounted for no less than 5 Germans with his own sword. Capt Mitchell was killed at the head of "C" Squadron in the first charge, shot through the head by a well aimed German bullet, but otherwise casualties were very small, four men being killed and Lieut Col Wormald and five men wounded.

As soon as "C" Squadron had broken completely through the German position; Lieut R. yWndham Quinn quickly rallied them, and charged back through the position, accounting for a few more of the enemy en route. Then, rallying again, the Squadron once more charged up the hill, but the enemy had by then been accounted for, except four unwounded men who were discovered hiding in the roots, and who were taken prisoner.

In the meanwhile "A" & "B" Squadrons had brought a very effective fire to bear on the remainder of this German Regiment, who attempted to move forward from the wood in rear, supported by the fire of the Regimental Machine Gun Section; and "J" Battery R.H.A's Section of guns. A fresh German Regiment, which attempted to move forward to support of the original advanced guard Squadron was stopped in an equally effective manner.

Simultaneously with this action; the Scots Greys and the 20th Hussars were closely engaged with a third enemy Regiment, which was attempting to enfilade the left flank of the 12th Lancers. The 20th Hussars silencing, with their accurate rifle fire a German Battery which attempted to come into action; almost before it had fired a single round. Both these Regiments inflicted very heavy casualties on the enemy. The whole action was a very fine example of combined fire and shock action, and of the cavalry pre-war training, both with rifle and lance. The losses suffered by this German.

The losses suffered by this German Cavalry Brigade must have put it out of action as a fighting Unit for several days, as well as inflict a very severe blow to its morale. Of the Squadron engaged by "C" Squadron 75 to 80 killed and wounded were counted on the ground after the action, 4 unwounded prisoners being taken, as already mentioned. The actual fight took place in the vicinity of the farm of Cerizy, but to the 12th Lancers this engagement will always be known as Moy.