

“J” Special Company RE
Appendix No 18

ARRAS 14/6/17

REPORT ON OPERATION WITH 18TH DIVISION ON JUNE 14TH 1917

ARRANGEMENTS FOR OPERATION

On May 30th a scheme was submitted to G.S. 18th Divn for operations on their point. It was proposed to instal 400 projectors at O.31.c.4.2., the target being the wood at U.2.a.5.5. This target was subsequently altered to the sunken down roads at U.1.b.7.1. It was arranged to transfer 180 projectors from the CHERISY position O.25.a.7.2., the remaining 220 to be supplied from the Company dump at SAUVEUR.

On June 4th orders were received from G.S. 18th Divn to proceed with the operation beginning the following night, 5th June.

CARRYING

On the night of the 5th, 150 projectors were dug out from O.25.d.7.2. and carried to the new position by a party of 100 infantry and 50 men of ‘J’ Special Company, 135 of the projectors were delivered and dug in 15 having been dumped en route as some heavy shell fire was encountered. 220 projectors were transferred by lorry from the Coy dump to the lorry dump at N.21.b.95.90., and thence by G.S. wagon to the forward dump at N.36.b.8.1. Here they were unloaded and stacked. On the following night 41 projectors were transferred from O.25.d.7.2. by a ‘J’ Company party, the same party picking up 12 of the guns dumped on the previous night. 122 projectors were carried in from the forward dump by infantry parties making a total of 175 delivered and dug in on this night.

On the night 7th – 8th June 93 projectors were delivered by Infantry parties from the forward dump, 90 of which were dug in at the position, making a grand total of 403, the odd 3 being kept in a shell hole at the position to replace possible casualties by hostile shell fire. Weather conditions were unfavourable until June 13th when we received advice from C.S.C. R.E. at 11 am that the wind was likely to be good on the night 13th - 14th.

At 1.10 pm G.S. 18th Divn wired orders to carry on the operation. On the night 13th – 14th, 400 drums were carried up to the position, all of which were delivered safely. The parties had to do 2 journeys and the last party did not deliver its drums until 2.10 am.

ARRANGEMENTS FOR FIRING DRUMS.

Wind limits had been defined previously as W.N.W. by S.W. by S. Zero hour was fixed by G.S. 18th Divn as any time between 2.30 am and 3.am. Wind readings during the night were as follows:-

12 midnight	W.	5 miles per hour	
1 am	W. by N.	5	
2 am	W.	4	
2.52	W.	3	steady

All zero conditions were ideal.

It was found impossible to load 5 projectors which proved to be duds; and in one battery of 23 guns the wires were cut by shell fire before zero, and owing to the lateness of the arrival of the last infantry party at the firing point, Zero could not be fixed earlier than 2.52 am at which time day was breaking, and since the position was on a forward slope in the open, it was impossible to re-connect the wires, and test the circuits in time to fire this battery.

The enemy had been intermittently shelling the locality of the position with High Explosive throughout the night. Work had to be suspended on four occasions. After the discharge however there was no increase in this desultory fire though several Verey lights consisting chiefly of golden rain, double green and red and white lights were fired.

As the drums burst on the target, a dense cloud was seen to hang for some minutes in the SENSEE RIVER valley. At 0+5 minutes the wind freshened and carried the cloud up the Eastern slope and over the Northern end of the village and the Southern end of the FONTAINE WOOD. The cloud then proceeded in an Easterly direction. The conditions were so favourable that there is every probability that the gas attack was a complete success.

Casualties:- 4 O.R's wounded (two remaining at duty)

BEHAVIOUR OF PERSONNEL

Both officers and men worked with the greatest energy and accomplished their tasks under difficult conditions. I wish to especially recommend No 113039 Sgt Helmen B. This NCO was wounded in three places 20 minutes before Zero but informed no one and carried on with his work until the discharge was finished. He examined all his projectors, making sure that they had fired, and assisted the officer in charge of the Section in mustering the men and withdrawing from the position. It was only when the whole party was some distance from the front line that he asked for his wounds to be dressed.