

Reserve Regiments of the 45th Reserve Division—still remained in cellars and dug-outs, whose well-screened entrances made the clearing of Courcelette a two-day operation. Meanwhile, in front of the town, the 22nd and 25th Battalions came under repeated counter-attack—14 in the case of the 22nd, seven during the first night. "If hell is as bad as what I have seen at Courcelette," Lt.-Col. T. L. Tremblay, commanding the 22nd, wrote in his diary, "I would not wish my worst enemy to go there."⁸ Between 15 and 18 September, inclusive, the 22nd suffered 207 casualties, the 25th Battalion 222, and the 26th Battalion 224. German losses in the first five days included an estimated 1040 prisoners.⁹ The regimental histories of the 45th Reserve Division indirectly pay tribute to the fighting qualities of their Canadian opponents at Courcelette.*

There was difficult fighting in the 3rd Division's sector. On the 7th Brigade's left the 42nd Battalion had gained its portion of the new line without much trouble. The Corps order had given no time for reconnaissance, however, and on the right the Patricias lost their way in broken ground from which all landmarks had been obliterated. Though raked by rifle and machine-gun fire as they struggled forward between the shell-holes, the Patricias reached the Fabeck Graben on their right, making contact with the 5th Brigade in Courcelette. Farther west two platoons linked up with the 42nd Battalion, but a 200-yard stretch of the German trench remained in enemy hands. Before dark the 4th Canadian Mounted Rifles (8th Brigade) on the extreme left, in spite of heavy punishment from the German barrage and enfilade fire from Mouquet Farm, captured a further length of Fabeck Graben and established two blocks to form a firm flank. Shortly after eight the 49th Battalion helped to consolidate the 7th Brigade's holdings by taking some chalk pits beyond Fabeck Graben, though the nearby section of that trench remained in German hands. The Corps report of the day's operations made special mention of the excellent support provided by the 1st Motor Machine Gun Brigade,† whose Vickers had been in almost continual use. Throughout the night engineers of the 4th, 5th and 6th Field Companies directed parties from pioneer battalions working on communication trenches and strongpoints. In the meantime the infantry beat off a number of counter-attacks mounted from German positions north and east of Courcelette.

On the left of the Canadian Corps the 2nd British Corps had advanced its line some 400 yards nearer Thiepval. On the right, however, results had fallen short of expectation. The Fourth Army had broken through the German Third Position on a front of 4500 yards and captured Flers and Martinpuich, but the villages of Morval, Lesboeufs and Gueudecourt were still untaken. Farther south

* In one of the most moving passages of all German war literature the History of the 210th Reserve Regiment describes the annihilation of the Regiment's 2nd Battalion near Courcelette on 15 September 1916. The adjoining 211th Reserve Regiment, which carried the main burden at Courcelette itself, grimly recorded in its History casualties for the period 8-17 September of 59 officers (out of 75) and 1820 other ranks.

† During July and August 1916 the Borden, Eaton and Yukon Batteries had been attached to the 1st Canadian Motor Machine Gun Brigade for tactics. After 19 August Canadian infantry divisions ceased to have a motor machine gun battery on their strength. The entire motor machine gun strength became Corps Troops, being allotted special tasks at the discretion of the Corps Commander.¹⁰