

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

18 September 1914

Started this morning from Densil, and rode to Soupin where Headquarters, 4th Brigade are. On the way we had coffee at 2nd Division Headquarters. We were told to be careful on the way as if the Germans saw many horses together they would be certain to shell us. Unfortunately a batch of remounts caught us up and we had three or four shells amongst us in less than no time, and all the horses stampeded. Francis Scott was knocked off his horse, but not much hurt. Having arrived at Headquarters about 10 we were taken up to the Battalion which was holding a line of trenches, on top of a flat topped hill just outside a wood. One or two German were sniping at us and one of our men was wounded this morning. I found all in the best of spirits and delighted to see us, in spite of the fact that Guernsey, Arthur Hay and Bernes had all been killed on Monday. The first two by Germans up tress. They did not live long afterwards I am glad to say. Guthries and Hugo Gough were both wounded the same day, and the latter lost an arm.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

18 September 1914

The high explosive shells are most terrifying, but if one keeps well in a trench they do not do much harm. They went on firing these shells till 8 pm sometimes singly and sometimes the

universal, which has three bursts. Many fell within a few yards of us but did no harm. In the afternoon the CO and I walked all round our trenches and up to those of the Light Infantry on our left. We walked right out in front and passed David Bingham's grave. There were many dead Germans lying out in front, and it is difficult to see when they will get buried.

When we got the hill we are on at present the Germans tried a sort of counter attack and drove cattle in front of them and the whole place is littered with dead cows and smells most unpleasantly.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

20 September 1914

Bullets were coming into the town and the enemy were bursting shrapnel in the town. I went to the Brigade Office after turning out the Battalion, for orders. Companies were sent to various points, and all was carried out in perfect order. The firing by this time had become furious and when I had taken two companies down a road and given them orders I went back to Brigade Office under the cover of all wall. The Brigadier was standing outside quite calm, bullets flying about from enemy machine guns, and shrapnel. He, Brigade Major and I stood together. I did not like it a bit, but in half an hour's time, the firing slackened and at 9 am, my Battalion was told to return to its billets and the attack was repulsed.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

21 September 1914

Up at 1.45 am and marched off to relieve the 2nd Gren. Guards in the trenches. We went round the position and all got into their trenches, by 5 am and then a certain amount of sniping began and a few shells came over, the whole place is very dirty, the weather wet, and one is simply covered in mud with nothing to change in. I can't complain as I have only just come out. The Battalion has been here a week.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

22 September 1914

From 2 pm onwards we have been under a very heavy fire from big German guns, and they have been pitching shells on top of the cave and all around. It has been a most unpleasant experience and very nerve wracking although it has not done any very material damage as far as I can tell. The Germans are certainly wonderful gunners. An aeroplane came over this morning, and they got the range here in a very short time. A furious fusillade started at 9 pm which lasted till 10 pm. The Germans lit us up with star shells and searchlights.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

27 September 1914

The best night I have spent I think as I did not get up till 7. Then we began to hear the bands of the Germans in our front playing, the tune was "God save the King", also some hymn tunes, so I suppose they were having a church parade.

After breakfast we received an order to advance and to send out patrols to clear up the situation. As far as per immediate front is concerned we know the situation perfectly, as the movement anyone puts his head over his trench he not only gets fired on by rifle fire, but generally gets three or four rounds of shrapnel as well. About 11.30 am heavy firing began both rifle and shrapnel, the cause of its being the Leinsters on our right, tired to sent out some patrols covered by the fire of our right company. They could not make much headway and we were forced to lie down.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

1 October 1914

The Gunners have been making some very good shooting today and driven the enemy out of several trenches. It is most interesting to watch our shells bursting over their trenches. And to see the Germans run out of them, so I hope they are getting a real good doing. But in spite of this, their trenches are getting nearer.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

4 October 1914

When I got back to my Headquarters I found a letter from the Brigade Major saying that as our billets in the town had been left in such a dirty state the General had ordered us to stay in the trenches another night, i.e. three nights altogether. The Coldstreams had complained about it, we don't complain about them as we have every reason to do, but simply set to work and clean up their mess. One would have thought this sort of thing would not have gone on on active service. However we shall know in the future. The men will never forget it and it will make for bad feeling I fear.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

5 October 1914

This morning hearing that the wood in our immediate front was clear of the enemy, I went through it to see what was the other side, the whole wood is strewn with dead Germans, and a few English. A horrible sight. I had 30 Germans buried and 5 English. There are many other Germans probably, 100 all dead for about 10 days, partially buried. Some are blown to pieces by our guns. There was a fight in this wood about 10 days ago. I also collected a lot of rifles and ammunition and other German equipment. Unfortunately one of our men, Pte.

O'Shaughnessy, No.1 Coy. was killed by a sniper while looking out at the end of the wood, just after I left. The Germans belonged to the 64th, 56th, 89th and 49th Regts. But we could not get anything off them, as they had been dead too long.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

9 October 1914

It is a perfectly glorious day today, and this morning I saw what I think a wonderful sight. The Germans were shelling a French aeroplane high up in the air. The sun was brilliant, the sky dark blue, and the burst of shrapnel from six guns one after the other, at first you saw one small puff of white then another, then heard the explosions of the first as the puff gradually got bigger and whiter, and so till all six had burst, leaving great thick white puffs gradually getting larger, while the aeroplane sailed away as if nothing had happened. It was a wonderful sight, and an artist might make a very striking picture of it.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

18 October 1914

Orders to be prepared to move at an hour's notice, came just after breakfast, about 8. am. One of the mails we have missed came in today and got boot from Peal, putties watch etc and a parcel from Fortnum and Mason. There was an open air service at 10.30, but I could not go, as I was on a Court Martial. A good many French soldiers passed through here last night. All Territorial's and fine looking, medium aged men. Their officers all look like Bank Clerks, and it is the lack of them that the French army is suffering from. We expect to be off soon, but in what direction we can't say. The people in this town speak a mixture of French and Flemish, very difficult to understand. They have also very harsh voices.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

30 Oct 1914

Up at 4 am and our march orders came at 4.45 while we were having breakfast. They were, that we were to march to Ypres, and drive in the enemy wherever met. We left B [Bethune] at 6.35 am a cold misty morning, but good for marching in. One of the signs of winter approaching was that some of the cows had sacks on their backs to keep them warm. Sounds of firing ever became more distinct. Between Vlamertibbe and Ypres an ever increasing stream of refugees passed us. Men, women, and children of all kinds and description. All the women had terribly haunted expressions on their faces, and that perhaps more than anything else I have seen made one realise the horrors of war. We halted at Ypres for about five hours, and then moved into billets at St. J. About two miles out. We are now quite close to the fighting and 3 Battalions of the Brigade have gone out and we alone remain in reserve and

expect to go out at any moment. Many French troops passed us today, nearly all Territorial's and for the most part away from the fighting. There is a certainty of fight tomorrow. One hears of the Germans advancing and burning everything as they come.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

26 October 1914

We began an attack at that hour [5.30 am], but could not get very far as the enemy were prepared in their trenches, we got rifle fire from every direction, and a man had his leg broken within two yards of me by a bullet. The enemy was very active all day and so were we, but we could not advance although it was attempted by two brigades, we suffered considerably, losing our Medical Officer, a very fine man killed, and about 70 or 80 killed and wounded, including those killed by one shell the day before. I hope we did as much if not more damage. We got many orders today, once to resist a desperate counter attack, supposed to be about to be commenced by the enemy, then to be prepared to assist another brigade who were going to advance, and then to hold our ground. We had been digging all day, no sleep or food for at least 36 hours, so we were rather fatigued.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

31 October 1914

Our line was fairly dug in, and at 7 am the enemy began the most terrific bombardment with guns of every calibre. Not a house within a range of three or four miles was left untouched, and the incessant roar went on all day, shells dropping within a very few yards of our dug out. We had many casualties, amongst them. Coke killed, Francis Scott, Kingston, and Fergusson wounded. About 4 pm, the Battalion on our left gave way, and with considerable difficulty, we bent back the left of our line and got a fairly good one. Eventually we regained our original line. Shelling went on till 11 pm and as it was a very bright moonlight night, only the reserve companies could get teas, although we managed to get supplies to all. I think this was one of the worst days I ever spent, both with anxiety as to what was going to happen, and the great strain on one's nerves to say nothing of want of food. The Grenadiers were relieved by the French during the night, but we had to remain in our trenches. No one in the front line could put their heads up over their trenches, without a bullet coming at it. Casualties, I think about 40 officers and 50 to 60 men.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

1 November 1914

Early this morning the enemy brought up a field gun, to within about 5 or 600 yards of our position, and proceeded to pound it all day. They blew in a trench killing six and wounding nine men. It became desperate about 1 pm because whenever the men were forced to leave their trenches, they got shot down by machine guns, waiting for them. Nothing could be done, we seemed to get no artillery support of any sort. One company was forced to give

way, and then the trouble began. Our reserve company was put to line the edges of the wood behind us, to cover the retirement of the company which withdrew. A perfect hail of bullets followed them, and many were shot down. The CO and I tried to rally them, and had a certain amount of success, ably helped by Stepney. I was then sent to Brigade Headquarters to report what occurred, but found they had moved on, as the Brigadier had taken command of 2nd Brigade as well. On my way back I came up with many stragglers, and got them back to the firing line. I also met the CO being brought down wounded, not badly, Teddy Mulholland very badly wounded in the stomach, and Tom Vesey too. I then went up to Headquarters and reported what had happened. I got back only to be told that the Battalion was completely disorganised, so I wrote this to the Brigadier and went off in search of more of the Batt. who I was told had gone up a certain road. This proved not to be the case, but I met the GOC 7th Division and told him what had happened and he put half a battalion at my disposal, but they were so long coming, I went back, and found the Cavalry Brigade had arrived, and things were straightening out.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

3/4/5 November 1914

Every day much as another, very heavy shelling all day with the enemy occasionally seen in front, they are trying desperately to break through our lines, and we are desperately trying to prevent it.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

6 November 1914

All was quiet till 1 pm when a terrific bombardment began, which lasted for an hour. Shells of every description burst on our support trenches, where I was, and within a few yards of us, and the effect on one was awful. About 2.15 we got a message to say that the French on our immediate right were retiring. This meant that our right flank would be in the air. We pushed up some supports, and I was sent to report to the Brigadier. By this time a hail of bullets were also coming over from hostile maxims, and my walk was anything but pleasant. The Brigadier told me some cavalry would be immediately sent to our support. I made my way back to my Battalion and saw the French running in all directions, and learnt that the enemy had got on to our right flank and turned it. I ran back with the news to the Brigadier, and then began to try and get back to my Battalion. I was met by streams of men coming back and with the help of a colour sergeant managed to form a firing line in the edge of the wood, someway behind our firing line. The 1st and 2nd Life Guards and Blues and Royals came up and made a very fine advance through the wood. Our men, about 100 of them of their left under Norman Orr Ewing helped and drove the enemy back, killing a good many with the bayonet.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

7 November 1914

Stepney, my CO went out a 7 am and I heard at 1 pm that it was thought he had been shot. He had been very much depressed for the last two or three days, and told me that without relief, he could not stand it much longer. He also felt responsible for some of our losses, which really had nothing whatever to do with him. I send out to see if he could be found after dark, and they found him between the regiment on our left and the enemy, quite dead, with bullet wounds in his head and chest.

Captain John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

8 November 1914

I cannot describe my feelings at having no friends here, when only a few days ago, there were 25 of us, and all such a happy family. It is too sad. I sincerely hope we shall be relieved from the trenches tonight. We have been in them day and night for 15 days and it is a very great strain on the officers and men.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

1 Jan 1915

A quiet, but wet night, and I found the trenches very bad in some places, but the men are in excellent spirits because they said they had been shooting a lot of Germans. There is no doubt that the enemy's snipers are much less active since we established properly protected places

for our sharpshooters to shoot them, i.e. loopholes made of steel through which the German bullet will not penetrate.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

2 Jan 1915

As a set off to our bomb throwing of last night, my Headquarters was bombarded for half an hour just as I had finished breakfast I did not take much notice of the first few sent, but when one pitched quite near, I went out to see what was going on, and then advised everyone to get into a dug out. I stood in the orchard just behind our house, and watched the bombs coming over. They must have been sent from at least 700 yards off. One couldn't hear the discharge, only the whistling through the air. When they came over the house you could see them coming; they looked about the size of a cricket ball, but were probably larger really. One burst within 30 yards of me, and another within 15, and the only effect, was a big hole in the ground, about 3 ft. Deep and 4 ft. across and a lot of mud thrown up in the air. It was a novel and interesting experience for a short time. They exploded with a fearful noise. In all about 20 were sent over. Only one of which hit the corner of the house and did no damage.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

2 Jan 1915

I then concocted a little plan for a bomb raid on the German trench. Owing to the gap which had been caused by our last bomb of the previous night, some of the enemy could be seen passing it to go on with their work at the end of the trench. So I had all my sharpshooters warned to be on the lookout. The first bomb fired bolted four Germans who got it hot from the sharpshooters as they passed the gap. The second burst too high, but made three more run back, the third hit the trench in front of them, and a lot of timber was seen to fly up in the air and they doubled back. The fourth also fell in the trench, and caused damage to it, so in the whole the raid was successful chiefly owing to Keating who aimed the mortar, and Straker who observed from a house and directed the fire by semaphore.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

4 Jan 1915

A perfectly beastly day, ruining with a thick mist. I had intended to go into Bethune to get my hair cut, but I shall postpone it till a finer day. The men spent the day cleaning themselves and their clothes as best they could, and 120 were able to get hot baths at a brewery near here. There are big barrels put in a large room and filled with hot water. Two men get in each barrel. They are provided with soap. When they have taken off their clothes, they are tied in bundles and sent upstairs where there are many women employed to iron them with hot irons. This I am told, kills anything there may be in them which is living! The men are allowed ten minutes in the tub, and then another lot come in. If a man has any article of clothing in a very bad state, he is given a new one. The whole thing is a splendid arrangement, and it is a

pity that all the men in the Brigade cannot each get a bath during the time they have here. I think just over half will be washed by the time we leave.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

6 Jan 1915

The Brigadier gave us some information as to the trenches we had to take over. They are rather wet, and the part this Battalion has to take over is only about 50 yards from the enemy. The present Brigade is suffering from "Trenchitis" i.e. they sit still in their trenches, and go on the principle live and let live, this will not win a war.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

8 Jan 1915

The trenches were bad, both from the point of view of comfort and also from the military point of view, i.e. too many loopholes, and in many places the men could not see to fire over the top of the parapet, which of course is essential to repulse an attack, or look out over at night. The water in most places varied from 50-200 away. They have got in many places "chevaux de frises" and would have to come through a great deal of surface water to attack us. The relief took a long time to complete owing to the narrowness of the communication

trenches, and the depth of the mud in them. Seven men were stuck in the mud, and had to be dug out, one was in for six hours. I saw him next morning, and asked him how he was, and he said he was alright except for a little rheumatism!!

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

16 January 1915

I went round all the billets in the afternoon and found the men, quite comfortably established in the barns with plenty of straw and braziers. I forgot whether I ever mentioned the fact that during our latter turn of duty in the wet trenches, our medical officer, Capt. McCarthy, who is a civilian doctor in Grosvenor Street, tried the experiment of mixing some mustard with the lard, before the men put it on their legs, in order to try and stimulate circulation. Anyhow this was done, with the result that not a single man suffered from swollen feet during the last 72 hours they were in the trenches, whereas for the first 48 hours about 40 had to be sent sick with bad feet.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

19 Jan 1915

I hear there is rather a peculiar situation up the line, some Saxons insist on sitting on the top of their trenches, and apparently our men do not like to shoot at them. An ultimatum was sent to say that at noon if they sat there they would be fired at. They were still sitting there, and some shots were fired over their heads, and all they did, was to wave the papers they were reading! It is also said that they pointed further up and shouted: "There are the damned Prussians up there, who would shoot as soon as look at you"! I have not since heard what happened since.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

28 Jan 1915

I went round to see what companies were doing this morning, by way of training. I had been to 1 and 2 and had just finished with 4 when I heard an explosion and saw some smoke, and men running and shouting in all directions about 300 yards away. I went over to see what had happened, and found that Keating, one of my best officers, had been showing some men how to throw bombs, and he had held one too long after having lighted it and it had exploded. He, himself was lying in the ground quite dead, blown to pieces, a truly horrible sight and 13 men had been wounded. It is a terrible calamity and I would not have had it happen for worlds. It was purely an accident. Keating seems to have cut off too much fuse, and having lit it, it went off sooner than he expected.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

21 Jan 1915

The training that we have to do in Corps Reserve is that most calculated to improve the smartness of the Brigade. This is very necessary, as men seem to think, that on active service they can do as they please in this respect, but in reality nothing is more liable to create indiscipline and slackness sooner than the lack of supervision in small details. We do already do a good deal of drill whenever possible, and this is combined with frequent kit inspections will make a vast difference to the appearance of the Brigade in five days, making of course every allowance for the existing condition of things.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

22 Jan 1915

In the afternoon I tried the experiment of shooting through two loose blankets, folded two, four, six and eight times and hung on a string about six inches apart. It was supposed to stop a bullet, but it did not; the bullet going through the six and eight folds turned sideways and went into the target in this position. The blankets were dry and the range about 30 yards.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

27 Jan 1915

We heard this morning we had to take over a new line of trenches between Givenchy and Guinchy, I mean new to us. I wish we could be put back into ones we know, as the casualties are always much larger when we first go into new trenches and by the time we know the surrounding country, and the various devices of the enemy we are taken out, and can do no really good service as one might do if one went back to ground one knew.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

27 Jan 1915

Cardinal Bourne paid the Battalion a visit in the afternoon quite unexpectedly, and I paraded all the Roman Catholics for him to see. He made an address and then walked down the ranks. The last time he had seen the Battalion was when it went to Westminster Cathedral just after the war broke out.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

31 Jan 1915

I went up to the top of my much dilapidated house in which my Headquarters are situated, to watch our heavy artillery shelling a certain place in the German line. From this observation post, one can get a good view of the whole position and apparently the enemy got a good view of me, as three shots hit the wall, and one came right through, where there is no wall. So I went below for a bit, but returned as soon as I heard our heavy guns begin to shoot. They made perfect practise and were followed after each shot by shrapnel, to hit off any of the enemy who might be running back from the effect of the heavy artillery. I watched this for some time, and then the Germans began to shell all the houses, so I retired below to the cellar. Two or three shells took more off the roof of this house, so it was probably lucky for me that I had gone below.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

O'Leary's VC Date??

The attack was arranged as follows: Ten minutes heavy bombarding followed by an attack by 50 Coldstream supported by 30 Irish Guardsmen to build up barricade when captured. At 10.50 am the fiercest bombardment I have ever seen began, and lasted for ten minutes. Then the attack began, but it was stuck just after it had passed a barricade held by Innes and 14 men. The reason for this I think was that some of our shrapnel was falling short, the barricade to be captured being only about 40 yards ahead. Innes and his 14 men were then ordered to charge then which they did most gallantly and took the attack with them. One man, Corporal O'Leary Irish Guards, rushed forward up the railway embankment and calmly shot down

Germans behind the first barricade, five in all, then rushed on to another barricade and shot three more, and took two prisoners by himself. I hope he will be suitably rewarded. Thus a second barricade was taken besides a machine gun and about 50 prisoners, and our line was extended about 60 yards at this point. This was immediately entrenched by Eric Greer's company who worked like slaves at it.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

21 Feb 1915

I went round the trenches soon afterwards and found them very muddy, but gradually being dug out so as to get them down to dry ground again. Eric Greer was trying an experiment of shooting rifle grenades point blank out of a rifle, instead of up in the air, and dropping on to the required spot, as this gave the enemy time to see them coming. There are one or two snipers about 70 yards off who have been giving trouble, and I hope we may get at them by this means.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

22 Feb 1915

The new method of firing the rifle grenades has been a success and the snipers have been completely silenced, and their loop holes blown in, and one of their dug outs set on fire, so I hope they will change their position, unless they are killed.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

17 March 1915

Shamrock was sent to us by Queen Alexandra, and I gave it out to Company Commanders to distribute to their companies. The men had an early service in the morning, and then the whole battalion went by companies to have baths in Bethune, which was about the most profitable way the day could have been spent. I arranged that each man who wanted it, had beer with his dinner, which is their height of bliss provided it is free.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

19 March 1915

I went round the Herts trenches with their CO. I never realised what a good position they had got. They completely overlook the German line, and in some places can fire right into the

backs of the enemy trenches where they bend back. They are also building a series of small forts which will eventually be connected with the trenches.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

11 April 1915

The Battalion started off to relieve the Grenadiers about 4.30 pm and I rode up about 5.30. the enemy aeroplanes were very active and flew over us, but very high and fired at by our guns. I do not think they were paying the least attention to us, but trying to silence some of our heavy guns which had caused them some annoyance and damage in the morning. We got the relief over all right about 7 and I went around all the trenches. The Germans certainly have more wire up in front of all of them, especially in their second line trenches, and they were very musical, singing and making much noise, but otherwise they did not worry us except for an occasional bomb, which did no harm.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

25 April 1915

I sat up in the dugout all night and at 5.30 am, Desmond Fitzgerald and I went round to examine the place near the White House where the mine was supposed to have exploded. I could not see much trace of an explosion and later on the mining expert decided it was only a shell, so the White House mine has still to be exploded. After breakfast I went around again, and saw the two men who voluntarily went down the mine after the explosion to find the officer. It was a gallant deed and I have recommended them for the DCM. I can hear of no other mines so far. I had men listening at many points but not one of them heard anything. I have urged a definite mining policy for this area should immediately be adopted. We are truly sitting on volcano without apparently taking any defensive action, and to me the mine danger is very real and I have written somewhat strongly on the subject.

We have all been issued out with an antidote to the latest German villainy i.e., that of asphyxiating gases. They become more devilish every day, and it does not seem fair to men to fight them with clean weapons.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

6 May 1915

I got a message at 1.30 am to say there was a mist rising from the German trenches, and that gas was thought to be about to be about I got up and went round the trenches. So far as the mist was concerned it was a genuine one, but at least in two places I smelt or thought I smelt a strong smell of ether. I was out for some time, and found everyone alert who should be, and each man I asked knew exactly what to do in case of emergency. It may have been imagination what I smelt, but it also may have been that the enemy has ether ready in his

trenches, and some of it may have been leaking. On the previous night some men of the Battalion on my right were overcome while digging, and there is evidence to show that some sort of sulphuric vapours were about that night. So whatever happens we are ready with masks and anti-gas mixtures and unless some new form of poison is tried of which we do not know, I think we can cope with anything that may happen.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

9 May 1915

Up at 3.30 am and breakfast at 4. About this time an allied aeroplane flying very low was brought down, but luckily just behind our lines, and the men were unhurt. The battle began at 4.45 am and soon there was intense gunfire, about two miles north of us. One cannot describe it except by saying that it was one continuous roar of guns, occasionally relieved by a deep scrunching sound denoting one of our big howitzers had burst its shell somewhere. The whole horizon was thick with smoke, and occasionally one saw the flashes of the bursting shrapnel. It seems as if nothing could live in the area of this bombardment.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

11 May 1915

A very peaceful night, and the best I have had for some time. One of our big howitzers began shelling a German redoubt at 8.30 am which is only a few hundred yards on our left. I went

into the Grenadier lines to watch it, and saw wood and earth flying in all directions, nothing could have lived in it, but I expect at the first shot the Germans went to ground somewhere near.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

14 May 1915

The evening turned out fine, after a rather cold wet day. I walked round the bivouacs and found the men very cheery, playing games and signing. I had previously sent into Bethune for wood for them to make fires with, so that they might get themselves dry, and this arrived about the time I was going round. I had allowed no fires, as the only wood to burn, was tobacco drying poles, and hedges and as the former are valuable to the inhabitants of the farms, I thought it best to allow no fires. It certainly saved unpleasantness with the inhabitants which is always a good thing to avoid. The men sang songs till past 11 pm they are in the best of spirits and ready for anything.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

18 May 1915

I went back to my dugout and tried to find out what officers I had left. I found Gutherie and Fox had been killed, and the following wounded, Rosse badly in the head, Young Ralli who came to my forward headquarters with a nasty wound in his thigh, Alexander, Greer, R. Paget, Persse, Boyse, Tallents, and Campbell, while Billy Reid had been knocked unconscious by a shell I saw him in a dugout. A truly awful list and this left me with twelve officers, very few of the remainder of them who were present at the action escaped without some slight scratch, for of the twelve left, five were right behind with transport according to orders. MacCarthy got hit on the head by a bit of shell, Desmond Fitzgerald a bruised back, and I got a piece of shrapnel through the peak of my cap which made a very slight scratch just above my eye, so that only left two untouched.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

19 May 1915

Burke is much worse than I thought, and both he and Rosse were operated on today. I cannot sat too much in praise of the officers and men and how magnificently they all behaved in very trying circumstances during the attack on the 18th and held on to the ground they had gained, so it is no use trying to do so. I deplore the casualties, but it is no use thinking too much about them as they are bound to occur.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

25 May 1915

I rode out in the woods with Desmond Fitzgerald to see the companies drilling, I found only one of them, but the woods were glorious and quite big enough to lose one's way, which is what I imagine the other companies did, as they were not where they said they would be. However the exercise is what they want chiefly, which they all got. On my return I found a message to say we were to be prepared to move at a half an hours notice.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

23 May 1915

Another lovely day, and I sat in the garden most of it. I went round and inspected all the billets, the men have plenty of room, and seem very comfortable, though some of the places where they are, are very hot. In the evening, Straker, my machine gun officer, who has hired a small motor, took me for a drive. The country is perfectly lovely, so different to the flat country we have been in, so long, and it is a real joy to see such things as hills and woods again. We went through several villages, all packed with French troops. The view from the tops of some of the hills is magnificent. We heard today that this is the first day of Italy's mobilisation.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

26 May 1915

We heard in the night that some more trenches have been taken by Territorials and also some 50 prisoners. The smells in this farm, and the noises of all the various animals which inhabit this farm are awful. I cannot imagine how the family of which there are many, can possibly live in this sort of atmosphere, but they seem to thrive on it.

I went round all companies in the morning. Some new sort of masks have been issued, all ready prepared with solution to counteract the effect of gas, and they seem very good. The men are being practised in putting them on quickly. The mask is a most necessary weapon now, as without it whole companies and more can be disposed of by the gas. We have not had it used against us as yet, but any moment it might be.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

1 June 1915

I heard last night that George Nugent had been killed. It is very sad, several old Irish Guardsmen have lost their lives. He apparently was talking on the brick path leading to the Givenchy trenches, up which I have so often gone, and a stray bullet came and hit him in the spine. Funnily enough it was within 200 yards of where his boy was hit in March.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

4 July 1915

During dinner I got a note from the lady of the house where we had our dinner party the other night, saying that she had intended to come up and pay me a visit this afternoon, but had been to the country and came back too late, so I send a note asking if I could come up and see them after dinner, which she answered by saying she would be delighted to see some of us. So I took Father Knapp up with me, and found them all, i.e. the owner, her two daughters and one son, and her mother all dressed in their best. They were very nice, and quite sorry we were going as they said some people who were billeted on them never take any notice of them at all, and that they had never know English before we came, properly. They hope if we come back here we would be put up at their house again. I think it is such a mistake not to be friendly with these people in Bethune. If one is even from a purely selfish point of view, they will do anything for one, and I think it only right that we should treat them civilly, and take a little trouble to look after their property which we use. So many don't, and that is why the British soldier and officer has not got a very good name here. If one talks to the French people about their behaviour they shrug their shoulders, and say "mais, c'est la guerre", which is full of meaning.

However I hope as this may possibly be the rest place of troops of the 1st Corps for some time, we may undo the harm that has been done here by other troops in the last three months.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

5 July 1915

We relieved a Battalion of the 6th Brigade in the trenches about 3 pm and I immediately went round all the line. It is heartbreaking to see the state of the trenches have been left in. It looks as if no-one had touched them since we left them at the end of February last, and it will take endless labour to get them anything like good and safe again. In some places too, the Germans have been allowed to come very close, in one place they have a post as near as 20 yards. I do not in the least wonder now, why in some parts of the lines the Germans are able to take our trenches; and I hear the trenches we left in May are even in worse state than these.

Acting Lieutenant Colonel John Trefusis

1st Battalion, Irish Guards

11 Aug 1915

[Monty Gore Langton] rang me on the telephone and told me the result of the reconnaissance. He went out across one crater with an orderly and a bomber, and found another deep crater between himself and the enemy's line. Here, while waiting for the lights to be sent up from behind to examine the German trenches, and he was now within a very short distance of them, a German came up to within eight yards of him, but he was seen by his orderly, who had two shots at him, the second killing him, and he fell back into the crater nearest the German line. Having now discovered what he wanted he came back. This was a very daring piece of reconnaissance work and well carried out. Later on he went out again to put some

wire out, but fell in with a German bombing party, and only with difficulty got back to his trenches being knocked down three times by the explosion of bombs near him. The men with him got back alright too.