

Volume 2 Section 357-01

Officers Reports of Capture Cecil Francis Ramsden Bland

He was captured 21/3/1918 at Moy serving with B Coy 8th Royal Berks. He was repatriated 28/11/1918.

His report reads:-

Sir

On March 21st 1918 I was in command of 2 platoons forming the front line garrison of the right company, left battalion of the 53rd Brigade, strength about 37 men. & 3 officers including myself; the line was held by small posts. On the evening of March 20th 1918 I received a message informing me that the enemy would attack next morning after a ten hour barrage.

At 4.40 am (approx) on March 21st 1918 the enemy barrage commenced; after about 1/2 hour the barrage became very intensive & I ordered men to get into dugouts acting according to orders I had received previous to the attack, Sentries were posted over each dug out & a sharp look out kept. A thick mist prevented us from seeing even our own wire (distance about 30 ft). At about 8.40 am sentry reported enemy in our rear. Twelve men and another officer myself immediately turned out of Hd qr dugout & I perceived 2 parties of enemy working up along the trench, one on each flank & a larger party in our rear

We exchanged bombs with the enemy & shot at him & the one party on our right disappeared. As the Germans were actually in trench & working along from the flanks, I concluded that the front line had been captured & decided it was useless to try to recapture it with the small force under my immediate command & thought the best thing to do was to fight our way back & get in touch with remainder of Battalion with whom all communication had failed. By means of compass we endeavoured to move due WEST, but owing to frequently meeting with the enemy & to the thick mist we became lost. We kept meeting with parties of the enemy who, on being fired on, ran. We captured 3 of enemy but they were of no use to us in finding the way.

We were surrounded about 11.30 am and after consulting the other officer & the men, of whom some were wounded I surrendered

The barrage continued on front line even though the enemy were behind it (front line)

I am Sir

Your obedient servant

Cecil F R Bland Lt

The Royal Berkshire Rgt

After repatriation Lt Bland returned to the 3rd Battalion at Portobello Barracks in Dublin and went with a party of the 2nd Bn to North Russia where he was murdered by Bolsheviks on the 7th July 1919.