

Extracts from New Zealand Medical Service in the Great War by A.D. Carbery

Pertaining to Captain Gilbert Bogle and /or Bogles Post

15th.

At 6.45 a.m. the first of the walking wounded were filing into the bearer relay post at Thistle Dump, and were being directed on to the A.D.S. Stretcher cases coming down a little later were conveyed by wheeled stretchers or by horsed ambulances to Flat Iron Copse.

By noon it was becoming clear that the wounded of the remaining battalions of the N.Z.R.B. were not coming down at all freely, although all were now in the third line of the attack, and our right flank was well out beyond Flers. The enemy had put down a barrage in front of the switch trench on the crest which it was very dangerous for bearers to pass through. It was also known that these battalions had sustained substantial losses. The A.D.M.S. now directed the A.D.S. parties to push the bearers ahead as far as circumstances would permit in order to clear this flank. By 1 p.m. it became known that the R.M.O. of the 1st Battalion, N.Z.R.B., Captain Bogle, had established his R.A.P. earlier in the day at a point south-west of Flers.

At 6 p.m., however, there was considerable congestion of wounded at Flat Iron Copse, evacuations were delayed by the supplies coming up to the front line through the narrow road from Mametz practicable for wheeled traffic as far as Thistle Dump; the wounded of the 47th Division were coming in freely; our A.D.S. was shared by that Division as it was on the route from the eastern corner of Highwood, where the Londoners had sustained very severe losses, and where their line joined the left of our division. The wounded from our right flank evidently were finding their way in to the 41st area but a few wounded from Captain Bogle's R.A.P., not yet definitely located, were coming into Flat Iron Copse.

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Now the 3rd Brigade Headquarters had moved early in the morning to the junction of "Fat" and "Flag," trenches just in front of the R.A.P. where Bogle was, and it is assumed, and seems probable, that the report sent in by the 3rd Brigade refers to Bogle's post and not to the R.A.P. at Carlton trench.

16th.

By 10 a.m. a very clear account of the medical situation on the right flank came to headquarters from the 2nd Brigade, who reported that Captain Bogle, R.M.O. of the 1st Battalion of the N.Z.R.B. had 120 stretcher cases in an exposed position about 650 yards west of the south end of Flers, near some old German dugouts, the position now definitely located by a map reference. A small party of volunteers, mainly transport details, under Captain Grant, N.Z.M.C., transport officer of the 3rd Field Ambulance, who had arrived at Green Dump, set out with guides for Bogle's post; sometime later, the "C" section bearers of No. 3 Field Ambulance were withdrawn from the 41st Divisional A.D.S. and were instructed to clear Bogle's Post as expeditiously as possible.

By 1.30 p.m. stretcher cases were coming in from Bogle's Post to Thistle Dump. By 3 o'clock the forward evacuating officer, Major Martin, had cleared most of the wounded from his front, but an impassable barrage had now fallen like a curtain on the Crest impeding the work of clearing Bogle's Post, which could not be resumed until the barrage lifted or until dusk. The Switch trench was very heavily shelled during this afternoon, all traffic had to pass over the spur of the main ridge, on which Crest trench and Switch trench were sited. The high ground was under observation by the Germans, our new communications were not as yet completed, the New Zealand Pioneers were engaged in the work of digging an avenue leading into our forward positions. The open ground over which the bearers had to carry was pitted by deep shell holes closely set, so that the going, even in dry weather was very slow: the carry was nearly 3000 yards from Bogle's Post, which was extremely exposed. By 5 p.m. Major Martin reported to Lt.-Col. Murray, that he was in close touch with all R.A.P.'s and that with the exception of about 100 stretcher cases at Bogle's Post, all were fairly clear.

Captain Bogle received a large number of wounded from the three battalions in front, the 3rd, 2nd, and 1st (his own) and was obliged to dress and tend these wounded where they had collected. Now it so happened that this locality, by reason of a small bank some 12 feet high and about 150 yards long running north and south, gave shelter from machine gun fire coming from the high ground on the left of our advance, and although the position looked out openly towards Flers, there was little fire coming from that direction, at least while the enemy were shifting their guns. There were a few dugouts in the bank, one of them had a sandbagged porch and had already been used by one of the German R.M.O.'s. Two trenches scored the bank

at right angles, opening out on the post, both leading to Fish Alley, a name given by us beforehand, to the German communicating trench, which led from Flers trench to the Switch. Good cover for the Bavarians—as to the south, the ground rose sharply to the crest and there was protection under the bank from our fire coming from the southwest, where our chief gun positions were, and as we have seen the hollow in which the post lay gave some protection to our own people. Here the wounded drifted or were carried all during the day and night of the 15th. Some of the walking wounded and a few stretcher cases found their way to Green Dump or Thistle Alley. The tendency for bearers or walking wounded would be to follow the direction of the Longueval-Flers road parallel to the bank, but some 600 yards away to the left of returning parties. The night of the 16th was extremely dark, most of the serious cases had been collected and were lying on stretchers about the post as there was not room enough in the dugouts to shelter them. As the 3rd Brigade was being relieved by the 1st Brigade, volunteers to carry stretchers were called for from the 2nd Battalion of the N.Z.R.B. now returning. All the wounded who were lying on stretchers were carried out, but many remained for want of more stretchers. While tending these wounded Captain Bogle was hit by a shell which burst immediately behind him, killing him instantly. His body lay that night at the post where he had worked so heroically for 36 hours, and which had now become his mortuary chapel.

Captain Gilmour, N.Z.M.C., with 30 infantrymen detailed to act as bearers had proceeded early to Bogle's Post where it was reported there were still some 80 stretcher cases; another party of 95 bearers under Captain Kemp, N.Z.M.C., had advanced at daylight from Thistle Dump. The combined parties soon cleared, and by 10 a.m. Major Martin by personal reconnaissance was able to report that the fateful R.A.P. was practically clear. Captain Reid of No. 1 New Zealand Field Ambulance relieved Captain Bogle, killed in action; Major Martin, Captain Robertson and Captain Prior remained on at the post during the morning.

By noon the last of the wounded of the N.Z.R.B. were brought in, a heavy barrage was still falling and there were casualties amongst the stretcher parties; some of the bearers, who showed symptoms of gassing, had to be evacuated. At 3 p.m. The shelling about Bogle's Post became very violent, it was much exposed to view from the enemy positions about Gueudecourt, some 3000 yards away to the right. The few wounded remaining were hurriedly brought into the dugouts or the most sheltered positions; while doing this Major Martin was wounded by shrapnel in the abdomen, the face and the neck. A stretcher party was immediately organised by Captain Prior to carry him back to the A.D.S. at Thistle Dump, he passed through the A.D.S. at Flat Iron Copse at 5 p.m. and, in one of our own cars, proceeded to the New Zealand Stationary Hospital at Amiens, where he was operated on; but he died the same evening. Captain Bogle's body was brought in during the afternoon by the Rev. C. Huchen, Chaplain to the 1st N.Z.R.B. and buried in the cemetery at Montauban.

The loss of two such brilliant officers as Bogle and Martin on the same day, and at the same post, was keenly felt by the corps. Bogle was undoubtedly the best R.M.O. in the division. An Edinburgh rugby "blue," he was a leader in all forms of athleticism. He joined the 1st Battalion of the N.Z.R.B. in 1915, and sailed for Egypt in October, seeing service at Mersa Matruh during the Senussi rising. His brother officers of the battalion held him in the highest esteem, they found that to his men he was a real friend, trusted, beloved, and appealed to in every difficulty; no day's work was ever too long for him no duty too irksome. One officer of the battalion wrote of him:—"He was the finest gentlemen it has ever been my good fortune to meet. His capable and untiring work have been the admiration of us all; where all men were heroes his courage shone conspicuously. He always seemed so absolutely part of the battalion in the mess—on the march—in the field, and was always so helpful to everybody that there is no one who could be so missed by officers and men."



CAPTAIN GILBERT VERE BOGLE, N.Z.M.C.

Note: Gilbert Bogle's brother Sgt Gordon Bogle was killed on 20/9/1917 while serving with the Australian Infantry. - CSH