

## Journal #18



Infantry fix scaling ladders in preparation for leaving their trenches on the day before the Battle of Arras on 8 April 1917.

Why is 1917 considered to be a turning point in the war?

## Letter

### **Harold Mellersh, a young platoon commander who was in the Somme offensive.**

Nothing happened at first. We advanced at a slow double. I noticed that it had begun to rain. Then the enemy machine-gunning started, first one gun, then many. They traversed, and every now and then there came the swish of bullets.

It's a bloody death trap, someone said. I told him to shut up. But was he right? We struggled on through the mud and the rain and the shelling. Then came a terrific crack above my head, a jolt in my left shoulder, and at the same time I was watching in an amazed, detached sort of way my right forearm twist upwards of its own volition and then hang limp. I realised that I had been hit.

I was suddenly filled with a surge of happiness. It was a physical feeling almost, consciousness of a reprieve from the shadow of death, no less. That I had just taken part in a failure, that I had really done nothing to help win the war, these things were forgotten - if ever indeed they had entered my consciousness.

1. After exiting the trench how did the soldiers advance?
2. What happened to Harold Mellersh?
3. Why was Harold happy?

## Vocabulary

**Jumping the bags:** Going *over the top*. Attacking over the sandbags of the trench parapet.

**On the wire:** Missing or killed in action.

**Over the Top:** Make an attack, to go *over the top* of the trench parapet, or *over the bags* (sandbags).

**Perisher:** Trench periscope.