

THE BATTLE OF BELLEAU WOOD

Brigadier-General James G. Harbord, 4th Marine Brigade

Ferme de la Loge, 11 June 1918, 8 AM

1. The following report submitted for the 24 hours ending 8 PM, June 10: General aspects of the day favorable to us. Weather cloudy with low visibility during great part of the day.
2. No particular events from 8 PM, June 9 to 3:30 AM, June 10, except intermittent activity of our own artillery and quite constant shelling of our front line by the enemy. 3:30 AM, the 1st Bn., 6th Marines, under command of Major John H. Hughes, following an extensive artillery preparation, took the southern half of the Bois de Belleau; rectified our line across the narrow part of the wood about 261.7, with liaison to the Marines on the right and left. There remains a nest of machine guns in the eastern edge of the south half of the Bois de Belleau, about 176.3–261.3. Our line after crossing the narrow part of the Bois de Belleau as stated, bends backward to the SW and then roughly SE to the corner of the wood, containing this nest of machine guns. The artillery preparation was very complete, but the topography of the Bois de Belleau—small, dense-wooded hillocks with tremendous boulders—offers considerable shelter from artillery fire. Every effort was made to secure identifications in the woods, but while many rifles and other articles of equipment were found, nothing that could lead to an identification was met. The 2nd Battalion, 6th Marines, was partly withdrawn from the Bouresches-Triangle Farm line and replaced by three companies of the 3^d Bn., 5th Marines. The 2^d Bn., 6th Marines, had been in the line continuously fighting since June 1. The remainder of the 2^d Bn., 6th Marines, will be withdrawn the night of June 10–11.
3.
 - (a) Enemy artillery reported active on front near Torcy along the line Lucy-le-Bocage—Bouresches, and some artillery fire on the line between 142 and the Bois de Belleau. Battalion commander under impression that this battery may be in the Chateau Belleau or in the woods on the north slope of Hill 126, west of Torcy. Information in each case given our own artillery support.
 - (b) Some reduction in enemy airplane activity, due probably to low visibility of the day. Balloons not put up until nearly noon.
 - (c) 2 large 7-inch minenwerfers have been captured in the Bois de Belleau, considerable German equipment, some rifles, one machine gun. Heavy movement of troops in the vicinity of Couchamps in the afternoon. Nothing to indicate the artillery was moving. Our artillery was informed and opened fire. The casualties in the engagement in the Bois de Belleau in the morning and during the day, 8 killed, 24 wounded. Among the wounded was Major Cole, commanding 6th MG Bn., a most valuable officer, and very severely wounded.
 - (d) I desire to call attention of the division commander to the fact that this brigade has been in the line since June 1 to date and has been almost continuously fighting. Its line was receded nowhere, and has everywhere, advanced. Officers and men are now at a state scarcely less than complete physical exhaustion. Men fall asleep under bombardment, and the physical exhaustion and the heavy losses are a combination calculated to damage morale, which should be met by immediate arrangements for the relief of this brigade. The talk among officers and soldiers of the French army, whom this brigade relieved, appeared to be that constant fighting for 5 or 6 days by them excused them for falling back before the enemy. This brigade has more than doubled the time which they considered exhausted them and has advanced against and held the enemy during all that time. I cannot too strongly urge that immediate arrangements be made for its relief, to enable us to rest and reorganize.