

Later in the morning we were told to dig a new line of defence about 200yds down from the top of the ridge, which was heavily wooded, so as to give a good field of fire. We knew there were forces holding a line on the forward slope but they were well forward and we never made contact as we were so busy digging in. We were on the alert all night and in the early morning I took a fighting patrol up to the ridge and beyond but could make no contact. Later we heard our forward troops had melted away in the night and we were again in the front line. About 10am Beswick sent word that he was sending Capt. Hutson to relieve me and I was to go back to HQ. I was handing over to Hutson when we noticed a German party had taken over a farmhouse about halfway up the slope. Well they had to be ejected and Hutson asked me if I would take charge and clear the position. I was fed up as I was tired, no sleep for the last thirty-six hours but, as Hutson said, who else had he got to do the job satisfactorily, so I reluctantly agreed. You must remember that many of the troops were inexperienced young soldiers, or older ones dug out from cushy jobs, scrapings from here, there and everywhere and we had had no time to weld them into a fighting force. So, when I asked for volunteers there wasn't one. Not like the old W Company. Shades of Box and Barlow. So I told off a 2nd Lieutenant and ten other men to accompany me.

Report in the Manchester Guardian, April 22nd. 1918

Second Lieutenant R F Ackerley, Lancashire Fusiliers, suffering from severe gunshot wound in the chest, is an Old Mancunian and a former member of the Grammar School OTC. After Matriculation in July 1915 he was for a few months with Messrs. James Boyd and Sons, Exchange Street, and then joined the Manchester Universities OTC. He was gazetted in March 1917 and went to France in May. He is 20 years of age and is the only son of Mr. Samuel Ackerley, solicitor, of Manchester.

Report in the Manchester Guardian, September 21st. 1918

The Military Cross, Awards to Lancashire Officers:

T./Sec. Lieut. Richard Faulkner Ackerley, Lancs. Fus.

For conspicuous gallantry and devotion to duty in leading his platoon in an attack and consolidating his position. Afterwards, when twice counter attacked, he held on until all his platoon were casualties except one man. Throughout the operations he showed great coolness and initiative.

22/4/18

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Dear Friend

I write these few lines hoping you will excuse writing and paper. I suppose by now you will have heard of your son. Hoping as he is getting on the way to good health. I was Mr.Ackerley's servant and I was with him when he got wounded. I'm glad to say as his cigarette case saved his life. I've got his case, he gave it to me and his last words when leaving me was to see it went home for he knew as I would if I came through alright, which I did, thank God. I will send it to you when I can get a registered letter. If I can't I shall keep it until I come on leave as I live in New Hall St. Pendleton. We were in the line and Fritz was sniping at us. He said to me I'll shift him. So he went and ? him out of the line. I know he killed two and what could ran for their lives but a sniper was in the roof of a house close by. Mr.Ackerley was a good soldier and I was sorry to lose him but I hope its not long before he is better and please remind me to him when you visit. Pte.J.E.Roberts, No 45316, 11 Batt. Lancs. Fusiliers, C Company, B.E.F., France. I now close hoping you receive this letter in the best of health as it leaves me at present.

From a Friend

John.