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A SHORT HISTORY OF THE 26th BATTALION A.M.F.

by  
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SHORT HISTORY OF 26TH BATTALION, A.M.F.  
By Major F.V.O. Fleming, 15/26th Bn.

The Battalion was first raised under the Defence Act and its provisions for Universal Training which came into operation in 1910.

It was then numbered as the 9th Battalion of Infantry and given its territorial designation of the Logan and Albert Regiment.

The personnel were drawn from the S.E. suburbs of Brisbane and the South Coast as far as the New South Wales border.

In 1914, on the formation of the Australian Imperial Force for service overseas, no attempt was made to build on the formations then existing in Australia, and many members of the unit went overseas with the First Division. The first infantry units to be raised in Queensland were the 9th and 15th Bns. The 26th Battalion was raised for the Second Division in May, 1915, and was made up partly of Queenslanders and partly of Tasmanians. The Battalion sailed early in July, 1915 but on two troopships, the S.S. "ARHEAS" and the S.S. "ASCANIUS", and first came together as a complete unit in ABYSSIA camp in Egypt, under the Command of a Queensland Officer, Lt.-Col. G.A. Ferguson.

After a months training the Battalion sailed for LEBROS and on 12th September 1915 landed on ANZAC BEACH, with a strength of 32 Officers and 932 O.R.'s. They continued their training behind the lines on the Gallipoli peninsula. They held COURTESY'S and STEELE'S FOSSES and then RUSSELL'S TOP. In this position they were visited, on 13th November, 1915, by Earl Kitchener. They left the peninsula on 12th December, 1915 and went to MUDROS. Though they had received considerable reinforcements on Gallipoli their strength was only 29 Officers and 540 O.R.'s.

The Battalion, with the rest of the Second Division, moved to Egypt and during February and March 1916 the unit was east of the Canal working on the Canal Defences.

On 16th March, 1916 they sailed for France and landed at MARSEILLES. They were given some anti gas training and went into the line in front of ARMENTIERES on 12th April, 1916 with a strength of 29 Officers and 974 O.R.'s.

On 6th June, the 26th Battalion took part in the first raid carried out by the A.I.F. in France. The raiding party was drawn from 26th Bn and 28th Bn. and was under the command of Capt. J.A. Robinson 26th Battalion. He was afterwards to command the Battalion as a Lt.-Colonel.

We made our first attack on 28th July when it was the left Battalion of the 7th Brigade at POZIERES. Though some elements entered the German second line, they were forced to retire. Included in the orders for this action was a paragraph, "Battalions must be instructed to husband resources of Mills Grenades and avoid unnecessary wastage".

On the afternoon of 4th August the Battalion moved out of TARA HILL and up the BAPAUME road for their second attack on POZIERES RIDGE we reached our objective in the German second line and held it, despite the constant counter attacks, till we were relieved finally on 7th August, 1916.

On the night 1/2 March, 1917 the Battalion staged an attack in conjunction with 28 and 27th Battalions on MALT TRENCH north of WARLENCOURT, Lt.-Col J. Francis now commanded the Battalion. The action was a particularly gallant one and three officers Capt. A. Cherry, Lt. G.C. Ward and Lt. F.C. Lloyd were awarded the Military Cross.

The Battalion followed this up by its brilliant capture of LAGNICOURT on 26th March. The cleaning up of the actual village was carried out by C Coy under Capt. Cherry. We stood off two severe counter attacks. Cherry used some captured German flares to hoodwink the German Artillery into thinking their counter attacks successful. They lifted the barrage from the village for a considerable time, Capt Cherry was later killed in action and for his gallantry was posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross.

Our experience at BULLECOURT on 3rd March, 1917 was disheartening. Instead of being used as a battalion we were broken up into small packets and thrust into cracks and crannies. By 0900 hrs we had disappeared and Brigade were wise enough to withdraw us. At the Details Camp Col. Tanars worked wonders and at 1800 hrs we were again a battalion fit for the line.

On 20th September, 1917 we had our first experience of a leap frog attack. Moving out from BELLEWARDE LAKE we passed through the 25th and 27th Battalions to capture the final objective with the 28th Battalion. We then dug a communication trench back from 28th Battalion to WESTHOCK RIDGE.

The morning of 4th October found us moving out to pass through 25th Battalion and capture BROCSSEINDE RIDGE. Still we were to capture the "blue line" we painted neat blue diamonds on the back of our "tin hats". For this morning both ourselves and the evening had planned an attack but we had timed ours five minutes earlier than his. The 25th Battalion actually met the Germans in the open with the bayonet. After capturing BROCSSEINDE we stood off a considerable counter attack from DAISTWOOD.

The early part of 1918, was spent in training interspersed with with tours in the line and on 4th April we moved down to the SOMME, July found us in front of VILLERS BRISTOINX doing a little peaceful penetration. Lt.-Col. J.A. Robinson, D.S.O. now commanded the Battalion. On 14 July we penetrated almost the whole of MONUMENT WOOD and captured the derelict german tank No. 506 "REPHISTO" this was the first german tank to be captured by the British Army and is now in the Brisbane Museum.

The Battle of AMIENS on 8 August opened with the Battalion as the right Battalion of the Australian Corps functioning with the 19th Bn of the 4 Canadian Inf. Bde. No. 9 Sec. 2 Tank Bn. R.T.C. was cooperating with us. Our C.O. reports afterwards "The tanks headed for any machine gun they could hear and dealt with it as only tanks do" For a casualty list of 8 Officers and 135 O.R.'s we captured 350 prisoners and 13 enemy field guns and 26 machine guns. Battalion H.Q. reached LA. BASTILLE HILL at zero + 135 mins. Functionally to time 59th Battalion A.I.F. passed through us for the second phase. The following day we had our first taste of open warfare, with verbal orders and artillery firing concentrations instead of barrages. However we only in support of 25th Battalion and they struck most of the trouble.

On 11 August we were again the right battalion of the brigade in a set piece attack beyond VAUVILLERS. On 28 August the brigade bivouaced S.W. of GAFFY and were ordered to continue the advance to the SOMME through HERBECOURT. Despite considerable opposition the battalion reached the canal at 0930 hrs, two hours after zero and patrols attempted to cross. On the morning of 30 August we succeeded in pushing three platoons across the canal but the marsh in the river valley carrying water to a depth of six feet defeated us. On 31 August the Battalion crossed the SOMME at PEUILLEURES behind 6 Brigade.

On 2 September the 26th Battalion formed the right bn. of 7 Bde for the attack on Mt. ST. QUENTIN we went into this attack with a strength of 14 Officers and 295 O.R.'s. It was entirely successful despite poor artillery support and after capturing 30 machine guns and 6 minnewerfers we consolidated on KOROS ALLEY.

At 0605 hrs on the morning of 3 October the 7 Bde attacked the BEAUREVOIR LINE the 26 Battalion followed the 25 Battalion to the first objective and passed through them to capture LOHMESET with a Coy under Capt. Stapleton, and BELLEVUE FARM, capturing two 77 m.m. field guns on the way the C.O. Lt.-Col. J.A. Robinson, D.S.O. was wounded before zero and the command passed to Capt. V.S. Cooper, D.S.O.

On 12 October, as reinforcements could not be maintained, it was decided to reduce the number of units in the Bde, and the 26th Battalion absorbed 34 Officers and 510 O.R.'s of 25 Bn. However the composite Bn. never went into action for within a month the Armistice was granted to Germany.

Early in 1919 the members of the Battalion were drafted back to Australia under orders for demobilisation.

Between 1920 and 1922 the Citizen Forces Army in Australia was reorganised and the Legan and Albert Regiment reformed as 2/26 Battalion under the command of Lt.-Col. J.E. Christoe.

In 1923 the original A.I.F. Battalion having been disbanded, the unit became known as the 26 Battalion dropping from its title the 2/.

Lt.-Col. F.Rosenkjar took over the command.

In 1924 we received our Kings Colours which was consecrated on a Bde parade at Enoggera Camp. In 1926 we were presented with our Regimental Colours bearing the ten battle honours won by the 26 Bn., A.I.F. They were consecrated, also in Enoggera Camp, by the Arch Bishop of Brisbane.

In 1929 came the change from universal service in Australia to voluntary service and the unit was reformed, in a matter of weeks, as a militia unit. In 1931 Lt.-Col. A.C.H.Smith, M.C. took over the command. Lt.-Col. Smith had commanded a company with the 26th Battalion, A.I.F.

In 1933 we absorbed the 15 Bn., A.M.F. and became known as the 15/26 Bn., the Logan and Albert Regiment. All ranks continued to wear the 26 Bn. badges. Lt.-Col. J.Graven, D.C.M., R.N. now took over the command. In 1935 Lt.-Col. A.C.Ball, M.D. succeeded to the command, and at present retains it. On 18 August, 1937 we were privileged to furnish a guard and the regimental colours for the unveiling, in the crypt in Anzac Square in Brisbane, of the Memorial to our elder brethren.

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