

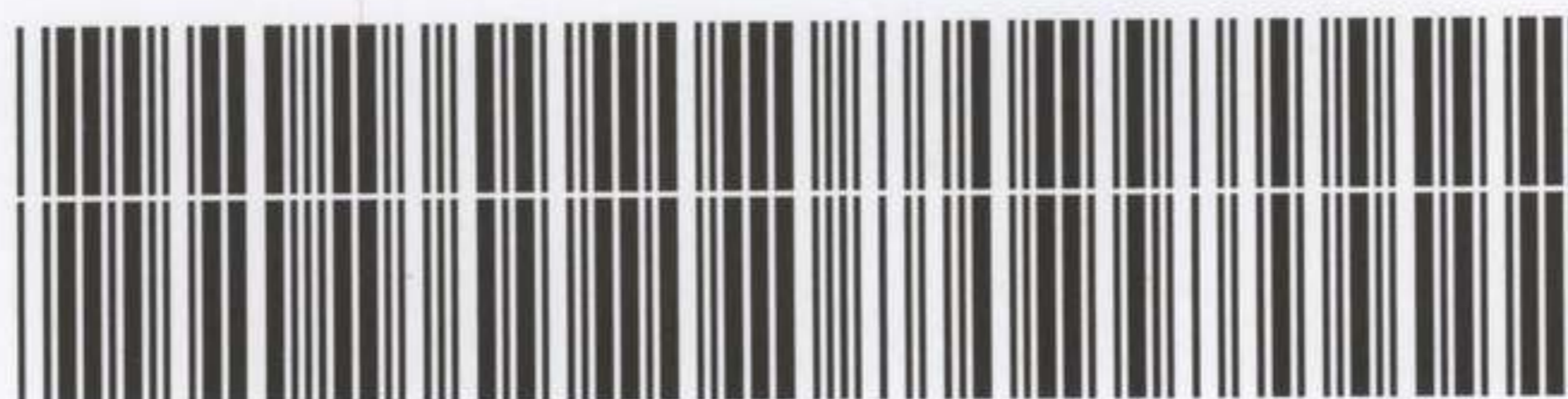
**AWM4**  
**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,**  
**1914-18 War**

Infantry

**Item number:** 23/28/14

**Title:** 11th Infantry Battalion

May 1916



AWM4-23/28/14

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Date. 1916	Place and Time.			Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
May 20	SAILLY	8-15	The Battalion, less transport,	
	SAILLYS	p.m.	Moved into the firing line with	
	BRANCE		27 officers 929 v.h. and occupied	
			the left section of 3rd Bde	
			frontage, in the PETILLON, area.	
			Regimental Staff:-	
			Commanding Lt Col S.R. Roberts	
			2nd in Command Major J.S. Denton, R.S.O.	
			Adjutant. Capt. R. Hemingway.	
			Quartermaster. Lieut. G.E. Egg.	
			Company 'A' Coy. Capt. A.H. Macfarlane	
			- 'B' - G.F. McCall	
			- 'C' - J. Newman	
			- 'D' - M.S. J.T. Milner.	

D.398/9.14.—C.11056.





Date. 1916	Place and Time.		Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
May 28	Living line	<p>enemy transport. This was covered by our Lewis guns at night.</p> <p>Enemy fired 400 shells into our area, principally HE + shrapnel. Our Artillery + trench mortars retaliated effectively. 8 O.R. wounded + 2 killed. Lewis M.G. owing to its mobility is proving very effective, in quietening enemy. Raipers, + sometimes his machine guns.</p>	<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);"> <i>St. Roberts</i>  <i>1/11/16</i> </p>
29	.	<p>Enemy quiet. He sent over a few large bombs at 4.30 pm + salvo of 5+4, wounding 1 O.R.</p>	

P.398/9.14.—C.11056.

Date. 1916.	Place and Time.		Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
May 30	Firing line	Enemy commenced a fierce bombardment of our line at 8.10 pm - with HE, Shrapnel, Aerial torpedoes, and bombs - which lasted until 9.30 pm - Result 26 killed 2 Officers (Captain R.D. Bradshaw & 2/Lt. A.B. Brooks) and 59 wounded and 6 missing	APPENDIX 'A' Copy of Co. despatches attached.
May 31	✓	Enemy quiet until 6.30 pm when several bombs were fired into our line these wounded 6 men.	- Subv. to P. - D. R. Roberts Col Co. 11 <sup>th</sup> Bn

D. 398/9.14. - C. 11056.

To 3rd. Brigade Headquarters.

June 1st. 1916.

Bombardment of Left Sub-Section of the Brigade Frontage  
of the 1st. Australian Divisional Sector of the PETILLON Section.

Attempted German Raid on night of 30th. May 1916.

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In amplification of my progressive reports on the above subject I beg to submit the following report:-

At 2010 on the 30th. May 1916 the enemy commenced a heavy bombardment on a section of our front line parapet, our support lines, CORDONNERIE POST and our communication trenches (MINE AVENUE and CELLAR FARM AVENUE).

It was evident that the bombardment had been timed for that hour as the attack on all points commenced simultaneously.

At the outset his batteries were employed as follows:-

- (i) Guns, large calibre, using H.E. on a small salient in our line and on CORDONNERIE POST.
- (ii) Trench Mortar Batteries and Aerial Torpedoes on salient.
- (iii) Guns using shrapnel on Communication trenches and on either side of salient for a distance of about 250 yards.
- (iv) Guns, 77 m.m. on parapet and supports line.

The bombardment raged with unabated and awful fury until 2130 when it slackened appreciably; at 2140 it ceased altogether.

By this time NO MAN'S LAND and the ground between the firing line and the supports were enveloped in dense smoke.

The parapet of the salient for a distance of 100 yards (actual parapet frontage) had been demolished. Some of the men occupying the space had been killed before they could be withdrawn. The others were withdrawn to the flanks but we practically maintained, under the trying circumstances, an unbroken sequence on either side of the salient.

In the meantime I had been in communication with the Company Commanders and immediately the bombardment was raised off the parapet they joined forces across the salient and pushed forward over the debris and opened up a heavy rifle fire.

Whilst the bombardment was proceeding, the enemy kept up a lively and continuous fire with his machine guns traversing our parapets and then switched them on to the salient and to other parts of the line where the parapet had been breached.

Our Machine Guns, particularly the Lewis Guns (mobile) had been bringing enfilade fire to bear on NO MAN'S LAND in front of that part of the line which was being so fiercely bombarded.

During the bombardment all but the observers and Lewis Machine Gunners were kept well under the parapet but immediately the bombardment ceased the whole line opened fire on the enemy's trenches.

So soon as the bombardment commenced assistance was asked of our Artillery and very soon our guns were in full action. The Trench Mortar Battery in our area also came into action and rendered most valuable assistance.

The damage done to our lines seemed appalling, but whilst the bombardment was proceeding organisation was going on in rear and in a very short time not only was the firing line reinforced but working parties, well organised, were at work building up the parapet, clearing away debris and reopening the communication trenches.

As I have previously reported, our lines were considerably damaged. In addition to the damage to the firing line CORDONNERIE POST had its interior blown out; the support lines suffered considerably whilst, for the time being, our communication trenches were rendered useless. By daylight, notwithstanding the fire of the enemy, we had constructed a new parapet around the salient, the communication trenches had been reopened, our wounded had been evacuated and other breaches in the parapet repaired.

In the meantime I had been hearing rumours that the bombardment was followed by a raid. None of my Officers were able to verify this but at daylight, on going into the question, I found evidence that one had been attempted.

At the section (N.10.c.65. 65 to N.10.c.75. 80.) the parapet was razed. I found that three lengths of white tape had been laid from the enemy's line (120 yards distant) to our entanglements, whilst

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in front of our parapet were 40 hand grenades (reference S.S.398 see plate figures 1 & 2), cylindrical grenade with friction tube, 6 packets of yellow explosive (Kill Guickaaf), a ladder and a life preserver. All these articles were collected.

I also found three men who actually saw a party of four or five Germans inside our parapet or what at that time was the ruins of our parapet.

One, a Machine Gunner, on rising to bring his Lewis Gun into action was knocked over with a bomb. A Sapper came to his rescue, and though both men were knocked over again, they got the gun into action well in the front of the debris and it remained there sweeping NO MAN'S LAND by enfilade fire during the night thus protecting the breach against attack.

Two other men say they saw three or four Germans but they were partially buried at the time and guns and bombs were not available. They saw the party appear on the debris immediately the enemy guns lifted fire off the parapet and whilst our lines in rear were being shelled.

I accept as an established fact that a small party of the enemy did actually reach our trenches under an intense bombardment and under cover of the dense smoke but the party withdrew at once and were not seen by the men who manned the debris immediately the bombardment ceased.

At the point of attack mining has been very active and no doubt the object of the raid was to destroy our mining chambers.

I am inclined to the view that only the enemy's scouts were able to reach our lines. The prompt manner in which the breach was manned after such a heavy bombardment, and the valuable aid given by our machine guns made any raid an impossibility. whatever

The party which reached the parapet did no damage to our lines and I venture to assert it was unable to return by the way by which it came.

I regret to say I lost one Lewis Machine Gun. Eyewitnesses say it was blown up with its bearer during the bombardment.

The casualties were heavy being Killed 36 other ranks, Wounded 2 Officers and 59 other ranks and Missing 6 other ranks.

With regard to the missing personnel, whole portions of the line were blown up and no doubt the men were either blown to atoms or smothered in the several craters which were formed in the lines.

In connection with the great amount of work which was done after the bombardment everyone responded to my orders which were:-

- (1) "That we must be prepared for an assault no matter how soon it was made.
- (2) "That every effort was to be made to conceal from the enemy the damage he had effected to our lines".

As regards the cheerfulness and resourcefulness of the men during the bombardment and of the action of the Officers and N.C.O's., I cannot speak too highly - the manner in which they manned the debris beggars description. All were animated with one desire, viz., that the Germans should not break our lines.

It was apparent to me that the orders issued for the defence of the Sub-section had been carefully studied by the Officers. Nothing that could be done was left to chance and had an attack been launched I feel sure a valiant resistance would have been offered.

I received most valuable assistance from the 18th. Battalion; members of the 1st. Pioneer Battalion worked assiduously whilst the 9th. Battalion Bombers were placed at my disposal. I find it difficult to single out ~~for~~ ~~special~~ ~~mention~~ either Officers, N.C.O's. or men for special mention when all ranks did so well. Most valuable services were rendered by the Battalion Signallers in maintaining communication necessitating the laying of fresh lines under fire, runners carried messages across the open in the face of what appeared to be certain death; The Machine Gunners entirely disregarded the fire of the enemy in order to sweep NO MAN'S LAND in front of the ruined parapets, Stretcher Bearers went to the assistance of their wounded comrades in the face of "hell let loose", Section Commanders rallied their men and one man sang a song without a tremor during the bombardment. Observers and sentries remained at their posts regardless of personal risk.

When it is taken into consideration that no one present had ever experienced such a fierce bombardment and many men had previously not been under fire I feel proud of the fact that every man stood his ground. Company Commanders and the Regimental Staff proved to be Officers in every sense of the word.



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I would, however, particularly bring to your notice for special consideration the following Officers, N.C.O's. and men:-

Captain MEDCALF F.G. and CAPTAIN MACFARLANE A.H., both of whom rose to the occasion, shewed a splendid devotion to duty, rallied their men, were resourceful and carried out my orders to the very letter.

To 2/Lieut. WALTER G.R.S. and 2/Lieut. FORBES S.F., who were in immediate command of the Platoons on either side of the section where the whole of the front line defences were blown away, much credit is due for the action and effective way in which they assisted their respective Company Commanders to rejoin forces across the salient and to man and hold the debris until the parapet was restored.

No. 2022 Coy. Sgt. Mjr. SHIPTON B., who, during the bombardment, moved about amongst the men and kept them confident.

No. 120 Sergeant Adam R.W.

No. 111 Sergeant VINCENT H.

No. 1910 Sergeant BELL W.

No. 368 Sergeant WALKER D.

All of whom shewed great resource, encouraged and handled their men with marked ability during a very critical period.

No. 1357 Private HODGE H. and No. 586 Private PLUNKETT W. did most excellent work with their Machine Guns at great personal risk, the latter, although knocked over twice by bombs, got his gun into action well in advance of the debris and swept the line of retreat of the enemy and practically made it impossible for a raid to be made at that point.

No. 1871 Private STRATTON E.W. Assistance rendered to and collection

No. 2480 Private GARDNER E of wounded under heavy fire.

No. 3791 Private FOWLER W.H.

No. 1971 Private KYNASTON E.H. For the conveyance of messages across

No. 3146 Private WEST L.W. the open in the face of what appeared

No. 3129 Private THOMPSON G.H. to be certain death whilst telephonic communication was interrupted.

No. 2054 Corporal PINE D For laying and repairing telephone wires

No. 2524 Private DUNKLEY L in the open under heavy fire.

The following Officers N.C.O's and men rendered most valuable services

Major DENTON J.S. D.S.O. Major MILNER J.T. O.C. "D" Coy.

Capt. NEWMAN J O.C. "C" Coy. LIEUT. LENAY L.L. Machine Gun Officer.

Captain HEWINGWAY R. Adjutant. 2/Lieut. BRODIE A.C. Signal Officer.

Lieut. HALLAHAN W.R.

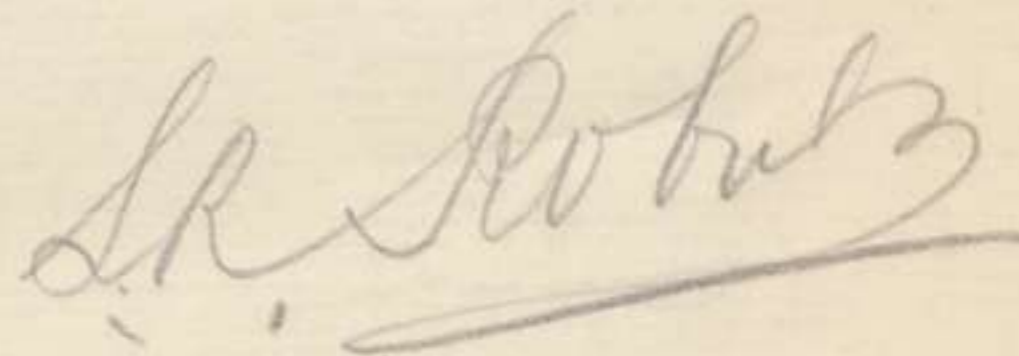
No. 3237 Lce. Cpl. BROWN W.D. No. 3677 Lce. Cpl. FRY V.E.

No. 3686 Private COLE N. No. 4016 WOOLCOTT E Private.

No. 1046 SERGEANT RICHARDSON R.L. No. 1545 Sergeant GRAHAM W.W.

No. 2906 Private VINCENT H.N. No. 901 Private PARKER W.

I attach reports from Company Commanders, and other Officers, also a reference plan.



Lieut-Colonel,  
C. O. 11th. Battalion.