

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

Infantry

Item number: 23/32/25

Title: 15th Infantry Battalion

April 1917



AWM4-23/32/25

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence
Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II.
and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages
will be prepared in manuscript.



Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Favreuil	apl 1 st	2 nd	In reserve at Favreuil, battalion repairing roads in vicinity	
Lagnicourt	apl 3 rd	4 th	Relieved 52 nd Bn on outpost line on northern outskirts of Lagnicourt	
		5 th	Enemy shelling Lagnicourt at intervals, advanced our outpost line about 300yds towards Queant, met no opposition, enemy not patrolling his front 49 th Battalion on our left also advanced their line about 300yds and we connected with them and consolidated the line	
		6	Advanced our outpost line a further 600yds and connected up with 49 th Bn who occupied railway line north west of Lagnicourt. We only met with slight resistance from enemy patrols who fell back without fighting	
Favreuil	7/8	9	Relieved by 9 th Battalion, we returned to bivouac at Favreuil	
			At Favreuil preparing for an attack on enemy line south of Reincourt	
			Received orders at 8pm to move out at 9pm to Hovenil	
			Left Favreuil at 9.30pm. with Battalion sending Lewis Guns by limbers Reached Hovenil at 12 midnight and moved forward and deployed along Railway line 1600yds north east of Hovenil. Were all ready at 4am to attack Hindenburg line when I received orders to move battalion back to Favreuil, attack being cancelled on account of tanks not arriving. Moved back at 4am to Favreuil arrived there at 7am.	

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Jarrevil	10 th		Moved up again at 9 P.m. to same place as last night and were in position to attack by 4 am. our task was to follow 14 th Bn and take Reincourt.	
	11 th		See narrative of operations attached.	
	12 th		Left Jarrevil about 12 noon and reached Bapaume Railway Station at 2 P.m. entrained at 8 P.m. and departed from Bapaume at 11 P.m.	
	13 th		Arrived Albert at 7 am and marched to Mametz Hutments arrived there at 9 am.	
Mametz	14/18		Reorganizing Battalion enquiring re casualties and commenced training specialists re equipping and getting men cleaned up.	
Ribemont.	19 th		Left Mametz Hutments at 9 a.m. Halted at Vivier Mill for lunch, reached Ribemont about 1.30 p.m.	
	20.		Commenced training Specialists, sports in afternoon. N.C.O's classes started from 7 - 7.45 am.	
	21 st		Fifteen new officers, 1 Wounded returned, 5 from Cadet Bn, 9 from ranks.	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Ritmont	22 nd		Brigade church parade at Mericourt Hall. all new officers inspected by Brig. Gen. C. A. Brand at Bde Hq.	
	23 rd & 24 th		Specialist training and musketry on Bn range.	
	25 th		Anzac Day, church service on sports ground at 9 am and Brigade Sports afterwards.	
	26 th		Specialists training and musketry on Bn Bde ranges. Official photographer took photo of men who took part in operation of the 11 th inst.	
	27 th & 28 th		Specialists training and musketry. Inoculation for men not inoculated during last 12 months.	
	29 th		Bde church parade at Mericourt Hall, service taken by Senior Chaplain 5 th Army.	
	30 th		Polling day for Commonwealth Elections. Bn on range at Mericourt. all specialist on range.	

W. Harvey, Lieut. Col.
C/O 10th Bn A.I. F.

Narrative of action of 15th. Battalion in the attack by 4th. Brigade on HINDENBURG LINE South of RIENCOURT on morning of 11th. April 1917.

At 10.30 p.m. on night 10/11th. April, 15th. Battalion moved from Bivouac ground north of FAVREUIL and at 4 a.m. on morning of 11th. April were deployed ready for action in position on railway line running through C.5.

B and C Companies being in position extending 200 yards to the west of C.5. Central, and A and D extending 200 yards to the East of that point.

Battalion H. Q. was situated at C.5.a.85.03.

R. A. P. was situated at C.5.c.90.98.

Preliminary Ammunition Dumps at C.5.a.80.05. C.5.b.16. C.5.a.55.15
14th. and 16th. Battalions were disposed in Sunken Road 200 yards North of railway line.

At 4.47 a.m. I received message that 14th. and 16th. Battalions had advanced to the attack and at 4.49 a.m. 15th. Battalion moved to the attack in Artillery Formation from the railway line.

There was not sufficient Artillery Fire to drown noise of Tanks moving up and they must have been plainly heard by enemy.

The Tanks that were co-operating in the attack on our front failed to reach objective excepting one (1) Tank which reached first wire.

The first news of the progress of this Battalion was received from Wounded men who stated that when they arrived at first objective hand to hand fighting was going on between 14th. Battalion and enemy. Our men pushed through to second objective and about 900 yards of second objective was captured by this Brigade which was much mixed up through difficulty in crossing enemy wire. The wire in front of first objective was almost intact on our front and it is estimated we had nearly 100 casualties on this wire from enemy enfilade M. G. Fire. The wire in front of second objective was intact excepting enemy sally-ports which were swept by

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Machine Guns; we lost heavily on this wire also. Enemy resisted stoutly in second objective and this line he held in strength. About 200 enemy were killed, only 38 prisoners reached our jumping-off line about 20 being killed and wounded by enemy's own Machine Guns.

No Runners had returned from Front Line and judging by the number of enemy Machine Guns playing in enfilade fire across No Mans Land it was impossible to get back from captured position. At 5.15 a.m. I sent Lieut. J.M. Rae to endeavour to get forward to Front Line on the left flank; he was wounded by M.G. Fire and reported that enemy Machine Guns dominated the ground and he thought it was not possible to establish communication. An Officer from the 17th. Lancers reported to me about this time and enquired as to possibility of Cavalry getting through. I informed him that the wire was practically intact and horses could not get through, he then went forward to reconnoitre wire himself but was wounded. I then sent 2/Lieut. F.E. Barnes to try and get through on the centre or right flanks, I have been informed he was wounded getting through but reached the captured trench, however he did not return. Two (2) Carrying Parties who tried to get ammunition and Bombs through have not been heard of since; not one man returned. Runners were sent from Front Line on Three different occasions but were killed by M.G. Fire. Arrangements were made then for sufficient Carrying Parties to be organised and then sent forward under cover of darkness.

At 9.50 a.m. I received a phone message transmitting a pigeon message from Capt. Dunworth timed 7.10 a.m. requesting Bombs S.A.A. and Rifle Grenades. It was hoped that our Line would hold until dark as No Man's Land was impassable in daylight, as it was absolutely commanded by enemy M. Guns.

At 11.15 a.m. troops on our left were seen to be retiring and at 11.20 a.m. our men commenced to fall back but very few reached the Railway Line. The defence of the railway line was immediately organised and four vickers Guns placed in position in our sector. One Company 52nd. Battalion held Sunken Road 200 yards North of railway line.

APPENDIX

This Battalion was relieved at 6.30 p.m. and moved back to FAVREUIL. Only four Officers who were in the Assault were brought in, they were wounded before reaching first wire. None of the Officers who reached objective returned and of the troops who took part in the assault only 52 have returned.

Enemy had tunnel communications about 10 feet underground between first and second lines and open communication trenches back to RIENCOURT.

His fire trenches were about 10 feet wide and 8 feet deep with three fire steps and contained dug-cuts.

Only two Lewis Guns were got back to our lines.

Our Stretcher Bearers did wonderful work getting wounded in under enemy fire, towards afternoon enemy allowed Stretcher Bearers to get the wounded without interference but in the morning he fired on them.

Captured Trench was enfiladed by M.G. Fire and severe Bombing attacks were made by enemy from both flanks.

Definite information as to how many of our men were made prisoners cannot be obtained but the men say a good number were taken.

Total Casualties of this Battalion were 19 Officers and 364. Other Ranks.

W. H. Lavery
.....Lieut. Col.
COMMANDING 15th. BATTALION.

15th. April 1917.
