

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

Infantry

Item number: 23/38/26

Title: 21st Infantry Battalion

October 1917



AWM4-23/38/26

Confidential Original

Vol xv

Sheet 1

WAR DIARY

By Lt Col B.O.C Duggan

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.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

Commanding 21st Battalion

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
YPRES	1917 Oct 1		Battalion in Reserve (Infantry Barracks)	(P)
"	"	2	Battalion in Reserve (Infantry Barracks) Lieut W McConnochie returned from Paris leave	(P)
"	"	3 10am	Battalion moved from Infantry Barracks to Gordon Area	
"	"	" "	Arrived at Gordon Area. Battalion in Reserve	(P)
"	"	10-40pm	The Battalion moved forward from Gordon Area to the Assembly point at D27 C 9.5	(P)
"	"	4 2-15am	Arrived at Assembly Point and formed up as previously arranged viz in mass sections in file without a casualty, although the enemy was searching the valleys with 4.2 & 5.9's H.E. shells.	
"	"	3-10am	Battalion moved forward to Jumping Off Tape and formed up as arranged and everything was in order at 5-10 am.	
"	"	5-10am	Message to Brigade Headquarters stating Battalion in position	
"	"	5-20 "	Battalion Headquarters established at BRICK KILN (D27 b 9.0)	
"	"	5-25 "	Enemy put down a heavy barrage on Jumping Off Tape. At Zero (6am) our barrage opened and the enemy immediately reduced his to a few 5.9's. The Battalion moved forward after	(P)

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	4.10.17	contd	the barrage in close formation until they got past the enemy barrage line, being now much disorganised on account of the heavy shelling by the enemy previous to zero and having lost all signalling gear except one telephone and one coil of wire. In their eagerness to get out of the enemy's barrage some of our leading Platoons pushed forward with the Unit (22 nd Battalion) who were to take the RED LINE entering the first objective simultaneously with them; and afterwards helped to mop up the area. Shortly after zero wounded and prisoners came into the Regimental Aid Post established in the Brick Kiln the latter being used to the fullest extent as stretcher bearers. Practically all the wounded up to about 6.30 am were the result of the enemy's pre zero bombardment.	(P)
	"	6.20am	Message sent to Brigade Headquarters that our casualties were approximately 10 per cent.	
	"	7.10 "	Men of the Brigade was seen digging in on RED LINE	
	"	7.20 "	A considerable number of men went through our barrage and commenced firing at the retiring enemy using captured Machine Guns against him. These men subsequently came back through the barrage and taking up their correct positions followed the barrage at the appointed time. There was much congestion around the "Pill Boxes" which were immediately shelled by the enemy on the first objective being taken.	(P)

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Sheet 3 - INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

Commanding 21st Battalion

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	4-10-17	7:50am	A message was repeated to Brigade Headquarters which was sent to Battalion Headquarters by two Company Commanders that "Resistance slight, am on the forward slope of the BROODSEINDE RIDGE. Prisoners surrendering easily"	
	"	9:35am	Battalion Headquarters moved to a Pill Box near the Cemetery (D 22 79.3)	
	"	10:15 "	Message Maps were received from Company Commanders showing the Battalion in position on BLUE LINE in close touch on Right Flank with 24 th Battalion on left Flank with 26 th Battalion which was overlapping; our front line being about 50 yards in front of the Unit on our left. On the position being queried by Brigade it was confirmed by priority message at 12:45pm.	
	"	4pm	Situation message forwarded to Brigade Headquarters read as follows. "Local counter attack appeared to form at D 23 74.3 but nothing developed."	
	"	7pm	A carrying party of the 18 th Battalion arrived with the following - 40 Tins of Water 20 Boxes of S.A.A. and 10 boxes of grenades.	
	"	8:15pm	A shell landed in Battalion Headquarters setting fire to 2 boxes of S.A.A. and holing 23 tins of water Casualties 2 O.R. Killed 4 O.R. wounded.	
	"	8:20pm	A message was received from Officer Commanding B Company requesting Water, S.A.A. and	

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	4-10-17	contd.	a Stokes Mortar Gun. The two former were sent and arrangements were made with the 24 th Battalion to send up a Stokes Mortar Gun Section.	
	"	9-45pm	Battalion Headquarters moved to DEKNOET FARM	
	"	9-50	Message received from front line "Situation normal, Casualties since arriving in the line about 5 per cent. Material Captured 1 Anti Tank Gun & 2 Trench Mortars.	
	"	11-30	Message received from line "1 Officer Killed and 2 Wounded leaving 3 Officers only in the line." The Battalion Signalling Officer (Lieut G.S. Clarke) was sent up to assist.	(P)
	5-10-17	1am	In touch with 24 th Battalion ^{Hqs.} and was informed that their Stokes Mortar Section could not be found.	
	"	3-30am	Message received from Brigade asking for information and stating that they had not received any news from us for over 12 hours.	
	"	3-50	The following message was forward to Brigade Headquarters. "Battalion established on Blue Line. Since arriving there casualties have been slight and except for active sniping the situation has been fairly quiet. Local counter attack was reported to be assembling but did not develop. S.O.S. has not been sent up on our front" Casualties to Officers heavier than previously thought 7 more Officers wounded during the night, leaving 3 Officers in the line viz Capt F. Sale mc Capt	(P)

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

Commanding 21st Battalion

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	5-10-17	Contd	H. C. A. Sandford & 2 nd Lieut N. R. Holt. Battalion Signalling Officer (Lieut G. S. Clark) has been sent up to assist. Capt F. Sale M.C. O.C. B Company reports everything satisfactory. Situation reports have been sent every hour by your runners returning also by walking wounded. Battalion Headquarters now with 22 nd Battalion at DEKNOET FARM. Strength in the line 4 officers and about 200 rifles. They are well dug in and have a continuous trench.	
	"	4 am	Situation report sent to Brigade Headquarters read "Situation satisfactory"	
	"	12 noon	The morning very quiet and very little artillery activity but Enemy Aircraft up continuously flying very low over our front line and at times firing into the front trench.	
	"	5-40 pm	A Lewis Machine Gun post was established about 150 yards in front of our right centre. The Gun crew had had a bad time having being buried twice previously and at dusk an enemy patrol attempted to out flank them with that they came back to the front line after a small scrap.	
	"	6 pm	The enemy sniping was practically nil until we sent out two patrols, then it livened up so much that the patrols could not continue. Enemy activity Machine Guns and snipers chiefly from the right front and Daisy Wood.	

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	5-10-17	7pm	The S.O.S. was sent up on our right and afterwards on the left and at the same time the enemy put down a heavy barrage on our front and support lines until 7-30pm	
	"	8pm	A message was sent to Brigade by an Artillery lamp that the situation was quiet and satisfactory and the same message was sent to Brigade Headquarters Forward Station by runner	
	"	11.25pm	The Battalion was relieved by the 18 th Battalion and moved back to KIT & KAT Westhoek Ridge	(P)
	6-10-17	1am	Arrived at KIT & KAT. Battalion in Reserve.	(P)
	"	12mn.	Clocks put back one hour	
	7-10-17	8am	2 Officers 100 other Ranks left Kit & Kat for 2 nd Australian Division Rest Camp Lieut G.S. Clark evacuated sick. Capt F Sale MC evacuated sick	
	"	3-40pm	Battalion left Kit & Kat to go into supports at DEKNOET FARM. Heavy shelling started and Battalion halted at SANS SOUCI for an half hour till the shelling eased up. Battalion relieved part of the 20 th Battalion in support. In consequence of an S.O.S. from our line enemy shelling was extremely active and progress much impeded.	
		7-35pm	Relief completed Casualties 1 OR killed 3 OR wounded	(P)

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

Commanding 21st Battalion

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	8.10.17	1 am	5 Officers + 102 Other Ranks joined Battalion from 2nd Aust Div Rest Camp.	
	"	3.25 am	Brigade Order received for the Attack. Orders for Battalion to support 23rd Battalion cancelled verbally by Brigade Major at 11 am and Battalion ordered to take half of frontage allotted to 23rd Battalion and attack at Zero. This was confirmed by an addendum order received at 8.15 pm.	(B)
	9.10.17	3.15 am	Battalion moved to Jumping Off Tape in excellent order.	
		4.15 am	Message to Brigade reporting Battalion in position.	
			Casualties moving up to J. Q. T. 1 Officer killed 2 Officers and 8 Other Rank wounded.	
		5.20 am	Zero Barrage opened punctually but all accounts proved it to have been light and ineffective, enemy snipers and Machine Gunners remaining in action over the whole area. Attack was satisfactorily launched well on time and troops came almost immediately under heavy and accurate enemy fire. All Officers became casualties early in the operation and formations became considerably disorganised. The 24th Battalion on the right was held up at west edge of DAISY WOOD and a portion of our right flank remaining with them. Owing to accurate fire very few messages came through and practically the only means of communication was a line to a forward command post run	(B)

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	9-10-17	Cont ^d	conjointly by 21 st Battalion and 24 th Battalion under the supervision of the Signal Officer of the latter Unit. This line was admirably maintained under most adverse circumstances and proved simply invaluable. Reports from this centre and the Battalion observers showed the attack held up on our flank on reaching the line of the roads but progressing under the greatest difficulties on our front by bounds from hole to hole. The ground was very heavy and cover infrequent. The left flank party under Sergeant Bowler progressed in touch with some elements of the 23 rd Battalion and moving South of DAIRY WOOD finally dug in at approximately D24 a 19. The centre under Sergeants Weir and Warren finally reached the Knoll near the final objective and dug in on a line D24 a 2.5 - D24 a 1.7 with both flanks completely in the air and under heavy fire from BUSY WOOD where the enemy was extremely active.	(B)
	"	8-15am	The party of the 28 th Battalion allotted to us were ordered forward to establish a position between the two WOODS and assist the cleaning up from the flanks.	
	"	8-30am	No further reports were received from this party but the Battalion Observers reported them moving forward to position	(B)

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	9-10-17	8-45am.	Battalion Commanders in conference decided that as there was practically nothing in rear, Brigade be requested to place a Battalion in the original front line in case of emergency. A patrol sent out to clear up the position reported at noon some elements of the Battalion on a Rough line from D 23 b 0.5 to D 23 b 4.6.	
	"	3-40pm	Orders received re relief by the 49th Battalion and Battalion Commanders in consultation decided on line to be handed over.	(9)
	10-10-17	1am	Relief was completed and two Companies of the 49th Battalion dug in on a line D 23 A 5.7 to D 23 a 1.3. Battalion was withdrawn and slowly collected in old support line.	
	"	12-40pm	Orders confirming previous verbal orders were received to form a composite Battalion under Acting Commanding Officer of the 21st Battalion (Major H A Crowther D.S.O).	
	"	7pm	On the Commanding Officer of the 49th Battalion expressing his agreement, the composite Battalion was withdrawn and ordered back to YPRES.	
	"	8-50pm	Battalion Headquarters closed at DeKNOET FARM and moved out to YPRES.	(B)
	"	11pm	Arrived at YPRES and Battalion billeted in CANAL AREA.	

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~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
			<u>Summary of Casualties for Operations 4-10-17 to 10-10-17 (incl)</u>	
	4-10-17		<u>Killed 7 Officers.</u> Capt J.W. Pearce M.C. Lieut F. Rigby, Lieut J. S.T. Rigby M.M. Lieut F.B. Collins, Lieut D. Black, 2 nd Lieut H.W. Harper and 2 nd Lieut T.F. Heward D.C.M.	
			<u>Killed 38 Other Ranks.</u>	
			<u>Wounded 7 Officers.</u> Lieut W. McConnochie, Lieut G.R. Edmanson, Lieut B. Besemers. Lieut J.A. McDonald, 2 nd Lieut W.G. Scales M.M. 2 nd Lieut S.H. Chapman 2 nd Lieut T.W. Eales D.C.M.	
			<u>Wounded 208 Other Ranks</u>	
			<u>Missing 15 Other Ranks.</u>	
	5-10-17		<u>Killed 1 Other Rank.</u> <u>Wounded 12 Other Ranks.</u>	
	6-10-17		<u>Wounded 5 Other Ranks.</u>	
	8-10-17		<u>Wounded 2 Other Ranks.</u>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
			<u>Casualties Continued</u>	
	9.10.17		<u>Killed</u> 3 Officers Lieut A.D. Hogan, Lieut H.L. Place D.C.M. & 2 nd Lieut D.G. Armstrong <u>Killed</u> 14 Other Ranks. <u>Wounded</u> 2 Officers Lieut G.H. Barton & Lieut H.N. Barton. <u>Wounded</u> 82 Other Ranks. <u>Missing</u> 3 Officers Lieut H.H. Corney M.M. Lieut A.G. Walmsley & Lieut B. Bollingham. <u>Missing</u> 23 Other Ranks.	
	10.10.17		<u>Wounded</u> 2 Other Ranks.	
YPRES.	11.10.17		Battalion resting in Canal Bank. Lieut W.H. Roberts rejoined Battalion from 6 th Training Battalion. 2 nd Lieuts F.L. Brett, T.H. Cory, J.G. English & R.A. Ball joined Battalion from Reinforcements. 7 O.R. reported for duty from Base	

(9)

(9)

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
YPRES	12.10.17	8.30am	Battalion moved from Canal Area	
"	"	9.30am	Entrained at YPRES.	
"	"	11am	Detrained at ABELLE and marched to STEENVOORDE AREA.	
"	"	12noon	Arrived at Billets.	
"	"	4pm	2 Officers and 120 Other Ranks rejoined Battalion from 2nd Aus. Div Rest Camp.	⑨
STEENVOORDE	13.10.17		Mustering Parade and Kit Inspection.	⑨
"	14.10.17		Bathing Parade Capt F. Sale MC returned from Hospital 6 OR. reported for duty from Base.	⑨
"	15.10.17		Training 5 OR reported for duty from Base	⑨
"	16.10.17		Training	⑨

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
STEENVOORDE	17-10-17		<p>Training</p> <p>LtCol B.O.C Duggan proceeded on English furlough.</p>	
"	18-10-17		<p>Training</p> <p>Lieut J. H. Watt on Paris leave</p>	
"	19-10-17		<p>Training</p> <p>Capt H.C.A Sandford, Hon Lieut & QM L.R. Brookes & Capt Chaplain G.E. Lamble proceeded on Paris leave.</p> <p>Lieut J.R Lee on English furlough</p> <p>34 Other Ranks reported for duty from Base</p>	
"	20-10-17		<p>Training</p> <p>2nd Lieut J.M. Burr, R.H. Farrdon and W.C. Tomkin joined Battalion from Cadet Battalion Oxford.</p> <p>17 O.R reported for duty from Base</p>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
STEENVOORDE	21-10-17		<p>Church Parade.</p> <p>G.O.C. Anzac presented Medals to the following N.C.O's.</p> <p>1221 L/Sgt Caudwell E.J. M.M.</p> <p>743 L/Cpl Sedgman S M.M.</p> <p>and presented M.M. Ribbands to the following N.C.O's & mem</p> <p>1909 Sgt Cummins J</p> <p>1966 Cpl Moran J J</p> <p>933 L/Cpl Warburton H J</p> <p>680th Pte Piper W J</p> <p>2931 " Turnbull T.W.</p>	
"	22-10-17		<p>Training</p> <p>Lieut R.B. Hogg and another rank on English leave</p>	
"	23-10-17		<p>Training Football Match</p> <p>2nd Lieut T.W. Eales and 18 O.R. from Base</p>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
STEENVOORDE	24/10/17		Training Football Match. Capt O. V. Hoad joined Battalion from Reinforcements.	(P)
"	25/10/17		Training Battalion Sports. Capt H C A Sandford, Lieut J L Watt, Capt-Chaplain G E Lamble & Hon Lieut & Q M. L. R. Brookes returned from Paris leave	(P)
"	26/10/17		Training 21 other Ranks reported for duty from Base	(P)
"	27/10/17	7-40am	Battalion moved from STEENVOORDE to OUDERDOM AREA via ABEELE & RENINGHELST	(P)
CROMWALL CAMP	"	11-25am	Arrived at OUDERDOM AREA and billeted in CROMWALL CAMP.	
"	28/10/17	10am	Battalion moved from CROMWALL CAMP to DICKEBUSCH AREA.	
"	"	11am	Arrived at DICKEBUSCH AREA and billeted in WALKER CAMP.	(P)
"	"	3pm	Church Parade.	

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
WALKER CAMP	29/10/17	8 am	Battalion moved from WALKER CAMP to CANAL AREA.	
CANAL AREA	"	9.15.	Arrived at CANAL AREA and billeted in Huts at H 27 b 9.9.	
			2 O.R on English furlough.	
			240 other ranks on Railway Fatigue	
			Capt A.E. Richards returned from R ^{td} A.D.B.D. 2 nd Lieut L.J.A. Buchanan & 20 other ranks from Base	Ⓟ
"	30.10.17		200 other ranks on Railway Fatigue.	
			2 nd Lieut N.R Holt to Lewis Machine Gun School Le Touquet.	Ⓟ
"	31.10.17		225 other ranks on Railway Fatigue.	
			Effective Strength 29 off 673 O.R.	
			Attached 1 off 4 O.R.	
			Detached 5 off 46 O.R.	
			B Duggan Lieut Colonel Commanding 21 st Aust. Battalion.	