

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

Infantry

Item number: 23/33/9

Title: 16th Infantry Battalion

August 1916



AWM4-23/33/9

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

(3).

Army Form C. 2118.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
WARLOY	August	4 9 pm.	The Battalion (as part of Brigade) left WARLOY for BRICKFIELDS. Arrived BRICKFIELDS, 12 midnight.	
BRICKFIELDS	August	5 8.30 pm.	Received orders to move closer up to line as a reserve for the 2nd Australian Division. Moved to TARA HILL, leaving the First Line Transport and Quarter-master's department at BRICKFIELDS. The Battalion bivouaced in TARA GULLY for night. During the night a good number of shells fell all around bivouac but only two exploded, the remainder, about 300 were "duds". No casualties. Received orders from 2nd Australian Division to relieve the 46th Battalion on carrying duties the following day.	
TARA GULLY	August	6 12 noon.	A. and B. Companies moved out to report to 12th Australian Infantry Brigade. C. Company to report to 7th Australian Infantry Brigade, and D. Company to report to 6th Australian Infantry Brigade, on carrying duties.	
" "	"	7 10am.	Battalion Headquarters, A. Company and D. Company moved to WIRE TRENCH WIRE TRENCH, remaining Companies came in during the morning and early afternoon.	
" "	"	" 1.40 pm.	Sent two Lewis Gun Detachments to the 15th Battalion Headquarters.	
WIRE TRENCH	"	8 6 pm.	A. Company moved off to support 15th Battalion, A.I.F. who were attacking the line R.34.b.24 - R.34.b.04 - R.34.a.7.4. R.34.a.5.3. - 12 - R.33.d.09 - 89. at 9.20 p.m. Our "D" Company under orders to proceed at a moment's notice to further support 15th Battalion. Location of Battalion Headquarters X.14. B.4.2.	
" "	"	" 10.40 pm.	Message from 4th Brigade Headquarters asking the position of our Company who were supporting the 15th Battalion. Replied, "A" Company under direct orders of Commanding Officer, 15th Battalion in KAY TRENCH and "D" Company in readiness to move at a moment's notice.	
" "	"	9 12.30 am.	Ordered to have a Third Company in readiness to move to 15th Battalion. "C" Company warned and ready.	
" "	"	" 8.30am.	"D" Company moved up to Front Line.	
" "	"	" 10 am.	"B", "C" and "D" Companies in WIRE TRENCH. "D" Company returned from support of 15th Battalion, not required.	

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WIRE TRENCH	August 9 th		During the day all officers and senior Non-Commissioned Officers made personal reconnoissance of trenches to be occupied by 16th. Battalion to-night.	
" "	" "	7 pm.	Battalion less one Company (A) moved into Front line to relieve part of the 15th. Battalion who closed to their right, and part of 7th. Suffolks who closed to their left. Our frontage was from 4.34.c.69 to R.33.d.85. Every arrangement for attack of CIRCULAR TRENCH and POINT 78 was made. No.4. Light Trench Mortar Battery to cooperate with artillery and direct fire on CIRCULAR TRENCH, commencing 5 minutes before 2.33 ZERO and lifting simultaneously with barrage.	
HEADQUARTERS X.4.A.7.9.	" "	12mid-night.	Attack launched on CIRCULAR TRENCH 78. 79.	W.D.A. 1.
" "	" 10	2.50am	Reported to 4th. Brigade Headquarters as per a.D.102.(War Diary appendix 1.).	W.D.A. 2.
" "	" "	3.50 am.	Reported operation successful everywhere as per A.D. 104.(War Diary appendix 2) Captured 50 prisoners, 3 Machine Guns and a Gas Plant and Fire Plant.	
" "	" "	12.14 pm.	Reported in reply to query from Headquarters 4th. Australian Infantry Brigade, that none of TRENCH 33.D.7.8 to 33.B.6.1. in our possession but could get same at any moment.	
" "	" "	12 noon.	Reported that we had taken over RATION TRENCH between 77 and 26 from the 7th. SUFFOLKS.	
" "	" "	4.55 pm.	Enemy actively engaged in shelling our new positions. Looked like preparation for a counter attack. Asked for four (4) Vickers Machine Guns.	
" "	" "	5 pm.	Conference of Company Commanders with Commanding Officer re operations for night 10th/11th. Battalion task, make good POINT 13. in R.34.a. and POINT 61 R.33.b. and also link up POINTS 78 and 28, in R.33.D. The zero time was 12.m. night 10th/11th. August.	
" "	" 11	1 am.	Attack launched.	
" "	" "	2.50 am.	Reported that we had made good POINT 61 and 28 and were constructing a trench between 26 and 28, also constructing communication trench between 61 and 78. (A.D. 130. War Diary Appendix 3.)	W.D.A. 3.
" "	" "	4.50 am.	Reported that we had established strong points at 31 and 61. Communicating with POINT 13 as rapidly as possible. The enemy placed a heavy artillery barrage in rear of ground just gained and communication front. Front line to	

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HEADQUARTERS X.4.a.7.9.	August 11	4.50 am	Barrage. Battalion Headquarters was difficult but was easing off at the time of re- porting. (A.D.131. War Diary Appendix 4.). Since daylight the left flank trenches of the Battalion(occupied by "D"Company) were severely shelled by the enemy, from POINT 28 to POINT 78 and from 26 to 77. At about 1 p.m. the garrison was withdrawn from the trench 28 - 78 but it was constantly patrolled during daylight and was occupied during the night. Every arrangement was made for immediate reoccupation in event of enemy counter attack.	W.D.A. 4.
" "	" "	1.40 pm.	Reports from front line to the effect that the enemy were coming out of MOUQUET FARM in small groups, spreading fanwise. Immediate orders were issued for the re-occupation of the trench 33.D.28 - 78 and Lewis Machine Guns were sent to R.34.a.12. Artillery support was asked for on POINTS R.33.d.28 to R.33.a.61. to R.34.a.13. At about 2.45 the attack developed and was met with heavy rifle fire from all parts. The Lewis Machine Guns at POINTS R.34.a.12. and 13. brought enfilade fire on the enemy and it was particularly devastating. The Artillery 18 pounder barrage also gave considerable help. The enemy suffered many casualties and at 3.5 p.m. his troops were completely demoralised and scattered. About 10 prisoners came in and surrendered and about 30 more were seen going in towards the lines occupied by the 13th. Battalion. A number of the enemy took refuge in dug-outs and shell holes in and near the QUARRY. The co-operation of heavy artillery was asked for. This was done and the artill- ery registered several direct hits on the QUARRY. This again aroused the Ger- mans who ran from place to place to find shelter. At the request of the Com- manding Officer the Artillery continued to intermittently shell the NO MAN'S LAND in our immediate front during the night. During the night the Battalion plus one Company of 13th. Battalion was employed to complete communication trenches to positions already taken.	
" "	" "	7.45 pm.	Reported to Brigade Headquarters that our left flank POINTS 99 to 28 and 77 to 26 were again being heavily shelled by guns from an Easterly direction. Our casualties were severe. Asked that our heavies indulge in counter battery work as it was considered far more effective than placing a barrage in front of us.	
" "	" 12	8.45 am.	Reported to Brigade Headquarters that bombers had advanced along TRENCH 78-61, well in advance of 61. The trench as a trench had ceased to exist owing to heavy artillery fire.	

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HEADQUARTERS X.4.a.7.9.	August 12	9 am.	Received report from left flank Company and passed to Brigade Headquarters that RATION TRENCH was unoccupied for a distance of some 200 yards left of POINT 26, (our extreme left). It was apparently abandoned by the British Troops on account of, and during the heavy bombardment by the Germans the previous evening.	
"	"	9.27 am.	Received orders of relief by 50th Battalion, (13th Australian Infantry Brigade), during the afternoon. Our route out to be by CENTRE WAY, CHALK PIT, and to BRICKFIELDS.	
"	"	11.30 am.	Colonel Hurecombe, Commanding Officer, 50th Battalion, arrived in advance of his Battalion, to take over. Complete arrangements were made for the relief. Our Companies were to go out under next senior officer direct to BRICKFIELDS, and the Company Commanders to stay until relieving Company Commanders were thoroughly acquainted with line.	
"	"	1.30 pm.	Leading Company, (A), of 50th Battalion arrived. The enemy started a terrific shelling of all our positions, paying particular attention to KAY TRENCH, 1st AVENUE, and CENTRE WAY, leading down to CHALK PITS. The relief was particularly slow on that account. It was, however, completed at 4 p.m. by which time the whole Battalion had left for BRICKFIELDS, via CHALK PITS. Battalion Headquarters moved out at 4.20 p.m. The whole road from KAY TRENCH through POZIERES, and down CENTRE WAY, was subjected to a severe bombardment from the enemy's "heavies." Casualties. Officers. Killed. Nil. Wounded 3. Missing. Nil. Other Ranks. Killed 39. Wounded 345. Missing 19.	
BRICKFIELDS	" 13	2.30 pm.	The Battalion moved to WARLOY. Condition of men good considering hardships undergone.	
WARLOY	" 16		The Battalion moved to LA VICOONE via CONTAY, HERRISSART, RUBEMPRE, TALMAS, arriving at 4.30 p.m.	
LA VICOONE	" 17	9 am.	The Battalion (as part of Brigade) moved to HALLOY-LES-LERNOIS via NAOURS and HAVERNAS, arriving at 11.20 a.m.	
HALLOY	"18/21st.		Organisation of Specialists Training continued.	

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HALLOY	August 22	2.30 pm.	The Battalion (as part of the Brigade) moved to TALMAS via HAVERNAS and NAOURS. arriving at 5 p.m.	
TALMAS	" 23	10.45 am.	The Battalion (as part of the Brigade) moved to VADENCOURT via RUBEMPRE, HERR- ISSART and CONTAY arriving at 4 p.m. Battalion bivouaced in wood.	
VADENCOURT	" 24	10am.	The Battalion (as part of the Brigade) moved to BRICKFIELDS via WARLOY ar- riving about 12 noon.	
BRICKFIELDS.	" 27	11am.	The Battalion moved into reserve for 2nd Australian Division at WIRE TRENCH. The move right through to WIRE TRENCH was delayed owing to the occupation of it by the 27th Battalion, A.I.F. We eventually arrived there at 8 p.m.	
WIRE TRENCH	" 28	10pm.	The Battalion moved up into the line and relieved the 14th Battalion, A.I.F. The Route taken was by the ALBERT-BAPAUME ROAD and into KAY TRENCH and into the line. The relief was slow owing to there being no communication trenches and wet weather. The trenches in some places were ankle deep in mud. The relief of the 14th Battalion was complete at 4 a.m. 29th August. The line we took over was as follows :- Our "A" Company relieved "D" Company PAUSE at 91-59. Our "C" Company is in KAY TRENCH 85. 78. 61 to the QUARRY. Our "D" Company is in SKYLINE TRENCH and POINT 77. The 14th Battalion left one Company in TOM'S CUT as a reserve. Advanced Battalion Fighting Headquarters was established at the QUARRY.	
BATTALION HEADQUARTERS R.24.c.5.1.	" 29	3 pm.	Conference of Company Commanders, Specialists and Commanding Officer re attack on MOUQUET FARM, to-night. The objective of the Battalion, plus one Company of 14th Battalion, 20 Lewis Machine Guns and 4 Vickers Machine Guns was from, R.27.d.73 inclusive to enemy strong point R.33.a.54 and MOUQUET FARM. The various tasks allotted were as follows:- "A" Company (Capt. HARWOOD) to get POINTS 27.D.42 - 31 and join up with 13th Battalion at POINT 73. "B" Company (Major BLACK) and Battalion Bombing Platoon (Lieut. WILTON) to take and clear MOUQUET FARM. "C" Company (Capt. McLEOD) to make good POINTS 27.A.12 and 33.c.29, and connect up these points with "A" Company, who will be connecting up from POINT 42 and also connect up between 33.c.29 and 33.a.77.	

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BATTALION HEADQUARTERS R. 24.c.5.1.	August 29	3 pm.	"D" Company (Capt. AHEARN) to make good enemy strong POINTS 54 and from a defensive flank on the left with strong POINTS at 33.a. 77-54-81. The preparation and result of the operations are described in the Intelligence Summary attached (War Diary Appendix 5).	W.D.A. 5.
" "	" 30/31st.		16th. Battalion relieved by 47th. Battalion (12th. Australian Infantry Brigade) during the night. The relief was very slow owing to the sloppy nature of trenches. Relief was however completed by 5 a.m. 31st. August. Moved to BRICKFIELDS. Our casualties for second phase of operations were :- Officers. Killed 3. Wounded 6. Missing Nil. Other Ranks. Killed 27. Wounded 144. Missing 51.	
BRICKFIELDS.	" 31	3 pm.	The Battalion moved to WARLOY via SENLIS.	

E. W. Baker

Lieut. Colonel
Commanding 16th. Battalion
A. I. F.

Cont.WAR DIARY APPENDIX. 1.

A.D. 103.

9th.

Circular Trench captured aaa Enemy line 33.D. 35 - 77 capturedaaa Line from 34.a.42 to 34.a.1.1. also captured aaa Gather from indefinite reports line from 33.D.7.8. to 33.D.8.9 also taken aaa No reports yet to hand re the balance of objective aaa 22 prisoners now at Battalion H.Q. additional prisoners reported taken approximate numbers 50 aaa Official reports state 1 machine gun captured unconfirmed reports state two additional machine guns captured aaa Am consolidating positions won aaa will report again when full information availableaaa.

CO. 16th Battalion.
2.50.

Signed. E.J. PARKS.

COPY.WAR DIARY APPENDIX. 2.

A.D. 104. 10th.

Every ^{hurry} successful aaa Have joined up with 15th. Battalion on my right flank and Suffolks on left flank aaa Am consolidating position aaa Require urgently 10,000 sand bags also require urgently 500 tins of water aaa Will be glad also to have an additional 300 shovels aaa in addition to pre-scribed objective have occupied advanced posts with small parties and Lewis Guns Unable to describe exact positions of these points at present but until exact location indicated to you please advise artillery not to shell trench 34.A.1.3. - 1 - 2 nor between point 33.B.7-2 which I gather from reports to approximate whereabouts of points mentioned aaa.

C.O. 16th. Battalion.
3.50.

Signed. R.J. PARKS.

Copy.

WAR DIARY APPENDIX. 3.

✓ A.D.130.

Got 61 and 28 Constructing trench between 26 and 28 Also establishing
communication trench between 61 and 28 aaa Am still awaiting particulars
re point 13 aaa

C.O. 16th. Battalion.
2.50.

Signed. E.J. PARKS.

WAR DIARY APPENDIX. 4.Copy.

A.D. 131.

Have established strong points at 31 and 61 Communication to 13 is being pushed on but is not yet completed. A communication trench has been run out to 61aaa Now pushed forward my left flank to 38 and have now dug in between there and 78 aaa It has been difficult to get information owing to heavy artillery fire This has been constant since about 1.30 am but has now eased off a little.

C.O. 16th Battalion,
4.55.

Signed. E.J. PARKS.

Our Operations.

As per operation order No. 37A., we carried out our portion of the Stunt Scouts - patrols placed tapes from about 100 yards N. of R.33.B.55. to a point about 150 yards S. of road S. of point 77, thence W. to allow our left flank Company to attack point 54.

From R.33.B.59. ~~the~~ to 91 the Company used the front line trench as a "jumping off" spot. These tapes were placed between 9.30 and 10 pm. There was no opposition, and an excellent "jump off" place on the whole line was arranged. The Companies were placed on this line from 9.30 to 10.45 pm., without casualties. All Company Commanders expressing their satisfaction at arrangements.

At about 10.56 pm. some heavy guns opened and caused the barrage to start. The barrage of shrapnel was well delivered but the volume was insufficient.

We gained quite a considerable amount of ground during the barrage, and at the lifting our men rushed the different objectives, and in all cases reached same, excepting No. 12. N. of MOUQUET FARM.

Immediately after our barrage opened the Germans barraged their own front line, his barrage was quite as severe as ours.

We could not hold the objectives owing to the men being attacked from the rear by the Germans who must have come out through tunnels. Our men retired to original front line: From about 42 to 73 we held on for about an hour, machine fire and bombs causing them to retire.

I personally put up 6 S.O.S. flares at 11.45 to 12 midnight to increase the barrage. No notice was taken whatever of these signals, it was very disappointing.

We now hold our original front position i.e. R.33.A.81 to R.33.B.55 with a strong point and fair communication to R.33.A. 77.

From 55 to about 50 yards in front of R.33.B.59 there is a well defined but not usable trench. This requires redigging at once to ensure communication with our right sector.

Please note that our actual trench ~~at~~ is at least 50 yards in front of R.33.B.59. From 59 to 91 on our right the trench is fairly habitable.

On retirement we immediately organised our original front line, using the Reserve Company of the 14th. Battalion in this movement. The front line is quite strongly held.

A point worth notice at this stage is, that only about 5% of the rifles could be fired at this stage, the ballance being clogged with mud and quite useless, Machine Guns were in a similar state.

A. Company is now in reserve in TOM'S CUT.

Our losses were considerable, however, all the wounded to the East and West and in line with MOUQUET FARM have been recovered, all our wounded in rear of this line must have been taken as prisoners. There were none of our boys about here at daylight this morning.

A further report on this operation will be sent along later.

Our Artillery.

The light guns are quite good. The heavies will persist in shelling our lines, some of our own shells lob as much as 200 yards in rear of our own lines, especially at the QUARRY and R.33.B.59. This is disconcerting to say the least.

Heavy artillery, should not in my opinion, be used at close distances unless the most perfect communication is arranged, and the Liaison Officer within a position to see the whole show. If this not obtainable it would be far better for our big guns to tackle points well to our front. I consider that the light and medium Trench Mortar Batteries could deal effectively with anything in our immediate front, and we can always direct their fire within at least 10 minutes. The present position is, before we can redirect the heavies their tour of bombardment is over; our saviour to-day was the "DUD" shells.

At Point R.33.D.78.89 there is perfect observation of all the objectives, ~~and our Liaison Officer~~ Liaison Officer located here directing heavies with perfect communication can do good work, otherwise I consider we should not use big guns at close objectives. Many of our people have been killed and at least 200 yards of our trenches levelled to-day by our own guns, especially at the QUARRY and R.33.B.59. between 3 and 6 pm.

The hostile is fairly bad at times, particularly along R.33.D.78 to the QUARRY and from R.33.D.78 to KAY TRENCH, however, the hostile shelling is not nearly as bad as it was during our last tour of duty in this position.

Assemblance of troops and communications to the line are our most urgent difficulties. All saps in low lying country have up to 3" 6" of thick mud on the bottom, KAY TRENCH being very bad in this respect.

All communications fail to our front line when the hostile shelling opened, armoured cables MUST be provided to the Front lines ~~from Battalion~~ from Battalion Headquarters.

At daylight this morning there was considerable activity in the German lines, in evacuating wounded, we seized the opportunity in going forward to collect as many of our men as possible. We left our lines ~~to~~ about 50 yards to the right of the QUARRY and proceeded several times to within 15 yards of MOUQUET FARM, on the S.W. corner, under a Red Cross Flag, thence to a point about 150 yards west of the former, thence to a point midway between 54 and 77, in R.33.A., all wounded in this region were recovered (17 in all). This reconnoissance was useful. I am certain that, had we obtained 29 and 12, N. of the farm and consolidated to 77 and 81 in R.33.a. we can blow 54 right out and make it untenable. I can explain this later after a good look at the maps. 54 cannot be reached by heavy artillery unless our shells fall at an angle of about one in two. 2" Trench Mortars from 77 will blow 54 out whenever it is required.

We picked up three men of the 21st Battalion on a line drawn from 29 to 77, about 100 yards out from this line. They were unwounded but lost. We treated them as stretcher cases. They stated that they had been there for five days. There are not many dead of ours in our front, probably not more than 150 and not many of these are ours. There is practically no German dead in our front.

In my opinion 54 is untakable from our lines. I certainly think that it should not be attempted to carry this point by a shock assault. With a line from 81 to 77, thence to 29 and 12 and well consolidated, 54 can be bashed out at any time. We had a good look at MOUQUET FARM from right, left and front, at about 40 to 15 yards distance. I am of the opinion that this place has been tunnelled underground and is practically a fortress. One Battalion could take it easily. Our B. Company took it without trouble, but it certainly requires another big unit to mop it up.

There is a defined but uninhabitable trench from 55 to 27, the latter place is evidently a big heap of bricks. There is also another defined trench from 77 to 54 in the direction of 47. These places are not habitable, but there are quite a number of dug-outs in them. From 27 leading W. along the S. side of the road, there is a defined, but blown in trench. This could however, be infiladed from 54. In attacking a place like this, I am certain that a silent daylight attack without Artillery is advisable, say at dawn.

The men can, on reaching objectives, lay up in shell holes and dugouts, until the following night, then consolidate by sapping from to crater to crater.

Plenty of real good artificial cover is available and there is the shell holes. Support trenches close up behind the "jump off" place, and garrisoned are necessary, and communication by armoured cable should be provided. Good communication for passing of troops and connections is vital.
