

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

Infantry

**Item number:** 23/34/26

**Title:** 17th Infantry Battalion

September 1917



AWM4-23/34/26





58

Date.	Place and Time.		Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
1917			
September 11	Blawarna	Brigade had a practice attack on facsimile of German trenches which we are to attack later O.O. 40	
12		Bn left CLAIR MARAIS at 8.30 AM & marched to LETEMPLE near STEENEVORDE - about 15 miles O.O. 41	
13		Left LETEMPLE at 6.30 AM & marched to DICKEBUSCH about 20 miles, where we had to pitch our own camp	
20		We attacked German position in front of WESTHOEK Attack entirely successful, Bn advanced almost a mile to CARTER POINT. Total Casualties 9 officers 299 OR. Killed Lt C. R. Humphreys & Lt J. L. Ryan Died of wounds Lt. W. K. Seabrook & 2nd Lt V. N. Hopkins Wounded Lt W. R. Haigh, Lt H. B. Clifton, Lt B. M. Blackstone	O.O. 42 & summary

C.11058.



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Date.	Place and Time.	Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
Left		Officers wounded Conto - 2nd Lt RN Pettit 2nd Lt A.E. Wauver.
22		Relieved by 6 <sup>th</sup> Brig + marched back to YPRES.
23		Left YPRES at 5.30 AM + marched to Halifax Camp
24		Left HALIFAX CAMP + marched to WIPPENHOEK
28		Gen Sir W. R. Birdwood presented M.M. ribbons Left camp at 5 PM + marched to HALIFAX CAMP
29		Left HALIFAX CAMP at 8.30 PM + marched to a bivouac just ON EAST of YPRES.
		J. W. Rawe Capt Coy



SECRET.17th BATTALION A.I.F.

Copy No. ....

OPERATION MEMO No. 40.Ref. 27 S.W. 1/20,000.

1. The Brigade will attack the facsimile German trenches i-m  
M. 28.a and b. to-morrow 11th inst at zero hour.
2. Zero 5 a.m.
3. Battalions will be in position at 4.45 a.m.  
20th Battalion on present front line as marked on ground.  
18th Battalion on fringe of wood.  
19th Battalion (right) and 17th Battalion (left) - 50 yards  
in rear of 18th Battalion.
4. The two leading Battalions will move off at zero. 17th  
and 18th at zero plus 30.
5. Formations.  
"A" and "B" Coys in front on 2 platoon frontage. First two  
 platoons in extended order. Rear two platoons in artillery  
 formation.  
"C" Coy. (moppers up) extended in two lines (1 wave) across  
 Battalion front.  
"D" Coy. (Carrying party) in artillery formation across  
 Battalion front.  
There will be 70 yards distance between the wave of "A" and  
 "B" Coys, and that of "C" Coy.
6. Major Russell M.C. will be O.C. Barrage.  
Lieut. Raine with 12 Battalion Signallers, with flags, will  
 report to Major Russell at 4.30 a.m. at M.28.b.8.1.  
Barrage will remain 5 minutes on first objective, and  
 15 minutes on second objective.
7. Company Commanders will remain behind after the exercise  
 for a conference.
8. "A" Company will be on road at 4.30 a.m. at M.28.b.8.9.  
Capt. Mackenzie M.C. will bring "B", "C" and "D" Coys to the  
 same place at same time.
9. Reports to Battalion Headquarters at M.28.b.8.9.
10. Acknowledge.

Issued at 6.30 p.m. by Runner  
Battalion Headquarters.  
10/9/17.

(signed) E.C. Barnett. Capt.  
Adjutant, 17th Battalion A.I.F.

Distribution:-

1. "A" Co.
2. "B" Co.
3. "C" Co.
4. "D" Co.
5. File.
6. Spare.



Adjutant



17th. Battalion, A.I.F. Appendix

REFERENCE :- HAZEBROUCK 5a. 1/100,000.

1. BRIGADE will march tomorrow 12th. inst. to STEENVOORDE via STAPLE HONDEGHE M, SESYLVESTRE, CAPPEL, ~~7~~
2. Time of departure will be notified later.
3. Baggage waggons will report at 6 p.m. today. Lorries will probably be available for carrying blankets and Iron Rations.
4. Billeting Party of 1 N.C.O. per Coy. will report to Lieut. E.R. RAINE at Battalion Orderly Room at 5 a.m. They will be mounted. They will then report to Asst/Staff Captain at Church, RENESCURE at 6.30 a.m. A
5. A party of 6 o/r per Coy from 'details to remain behind' will report to Lieut. A.S. BROWN at Monastery at time of moving off. This party will see that Billets are left in a clean and sanitary condition and will obtain a receipt ~~for~~ that effect from the Area Commandant's representative.
6. QUARTERMASTER will arrange to get receipts from the owners of all Billets that no damage has been done by the Troops.
7. Details for Reinforcement Camp will march in rear of the Battalion.
8. A C K N O W L E D G E.

*J. B. Brown* Captain.  
Adjutant; 17th. Battalion, A.I.F.

Distribution.

1. War Diary.
2. File.
3. C.O.
4. "A" Coy.
5. "B" "
6. "C" "
7. "D" "
8. Q.M.
9. T.O.
10. Spare.



O P E R A T I O N O R D E R N Appendix17TH. BATTALION A. I. F.

Battalion Headquarters,  
19th. September, 1917

REFERENCE: SHEET 28, N.E. & N.W. 1/20,000  
HOOGE and WESTHOEK, 1/10,000  
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1. In conjunction with Divisions on the North and South, the 2nd. Australian Division is attacking the enemy on date to be notified later. The attack will be carried out by 7th. A. I. Brigade on the Right and the 5th. A. I. Brigade on the Left. The 6th. A. I. Brigade will be in Divisional Reserve. The 27th. Infantry Brigade (9th. Division) is attacking on the Left of the 5th. A. I. Brigade

2. OBJECTIVES:

There will be three stages in the operation, each stage forming one objective.

The First objective	RED Line
The Second objective	BLUE Line
The Third objective	GREEN Line

- (a) The RED objective runs through points J. 8. b. 8. 7 to J. 2. b. 20. 15  
(b) The BLUE objective embodies the capture of Iron Cross Redoubt and runs on a line Eastward through Iron Cross Redoubt to points J. 3. c. 5. 5 and J. 3. c. 40. 85; East side of ANZAC to point J. 3. a. 10. 75  
(c) The GREEN objective is on the line J. 3. d. 0. 6, J. 3. a. 75. 20 J. 3. a. 5. 5 and J. 3. a. 2. 8.

Troops will consolidate on the Green line under cover of the Barrage, patrols being pushed forward when barrage permits.

3. ENEMY'S DEFENSIVE SYSTEM

The enemy's defences embraced in the above objectives consist chiefly of detached shell hole positions, concrete positions, old gun pit positions and defended buildings.

The Western edge of HANEBEKE WOOD and the old trenches at Iron Cross Redoubt and the trenches about J. 2. b. 8. 4 may be expected to be held. Counter attacks must be expected to come during the day from the East through the Wood in J. 3. d. and along the North edge of the POLYGONEVELD.

During the night or a fog, counter attacks may be expected anywhere on the Brigade front.

4. A C T I O N

(a) The Fifth Australian Infantry Brigade will attack on a one Battalion frontage with four companies represented in the front line, extended in depth.

(b) The attack by the 17th., 18th. and 20th. Battalions will be made in leap frog fashion.

(c) Boundaries, as in Map at Battalion Headquarters.

(d) The 20th. and 18th. Battalions will be drawn up on forward slopes of WESTHOEK RIDGE, the 17th. Battalion West of BELLEWAARDE RIDGE in the following formation:



"D" Coy. "C" Coy. "B" Coy. "A" Coy.

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1st. Platoon

-----

2nd. Platoon

3rd. Platoon  
(Moppers up)

4th. Platoon  
(Carrying Party)

Distances between waves will be 70 yards.

(e) The Jumping off Line for 20th. and 18th. Battalions will be taped out. At Assembly places and Jumping Off lines notice boards will also be erected on the night previous to the attack shewing where the right of companies will rest. In addition the right set of posts will be marked by Green Lamps indicating the Right boundary of the 5th. A.I. Brigade. There will also be a Red Lamp near Brigade Headquarters on WESTHOEK RIDGE to denote the Left flank of the Brigade. 17th. Battalion will draw from Brigade Headquarters two boards each marked "To Brigade Headquarters", "To R.A.P." and "To Brigade Dump". "A" Company will be responsible for placing them on the WESTHOEK-ZONNEBEKE Road between the BLUE and GREEN lines.

(f) The 17th. Battalion will move to the point of assembly in rear of the 7th. A.I. Brigade along the 7th. A.I. Brigade Route along MENIN Road thence to BEILEWAARDE RIDGE. Time of move will be notified later.

(g) Troops allotted for the attack will wear a colored diamond or stripe on the back of their helmets, viz.:

1st. Objective	RED
2nd. "	BLUE
3rd. "	GREEN

(h) All Companies are to be in position on the Jumping Off line one hour before ZERO

(i) Bayonets will not be fixed until after crossing WESTHOEK RIDGE

(j) Special arrangements will be made in each company to ensure correct direction.

(k), i. Leading Platoons will keep as close as they can to the artillery barrage.

ii. Rush each post occupied by the enemy immediately the barrage lifts off it.

iii. Keep their rifles clean and fire on every target seen.

iiii. Always be prepared for counter attacks.

v. Enemy aeroplanes may endeavour to harrass the front line while consolidating. The front line will continue to consolidate, the troops in rear will fire on hostile planes with every available rifle and machine gun.

(l) Each Battalion Sector will be divided up into four company Sectors, for mopping up, the 3rd. Platoon in each Company will be responsible for cleaning up its company sector; Special parties being told off to deal with known enemy positions. After mopping up the parties will become supports to their companies.

(m) A Special party will be told off by "A" Company to get into touch with the 28th. Battalion at point J.3. c. 85.55, North end of JACOBUS TRENCH. "D" Company will also connect up with the 27th. Infantry Brigade on our left.



(n) The Officer Commanding 5th A.M.G. Company will allot one section to accompany 17th Battalion under Lieut COULAHAN. During the advance two guns will move in rear of "A" Company and two in rear of "D" Company. On reaching the GREEN line two guns will be placed in position in vicinity of J.3.a.75.15 to cover the Valley in J.3.b. and approaches from POLYGON WOOD and two guns at J.3.a.5.5 covering Valley from J.4.a to D.26 central. Four men from each Company's rear platoon will be detailed as a carrying party for these guns.

(o) Two Stokes Mortars will be attached to the Battalion. One will move in rear of "A" Company and one in rear of "D" Company and on reaching the GREEN line will take up a position to command the enemy approaches, particularly in the vicinity of J.3.d.3.8. Companies will detail four men from their carrying platoons to report to the officer in charge of these guns, Lieut SUTOR.

(p) In addition to the general consolidation of the GREEN line "B" Company will establish and garrison a strong point at J.3.a.75.15 and "C" Company one at J.3.a.5.5.

(q) The C.R.E. is reconnoitering and preparing plans for the construction of a communication trench forward from WESTHOEK RIDGE along the WESTHOEK-ZONNEBEKE Road.

(r) After consolidation of the GREEN Line the following changes will take place: The 20th Battalion will be withdrawn and the 18th Battalion will take over and garrison the RED Line and area up to but exclusive of BLUE Line. The 17th Battalion will take over the BLUE Line and be responsible for the BLUE and GREEN Lines, which will then become the first line system.

(s) Officers and N.C.Os. in charge of carrying parties will be responsible that their loads are dumped in positions indicated to them on their objectives. If necessary they must be prepared to return for a second load, otherwise they will become supports to their companies in conjunction with the moppers up.

5. DRESS will be Battle order; water proof sheets will be carried rolled up on the back. Each man will carry

220 rounds S&A.A.  
 2 Rifle grenades  
 4 Sand bags  
 1 Iron ration  
 1 emergency ration  
 Balance of day's rations  
 2 full water bottles.

In addition each mopping up platoon will carry one tool per man, in proportion of three shovels to one pick.

6. The Artillery co-operation will include a number of separate barrages by Field and Heavy Artillery and will be issued to all concerned separately.

7. The Advanced Headquarters of the Brigade will be at J.1.d.65.10.

8. (a) The following Success signals will be used on capture of RED objective: Three Red flares in quick succession.

BLUE " Three white flares "

GREEN " Three green flares "

These will not be fired until the Company is actually on its objective and consolidated. A message will also be sent by runner to Battalion Headquarters confirming same.

(b) Contact patrol work will be carried out by No.4 Squadron RFC. The front line of Infantry will mark their position by lighting red ground flares when the aeroplane sounds its Klaxon horn or fires a Verey light. Company Commanders will see that flares are lit at intervals not exceeding 100 yards along the line of their most advanced troops.

(c) The S.O.S. signal to indicate a hostile Infantry attack will be sent to the rear by S.O.S. rifle grenades, pigeons and telephone. All officers and sergeants are to be provided with an S.O.S. signal grenade, which will be collected on arrival on objective and placed in a suitable spot ready for use.

9. R.A.P. in first instance will be in the vicinity of J.7.b.6.9. Any new positions it moves to will be duly notified to Companies.



10. During the advance any prisoners captured will be immediately sent to the rear under escort to Advanced Brigade Headquarters
11. The day of attack and Zero hour will be notified later, also when watches are to be synchronised.
12. Advanced Brigade Report Centre at J.1.D.65.10 and on capture of GREEN Line at J.2.b.95.35.
13. The Carrying platoons of each company will be required to carry forward the following stores which will be collected at Brigade Headquarters with the exception of the S.A.A. and water? S.A.A. will be picked up by units at BELLEWAARDE RIDGE I.12.d.50.95:  
~~May 23rd 1917~~
- |              |          |
|--------------|----------|
| No. 23 Mills | 10 boxes |
| S.A.A.       | 8 boxes  |
| Water        | 20 tins  |
14. Transport Officer will reconnoitre alternate routes forward of Transport Lines.
15. Greatcoats will be dumped in the Transport Lines and will be done up in Section bundles and marked with the man's name and section.
16. Battalion Headquarters will be at J.7.b.7.9. When the GREEN Line has been consolidated it will be moved to the vicinity of the junction of the Road and the BLUE Line.
17. A C K N O W L E D G E.

*J. G. Barrett*

Captain.  
Adjutant, 17th. Battalion, A.I.F.

--- D I S T R I B U T I O N ---  
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|---------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. War Diary        | 9. 27th. Brigade          |
| 2. File             | 10. 5th. M.G. Coy.        |
| 3. C.O.             | 11. 5th. A.L.T.M. Battery |
| 4. "A" Company      | 12. 5th. A.I. Brigade     |
| 5. "B" "            | 13. Q.M.                  |
| 6. "C" "            | 14. Transport Officer     |
| 7. "D" "            | 15. Spare                 |
| 8. 28th. Battalion. | 16. "                     |



## Appendix

SECRET

19/9/17.

17th. BATTALION, A.I.F.Copy No. /GENERAL

(Issued in conjunction with Operation Order No. 42)

The following points will be brought to the notice of all ranks:-

1. Every yard of ground gained will be held at all costs.
2. The words RETIRE and WITHDRAW are ABSOLUTELY FORBIDDEN.
3. Silence must be maintained when forming up and when on the jumping off tape.
4. Every man must know the whole scheme and the action he is to take in case of seniors becoming casualties.
5. All ground must be thoroughly "mopped up".
6. All troops must keep close to the Barrage, and RUSH WITHOUT HESITATION every enemy position.
7. Frequent reports of situation to be sent. Negative reports are valuable.
8. On gaining the objective, consolidation will be carried on immediately and the whole front wired as soon as possible.
9. All Officers and other Ranks are warned against carrying with them any papers, B.A.B. Code or Military Documents.
10. Every man must push on and the evacuation of wounded will be carried out by Stretcher Bearers only.
11. Carrying parties must be kept going and Company Dumps established.
12. All Strong Points will be mutually supporting and will be wired.

*D. G. Baver*  
Adjutant, 17th. Battalion, A.I.F.

Captain.



20/9/17.

- 3.35 a.m. G.O.C. reported us O.K.
- 5.37 a.m. Enemy opened barrage along front of 20th and 18th.
- 5.40 a.m. Our barrage opened.
- 6.10 a.m. Enemy barrage appeared to be falling round HONNEBEKE.
- 6.53 a.m. Three Red flares seen.
- 6.58 a.m. Three Red flares seen.
- 6.58 a.m. Message from Lieut. Browning (20th) states "Am holding line from 'C' Coy. to 'A'. Consolidating. Major killed. Am sending back for ammunition."
- 7.10 a.m. 18th Battalion seen moving forward.
- 7.22 a.m. 18th Battalion seen going forward in good lines; also Div. on left. Troops on right seen advancing well.
- 7.25 a.m. Observer reported about 50 Huns coming in on left Div.
- 7.26 a.m. Shelling in rear practically nil.
- 7.27 a.m. Enemy barrage falling on jumping off tape.
- 7.35 a.m. Message sent to Captain Mackenzie to move forward.
- 7.44 a.m. Three White flares seen.
- 8.20 a.m. 17th Battalion first wave passed jumping off tape.
- 8.30 a.m. Colonel Martin moved forward.
- 8.45 a.m. Message received from right company 18th Battalion "In touch on both flanks; consolidating, and putting out outposts about 50 yards in front of position. Casualties slight." Timed 8.32 a.m.
- 9.45 a.m. Captain Wright reports "Have reached Green Line and am consolidating same; ammunition wanted; our barrage a bit erratic but we are as close as possible to it". Timed 9.5 a.m.
- 9.45 a.m. Verbal message from Captain Mackenzie reports "Lieut. Hopkins and Clifton wounded".
- 10 a.m. Visual message from Lieut. Raine "Reported retiring on the right".
- 10.25 a.m. Visual message from Lieut. Raine "Ammunition required immediately Rang up G.O.C. who stated 100 men were being sent forward with S.A.A.
- 10.30 a.m. Visual signal "Enemy shelling front line heavily".
- 10.33 a.m. Captain Allen reports at 9.10 a.m. "Consolidating on line J.3.a.8.3. - J.3.a.7.5. I am in touch with mixed parties on both flanks; I am in need of S.A.A.. I estimate my strength at 50 rifles mixed units. Have 1 Vickers and 2 Lewis Guns".
- 10.45 a.m. Observers report "Enemy shelling heavily on 7th Brigade front".
- 10.47 a.m. Observers reports "Hostile Balloon up on far right".
- 10.55 a.m. Observers report "still shelling 7th Brigade heavily, but less on our front and on the left".
- 10.55 a.m. Two Green flares seen on 7th Brigade front.
- 10.58 a.m. Hostile balloon reported up well on left flank.
- 11 a.m. Hostile balloon up at rear of POLYGON WOOD.
- 11 a.m. Message from Brigade Headquarters timed 10.25 a.m. "JEWEL reported enemy counter attack sighted in preparation S. of ZONNEBEKE" C.R.A. advised.
- 11 a.m. Lieut. Raine reported "Established with Bd. Report Centre. Brigade line no good, visual only from this point. Colonel Murphy established here also".
- 11 a.m. "D" Coy. report in touch with K.O.S.B. and "C" Coy. Artillery falling short (Brigade notified). Timed 10.5 a.m.
- 11.30 a.m. C.O. was advised ammunition and water being carried to ANZAC HOUSE by 19th Battalion.
- 12.10 p.m. Enemy aeroplane brought down on right.
- 1.10 p.m. "A" Coy. reported "On arriving at the Green Line the 18th Bn. were found to be consolidating there; the trenches are therefore very congested; the 28th Bn. on our right, has pushed a bit forward past JACOBUS TRENCH, but the barrage has prevented me from going any further. My position overlooks all the ground in front." Timed 12.10 p.m. Runner states company is well dug in.
- 1.50 p.m. Lieut. Haigh reports, timed 12.45 p.m. "Am consolidating; have Lewis Guns in order; ammunition arrived; still require shovels and sandbags; "A" Coy. is 50 yards to my right; am digging that way; "C" Coy. is about 200 yards to my left space filled by 18th Battalion.
- 2.50 p.m. Message from Brigade timed 2.35 p.m. "Observers report enemy counter attack developing at MOULD in POLYGONVELD (reported to C.O.)."



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(2).

- 2.55 p.m. Visual message received "Infantry want barrage lifted 100 yards". Brigade advised.
- 4.45 p.m. C.O.'s message No. 13. "Fear casualties heavy; fully 40%; officers particularly so. Captain Wright reports Hannaford killed. The line is well consolidated, but we and the 18th very mixed; am trying to get the latter back into reserve position. 20th Battalion also very close up almost on the Blue Line. Well dug in. Machine guns all in position, well covering the front. No wire arrived yet. Enemy artillery still active but not so severe as earlier in the day. Masterson and Davis arrived safely. We are all joined up along the front now. Stretchers badly wanted".
- 6.15 p.m. Our barrage opened on our front.
- 6.20 p.m. S.O.S. reported by 19th Bn.
- 6.30 p.m. Barrage very intense.
- 6.40 p.m. Observers report "No sign of enemy movement".
- 7.25 p.m. S.O.S. all along front.
- 7.33 p.m. Enemy put down barrage in gully in front of WESTHOEK RIDGE.
- 7.35 p.m. Orange clusters of flares along front.
- 7.55 p.m. Another S.O.S. in front.
- 7.56 p.m. Another S.O.S. on our right.
- 7.57 p.m. S.O.S. sent up from Brigade.
- 8.5 p.m. Very few flares seen.
- 8.10 p.m. Enemy ~~xxx~~ barrage appeared to slacken off. Our barrage still strong.
- 8.25 p.m. Enemy developed intermittent rear fire. Our barrage fire slackened.
- 9.15 p.m. Message received re barrage in the morning.
- 10.20 p.m. Our guns opened up steady fire.
- 12 midnight. Our field guns opened up.

21/9/17.

- 4.30 a.m. Our barrage opened.
- 6.15 a.m. Our barrage ceased. Enemy reply not very heavy.
- 6.45 a.m. S.B. Party left for front; party supplied by 19th Bn.



