

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

Infantry

Item number: 23/56/18

Title: 39th Infantry Battalion

October 1917



AWM4-23/56/18

Date.	Locality.	Details.
1.10.17	Winnezeele	At rest. Working Party supplied for work in forward area, camped at H 16. Central No. 3 area.
2.10.17	Winnezeele	8.30.a.m travelled by bus to No.3 area H.16 Central. Rested until 4.p.m 3rd Oct.'17.
3.10.17	H.16.Central	At rest until 4.p.m. Moved to post near Potyze. The approach march started at about 11.30.p.m. The troops "hopped the bags" at 6.a.m 4.10.17.
4.10.17	Reference Zonnebeke Edition 7a 1/10,000.	The assembly tape was laid by the 10th Field Engineers from D.21.a.3.10 to D.21.a.7.0. The barrage opened at 6.a.m which happened to be 5 minutes before the Germans proposed attack on the same front. The narrative of this battle as written by Capt D.F. Middleton is attached as Appendix. All objectives were taken, the final line being situated as follows : - From D.16.b.0.8 to D.16.b.3.10 to D.17.C.3.9.
5.10.17		The whole area was "mopped up" by the 10th Brigade. Relieved by Manchesters 198th Brigade of 66th Division during the evening and moved to No. 3 area H.16 Central.
6.10.17	H.16.Central	Stragglers coming in all day. Day given up to drying clothes.
7.10.17		Morbecque Reserve rejoined about 8.30.a.m and went on working party to battle area to carry shells for howitzer batteries.
8.10.17		The day was given over to equipping and cleaning up mens' gear.
9.10.17		Equipping completed, everything ready for another move to battle area.
10.10.17		Moved from No.3 area at 7.30.a.m to Hussar Farm. Working Parties preparing tracks.
11.10.17	Hussar Farm	Working Parties on "K" track. Final preparation. Moved at 9.55.p.m to commence approach march to assembly tape which was laid again by the 10th Field Engineers in position approved. D.10.c.7.6 to D.16.b.6.7. The assembly tape was reached in good time and the men got into good position. The German had an idea that something was happening because he shelled the approach track, ("K") with gas shells & H.E shells & also the assembly point causing many casualties.
12.10.17	D.10.c.7.6 to D.16.b.6.7	The narrative of the battle is attached as an appendix. Casualties amongst the Officers were : <u>Killed in Action:-</u> Captain H. Southby & Lieut W.P. Nicholes. <u>Wounded.</u> Lieut A.E.W. Ayers. A. Edwards. H.F. Miles.
13.10.17		Relieved during the evening by the 11th Brigade. Returned to Hussar Camp near Potyze.
14.10.17	Hussar Camp	Stragglers coming all day. Day given up to sleeping and cleaning up clothes.
15.10.17		Moved at 10.30.a.m & picked up busses at Vlamertinghe at 12.30.p.m then by bus to Zoteux arriving at 2.a.m 16.10.17.
16.10.17	Zoteux	Arrived at 2.a.m. People very pleased to see us once more. Billeting progressed very favorably and everyone was fixed up in a very short time. The remainder of day was given up to rest.

H. O. Henderson

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Original

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WAR DIARY OCTOBER 1917

Date.	Locality.	
17.10.17	Zoteux	Reorganising & cleaning of Equipment. Recommendations for awards to be submitted by 12.noon 18.10.17. Roster of 10 per Coy submitted for English & Paris leave.
		Fire Picquet detailed by each Coy. List of shortages of Coys & Details being made up.
18.10.17		Reorganisation & cleaning of Equipment proceeded with. Bathing Parade to Desvres Cement Works between the hours of 6.30.a.m & 12.noon. Special Order attached.
19.10.17		Coys at disposal of their O's.C for Close Order Drill & Skill at Arms.
20.10.17		Coys at disposal of their O's.C. Nominations for Training Battalion, these N.C.O's leave for England on Nov 1st. Battalion Lewis Gun School started - to meet the demand for for fully trained Lewis Gunners & Instructors.
		Promotions attached.
21.10.17		Church Parade at 9.30.a.m) Communion at 7.30.a.m) Rev Sexton. R.C. parade to Becourt at 10.a.m Inspection of billets by C.O.
22.10.17		Training as per Syllabus.
23.10.17		" " " " warning against wearing the puttees wound from knee to ankle.
24.10.17		As per Syllabus.
25.10.17		As per Syllabus.
26.10.17		Training as per Syllabus. Men returned as being "Physically unfit" for further active service were paraded before the R.M.O
27.10.17		Training as per Syllabus. Billets returns 16/27 Oct were rendered.
28.10.17		Church Parade 11.a.m) Holy Communion 11.30.a.m) Rev Sexton. Evening Service in Church Army Hut 6.30.p.m R.C. Becourt 9.45.a.m. Inspection of billets by 2nd I/C. Major Paterson. Battalion School for N.C.O's and Aspirant N.C.O's purely voluntary projected. School to commence on Thursday next.
29.10.17		Scout Training resumed under Lieut August. T.A.B Inoculation for all who have not received during the last Twelve months.
30.10.17		Inoculation continued, Training as per Syllabus.
31.10.17		Bathing Parade 7.a.m - 10.a.m at Desvres Cement Works. Same precautions as before. Iron Rations checked. Pay made available. Lieuts Boase & Finster with 2 O/R's joined the Battn, on the 29th Inst.

A. C. Henderson

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Headquarters.
10th Australian Infantry Brigade.
29th September 1917.

Signal

C.O. 37th Battalion.
38th " "
39th " "
40th " "
10th M. Gun Coy.
10th L.T.M. Battery.

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with reference to preliminary instructions for YPRES
Battle No. 2.

Para. A 1. Captain G.R. HUTTON, 39th Battalion, will be in command
of the Brigade quota.

Para. 2 H. Each Unit quota will report to Captain Hutton at the
39th Battalion Camp, which is situated about 800 yards
North of the H in HOLLANDSCHEURE by 12.30 p.m.

Captain Hutton will arrange for the Head of the column
to move off from the 39th Battalion camp at 1 p.m. and
he will decide upon the route to be taken to HOLLANDSCHEURE.

Transport. Units can send messengers for the purpose of transporting
blankets and Officers kits. The number of vehicles
must be cut down to a minimum as they will have to
return the same night and be required to move the next
day.

Geo. H. Growth
Captain.
Staff Captain.
10th Australian Infantry Brigade.


S.O. 130/21

MAP REFERENCE. HANNOVER 5a.

Being Rations for consumption up to midnight
1st October will be carried.
advise this office by 12 noon
what numbers are proceeding

J.H.G.
H. O. Anderson Lt Col

A⁴ Oct 17THE YPRES-ROULERS RAILWAY.

1. The sketch overleaf illustrates the various embankments and cuttings on the YPRES-ROULERS Railway in the region where it crosses the BROODSEINDE-PASSCHENDAELE Ridge. Between ZONNEBEKE and the level crossing in D 17 b, these are of particular importance to us at present.
2. With the exception of a few concrete structures shown thus  on sketch there are no indications of any defences having been constructed along the line at present, but, owing to the bend of the railway to the N.E. and its general situation with regard to the lie of the land, it is clear that great use might be made of the various embankments and cuttings for the purpose of obtaining enfilade fire up the HANNEBEEK Valley and GRAVENSTAFEL Ridge to deal with any advance by us in this direction.
It is therefore quite possible that some of these concrete structures, especially those in D 22 a and b and 16 d, may be M.C. emplacements and they should therefore be given special attention.
3. A further point worthy of note is that an air photo taken on the 1st inst. shows that the ground in D 22 b and d (marked marshy on sketch) is still very wet. A considerable quantity of water has collected on the south side of embankment at D 22 b 1.3 and this in conjunction with the wet ground to the south of it may prove an obstacle to an advance on THAMES (D 22 b 3.5) which the same photo shows to be obviously occupied.

Original

9th Oct 1917

YPRES-ROULERS

10

12

18

16

23

CULVERT
20" WIDE
40" HIGH

CULVERT
36" WIDE
60" HIGH

CULVERT
24" WIDE
36" HIGH

CULVERT
24" WIDE
48" HIGH

2 CULVERTS
30" WIDE
40" HIGH

TUNNEL 3'
CROSS SECTION

Thames

MARSH

*Held by
Germans prior
to 4th October 1917*

R. O. Henderson

39TH BATTALION A.I.F.

Narrative of Stunt on October 4th 1917.

The Battalion moved out from camp at VLAMERTINGHE at 4.30.p.m on afternoon of the 3rd and moved to Bivouac Area East of YPRES. This area was reached at 7.p.m and a halt was made here for four hours. At 11.p.m the Battalion moved out on to "K" track and moved up thus in Single file with A. Company leading followed by B, C & D Coys. Shelling was met with right along the track after passing the crest of FREZENBERG Ridge. His shelling caused a fair amount of delay but no confusion. The Battalion reached its assembly point at 2.a.m and by 2.30. a.m all were in position and touch had been established with 11th Brigade on right and New Zealanders on left. At 5.30.a.m the enemy opened a bombardment on the 2nd Division on our right and we got the splashing of this. At 5.55.a.m all men were ready. At 6.a.m our Barrage opened and at 6.5.a.m we advanced. Owing to the bad light and Battle Smoke it was impossible to keep formations; the consequence was that all Battalions of the Brigade became mixed. At the first halt of the barrage for 12 minutes at the 37th objective, slight reorganisation was done but at the hours halt on the 38th objective a fair amount of reorganisation was done. The first serious opposition was encountered at JUDAH GALLERIES and here about 40 Huns were captured. These were attended to by a mixed body from the Brigade. While waiting at the 38th objective we were subjected to serious machine gun fire from ABRAHAM HEIGHTS and from some ruins in front of BEECHAM FARM. Word was sent to the New Zealanders re the guns on ABRAHAM HEIGHTS and the guns near BEECHAM FARM were dealt with by us on the left of the barrage. Our Line of Consolidation was reached at 8.50.a.m and consolidation was at once pushed on with. During consolidation casualties were sustained from fire of machine guns in concrete dugouts on Southern portion of DAB TRENCH and from snipers in BERLIN WOOD but these were afterwards dealt with by the New Zealanders and 40th Battalion on the left of the barrage. 100 men and 2 Officers were sent up to assist the 40th to capture and consolidate their objective. Things were normal in our line after the actual consolidation.

In the evening of the 5th we were relieved by a battn of the 198th Bde of the 66th Division B.E.F.

The Casualties amongst the Officers were:-

Killed in action

Lt Grant L.E.

Lost of wounds

" Speering K.D.

Wounded

Lt Mockey D.G.

Capt Cunningham W.R.

Lt Barker L.E.S.

" Houston B.B.

" Maxwell M.

" Brocksopp M.

Frank H. Shaw

Koblenz

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Signal

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THIRD AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

Divisional Headquarters,
5th October, 1917.

G.386/368.

SPECIAL ORDER.

The Operations carried out by this Division, during the period October 1st to 5th/17, have been brilliantly successful.- We have captured a large territory, over 1,000 prisoners and many machine guns, and have accounted for very many enemy killed and wounded. -

This success has been due to the fine spirit and devotion of the Troops, as well as to the high standard of performance, which all Commanders, Staffs, Services and Departments, throughout the Division, have set themselves. -

I have received many congratulatory messages from the Commander-in-Chief, the Army and Corps Commanders, and from other Divisions. - In conveying these to the Division, I desire to add an expression of my own thanks to all, for the splendid support which they have rendered to me.

The blow inflicted yesterday upon the enemy is calculated to have a decisive influence upon final victory. - But this can be achieved only if we vigorously follow up our success; and we must prepare ourselves as rapidly as possible to repeat our blow.

I look therefore to all Commanders and to the Troops, to spare themselves no pains or sacrifices to prepare, by rapid reorganization and re-equipment, for further immediate Operations.

John Monash

Major-General.

Commanding Third Australian Division.

T.C.

C.C.'s Coys. 2

In Information & salute please

*R.R. Beanhurst
K. Henderson Lt Col Capt.*

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DISTRIBUTION.

- "G" Staff.
- A.Q.Staff.
- C.R.A.
- C.R.E.
- 3rd Aust.Div.Signal Coy.
- 9th Aust. Inf. Bde.
- 10th -do-
- 11th -do-
- 3rd Aust.Pioneer Bn.
- A.D.M.S.
- D.M.G.O.
- 23rd A.M.G.Coy.
- D.A.C.
- D.B.O.
- D.G.O.
- A.P.M.
- 3rd Aust.Div.Train.
- Div. Supply Column.
- Camp Commandant.
- D.A.D.V.S.
- D.A.D.O.S.
- Div. Salvage Coy.

who were... left... COM... EXPORT... of... The... see... gas... also... The... and... out... com... as... dev... from... I... and... I... an... which... The... I... but... I... to... re...

[Faint signature]
 Major-General
 Commanding Third Australian Division

T.C.

----- Copy. -----

Original

From, C.O. 39th Battalion A.I.F.
To, G.O.C. 10th Infantry Brigade.

----- Narrative of Battle of PASSECHENDAELE. -----

On the night of October 11th, the 39th Battalion (less D. Company who were attached to the 38th Battalion and A. Company carrying party) left their billets near Hussar Farm at 10.45.p.m and proceeded to YPRES-ZONNEBEKE Road thence along road to starting point of the Approach March OXFORD ROAD which they passed at 11.15.p.m and moved along road to junction of "K" track along which they proceeded to point of Assembly which they reached about 4.a.m on the morning of the 12th Inst.

The march up to beginning of "K" track was unattended by any unusual incident but from the start of "K" track to near BEECHAM FARM we were bombarded with gas and other shells intermittently but owing to a strong wind blowing and also the softness of the ground the gas had no effect and we reached the Assembly Point with only very slight casualties.

The march along "K" track was very slow and attended by many stoppages owing to our catching up to the 38th Battalion and also parties of troops coming out along the same track. Just prior to our arrival at the point of assembly the enemy shelled us heavily and continued to do so during the operation and also while we were holding the Consolidated Line.

About 8.a.m on the 12th Inst I received word that men were bunched together behind pill boxes and did not know what to do as they had no Officers with them. I immediately sent forward Lieutenants' Nicholes & Edwards to organize them and lead them forward; both these Officers became casualties. It was then reported to me that the forward troops were held up by snipers and machine gun fire which I reported to Brigade and was ordered by the Brigadier to send forward the reserves.

I sent Captain A.T. Paterson forward with what troops remained to me. About midday men began to te filter back who on being questioned stated that they were told to get back, I ordered them forward and also went forward myself to ascertain what was the matter. I found men of both Brigades coming back in large numbers, I ordered them to dig in on the present line running from junction of railway line with road at point D 17.b.30.25, thence to S.E corner of AUGUSTUS WOOD, thence along Southern edge of Wood to cross roads near WATERFIELDS. D. 10.d.48.68.

The 10th Brigade holding from the S.E. corner of AUGUSTUS WOOD to cross roads D.10.d.48.68 with the 9th Brigade on the right. After digging in the Brigade was re-organized.

Standing Patrols were put out on the ridge in front of Consolidated Line but were ultimately with-drawn under instructions.

Relief of the Brigade by the 11th Brigade commenced at about 7.p.m of the 13th Inst, and was completed about 8.30.p.m.

The return journey was made under great difficulties owing to the state of the track and took about 5 1/2 hours to complete.

Through the Operations the weather was very cold and wet and severely taxed the strength of the men.

23/10/17.

(Sgd) R.O. Henderson. Lieut-Col.
C.O. 39th Battalion A.I.F.

R.O. Henderson

APPENDIX.

October

17/10/17.

39th Battalion After-Order
by
Lieut Col R.O. Henderson Commanding.

Bathing
Parade.

Baths at Cement Works DESVRES have been allotted to this Battalion tomorrow between the hours of 6.30.am and 12.noon and the following arrangements and time table will be strictly adhered to.

Not more than 30 men will bathe at one time and 20 minutes will be allowed each party; to fit in time table second party will be ready to bathe whilst first party are dressing and so on.

Lt Hay & Lt McCaul will supervise the arrangements & one will be inside the baths & the other to control men outside the baths and will be responsible for the smooth working of details and are to ensure that there is no cause for complaints by the civilians concerned.

Companies will be marched back to Billets without delay after bathing hour.

C. Company	to leave Billets	5.30.am	and bathe from	7.am - 8.am.
B. do	do	6.30.am	do	8.am - 9.am.
D do	do	7.30.am	do	9.am - 10.am.
A do	do	8.30.am	do	10.am - 11.am.

H.Q.'s Details half)

with 1st party)

remainder and) do

9.30.am

do

11.am - 12.noon.

details from Coys)

who cannot go with)

balance of Coy.)

Companies will make necessary arrangements for early breakfast, and marching of Coy to DESVRES, Officer or N.C.O in charge of Details to arrange for party to be divided as shown above.

Sgd. P. Neilson. Lieut.
A/Adj 39th Battalion A.I.F.

R.O. Henderson

Promotions.

No. 4102 L/C A.H.O'Dee to be Cpl dated 10/10/17 vice Cpl L.J.Downs killed in action 12/10/17.

No. 1196 T/Sgt C.R.Frencham to be Sgt dated 20/10/17 vice Sgt Blackburn evac. 20/7/17.

No. 256 T/Cpl E.W.Bates to be Cpl dated 20/10/17 vice T/Sgt Frencham promoted Sgt 20/10/17. *October*

No. 1387 Pte C.Rosewarne to be Cpl dated 12/10/17 vice Cpl S.V.Heath killed in action 12/10/17.

Appointments.

No. 568 L/Cpl T.Rosser to be Pioneer Sgt dated 5/10/17 vice Sgt R.Young placed on supernumery list on joining Officers Cadet Battalion Oxford.

No. 4649 Pte A.C.Johnston to be Provost Sgt dated 19/10/17. *H.O. Gardner*