

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

Infantry

Item number: 23/73/11

Title: 56th Infantry Battalion

December 1916



AWM4-23/73/11

287

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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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
SOMME	1916 Dec. I	8 a.m.	The morning was inclined to be foggy and was very cold, but the day turned out fine. All the available men in the Detail Camp were paraded by the R.S.M. and afterwards reported to the Engineers for Hut construction which was carried out until 4.15 p.m. The Battalion Rest Station is still being carried on and is for the purpose of treating men sent back from the Trenches with symptoms of Trench Feet etc. 3 other ranks left to attend Lewis Gun School of Instruction. Lieut. Wilson also 121 reinforcements reported to Detail Camp during the day and were taken on the strength of the Battalion.	
		10 a.m.	C.O. accompanied by Lieut. Williamson, Battalion Intelligence Officer left Battalion Headquarters at Rose Trench to inspect the area occupied by the Battalion in the trenches. Owing to the heavy fog which prevailed throughout the day, C.O. and Lieut. Williamson were able to proceed overland to the front line trenches and interviewed each Company Commander in turn as regards the condition of the trenches and also their Company dispositions in the front line. The trenches were found to be in a very bad state owing to the continual bad weather and although the men had worked all through the previous night trying to improve matters very little improvement could be noticed. C.O. returned to Battalion Headquarters at 2.40 p.m.	
		10.30 a.m.	Brigadier-General Elliott arrived at Battalion Headquarters and in company with the Adjutant inspected Rose Trench also Regimental Aid Post. He was very pleased with the way the men were working, also the way in which the relief had been carried out the previous night. In accordance with C.O. instructions each Company in the front line sent back parties to make themselves acquainted with the country in rear of the front line trenches, also in case of emergency to enable them to act as guides for ration parties, reliefs etc. During the day everything was very quiet. Lieut. F.B. Belten was wounded and three other ranks were killed by snipers. 4 other ranks were killed and 8 wounded by Artillery Fire.	
		5.30 p.m.	The enemy put up a very heavy barrage on our right front. Owing to the lack of telephonic communication it was impossible to tell exactly from Battalion Headquarters what position of the line the barrage was actually on. Runners were therefore immediately despatched in pairs to endeavour to get the required information from Companies in the front line.	
		5 p.m.	The following message was also despatched to the Artillery Liaison Officer "Enemy shelling very heavy on right front - please render assistance".	
		5.44 p.m.	The following message was received from 15th Brigade Headquarters "Enemy attacking our right front. Report situation every fifteen minutes".	

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SOMME	Dec. 1	5.45 p.m.	Message as follows was received from 15th Brigade "Be prepared to carry out counter attack with your Reserve Company in event of enemy lodgment in our trench. Act on your own initiative Report any action"		
		5.50 p.m.	The following message was xxx sent from Battalion to 15th Brigade Headquarters "Enemy shelling appears to be slackening".		
		6.5 p.m.	The following message was sent to 15th Brigade Headquarters "Have sent runners to obtain information from front line. As soon as they return information will be sent you".		
		6.10 p.m.	Message was received from 15th Brigade as follows: "Can you identify point of attack yet?"		
		6.15 p.m.	The following message was despatched to 15th Brigade "Enemy shelling appears to be in direction of Monseon, Blizzard and Zenith Trenches. Have sent runners to ascertain. No runners yet through from front line Companies. Enemy shelling quiet".		
		6.19 p.m.	The following message was received from 15th Brigade "Do you still require our artillery to fire"		
		6.38 p.m.	Message despatched as follows " Situation quieter. Consider advisable our Artillery continues".		
		6.40 p.m.	The following message was despatched "Runner just arrived from Headquarters, Battalion on right asking if situation is normal with me." His Battalion Headquarters is unaware of anything unusual. No runners however through from their front line".		
		6.43 p.m.	The following message was despatched "Our artillery may ease down now".		
		7.10 p.m.	The following message was despatched "Situation normal with hostile artillery fire".		
		9.30 p.m.	The following message was despatched "Runner just returned from front line with information to the effect that situation is now normal. No action followed enemy artillery fire. Enemy artillery fire caused practically no damage".		
		2		Throughout the remainder of the night everything was normal. The weather was fine but very cold. All available men from Detail Camp were again supplied to the Engineers to carry on with the building of huts. 2 other ranks left to attend Signalling School of Instruction 5 other ranks were evacuated to hospital sick and three other ranks departed on leave to the United Kingdom. During the morning C.O. and Intelligence Officer left to proceed to the front line but owing to there being no communication trenches it was impossible to move down the forward slope to where	

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SOMME	Dec. 2		<p>where the trenches were situated owing to the activity of the enemy snipers. During the morning the left flank company reported enemy sniping very active in front of Miles Trench, two men having been killed through same. Fatigue party from "B" Coy. occupying Rose Trench where Battalion Headquarters is situated to Needle Dump and brought forward roughly about 1000 sandbags to Rose Trench which were to be forwarded on again as seen as darkness fell to the front line trenches for re-fitting purposes etc. Except for the usual enemy artillery fire everything was fairly quiet along the Battalion front throughout the day. During the evening C/O. visited Needle Trench and arranged with the 55th Battalion for duck boards to be taken up to the front line with the rations. Rations arrived as seen as darkness fell also whale oil and rifle oil, and these were sent up to the front line with the usual fatigue parties. Reports received from the front line state that the men are cheerful and in good health. Four other ranks were wounded during the day.</p>	
		3	<p>The weather was dull and very cold. The usual work was carried out by the details in camp on hut construction under the supervision of the Engineers. Morning report received from the front line stated that situation was normal and feed arrangements satisfactory - the feed being hot and good quantity.</p>	
		II a.m.	<p>Colonel Hirst of the 2nd Divisional Artillery called at Battalion Headquarters and together with the C.O. and Intelligence Officer went forward on to the ridge overlooking the front line trenches and endeavoured to get some position from which to register guns. By working from shell hole to shell hole the party was able to reach the remains of Great Bear trench, and from here it was possible to watch the shooting by the batteries, time table having been arranged beforehand.</p>	
		II.30 a.m.	<p>G.O.C. 14th Infantry Brigade arrived at Battalion Headquarters and inspected Rose Trench.</p>	
		12.20 p.m.	<p>The C.O. returned and met G.O.C. Brigade and discussed several matters concerning the relief. C.O. was instructed to arrange relief direct with the 55th Battalion.</p>	
		1.45 p.m.	<p>C.O. left to interview C.O. 55th Battalion at Needle Trench and arrange details of the relief. The day was fairly quiet with very little shelling.</p>	
		3.30 p.m.	<p>C.O. arrived back from Needle Trench and immediately issued orders for the relief on the 4th instant by the 55th Battalion. These orders were duly sent to each Company Commander by runner.</p>	
		5 p.m.	<p>Lieuts. Cohen and Wilson arrived with 93 men from the Detail Camp. These men were apportioned to Companies. A shell fell amongst them whilst they were being allotted to Companies but luckily</p>	
			<p>only</p>	

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SOMME	Dec.			
	3	5.30 p.m.	<p>only one man was killed and one wounded.</p> <p>News was received from "A" Coy. to the effect that four men were killed and two wounded by shell fire.</p> <p>Hot rations were sent up as usual under cover of darkness by fatigue parties to the front line and were much appreciated by the men.</p> <p>Two Company Commanders from the 55th Battalion went up with the ration party and remained the night in the front line with Company Commanders with a view to becoming fully acquainted with the front line trenches. The night was very quiet. The usual enemy shelling took place, with occasional heavy bursts of shelling on the right.</p> <p>The total casualties throughout the day were 6 men killed and 10 wounded by enemy shell fire. 12 men were evacuated to Hospital and 40 men were sent back to the Details from the front line after having been replaced by reinforcements. The 40 men sent back were showing signs of weakness after their tour of duty in the trenches.</p>	
	4		<p>The weather was cold but the day dry and fine.</p> <p>Usual fatigue parties carried out work in Detail Camp constructing huts.</p> <p>Major Simpson having received instructions from C.O. that the Battalion would return to camp during the evening cooks were recalled and arrangements made for a hot meal to be issued to the men on their arrival, also all huts and dugouts in accordance with C.O.'s instructions were thoroughly cleaned and prepared for the men.</p> <p>Whale oil and braziers were also supplied.</p>	
		10 a.m.	<p>Colonel Cohen of the Artillery also Major Basktele of the Engineers called at Battalion Headquarters and discussed, the former the possibilities of a forward gun position to deal with hostile tanks, the latter discussing the work at present going on in the front line system of trenches.</p>	
		12 noon	<p>Major King G.S.O. 2, Division, called at Battalion Headquarters and discussed the front line trenches, also the communication trench at present under construction.</p>	
		12.30 p.m.	<p>C.O. and Major King left Battalion Headquarters and inspected the communication trenches under construction in the Brigade area.</p>	
		12.45 p.m.	<p>G.O.C. Brigade arrived at Battalion Headquarters and in company with Adjutant interviewed R.M.O. concerning the health of the men.</p>	
		2 p.m.	<p>G.O. with Major King arrived back after inspecting the communication trenches.</p>	
		3.20 p.m.	<p>The R.M.O. of the 55th Battalion arrived and relieved R.M.O. 56th Battalion who then proceeded proceeded direct to camp at Bernafay Wood with his A.M.C. personnel.</p>	
		3.50 p.m.	<p>Captain Wilson of the 55th arrived at Rose Trench and took over from "B" Coy.</p>	

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SOMME	Dec. 4	4 p.m. 5.30 p.m. 8.30 p.m.	<p>Colonel Mc Cenaghy, C.O. 55th Battalion, arrived with Headquarter Signallers, and established himself at Battalion Headquarters.</p> <p>Guides arrived from the front line Companies and at the same hour the head of the 55th Battalion Companies for the front line arrived at Rose Trench and were taken over by the guides, proceeding direct to the front line.</p> <p>The relief was reported complete, at which hour the adjutant C.O., accompanied by the Adjutant, left for Bernafay Camp, arriving at 10.30 p.m.</p> <p>By midnight all ranks from the trenches had returned to Bernafay Camp.</p> <p>14 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital.</p> <p>2/Lieut. G.R. Courtney and 5 other ranks were wounded, and 4 other ranks were killed.</p> <p>News was received that Lieut. J.A. Sheffield was evacuated to hospital from 4th Army Sniping School.</p>	
			<p>5</p> <p>Weather was dull and cold.</p> <p>The morning was devoted to an examination by the R.M.O. of all ranks in the Battalion. Company Commanders were instructed to see that all men in their Companies rubbed their feet with whale oil.</p> <p>II C.O. held a meeting of Company Commanders and discussed the tour of duty in the trenches, also asking for any suggestions from Company Commanders for the comfort of the men during the next time the Battalion is in the Trenches. C.O. also impressed upon Company Commanders the absolute necessity for taking all precautions to avoid Trench Feet, which complaint became fairly prevalent during the Battalion's last tour of duty in the trenches.</p> <p>4 Message was received from Brigade to the effect that the Battalion, excluding Transport, would move to Delville Wood Camp on the following day. This information was immediately passed on to Company Commanders and all necessary arrangements made.</p> <p>During the afternoon a parade was held at which all men rubbed their feet with whale oil under the supervision of Company Officers.</p> <p>56 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital sick. 5 other ranks rejoined ex hospital.</p> <p>Captain G.H. Mann, 2/Lieut. Greber and 8 other ranks departed on leave to the United Kingdom.</p> <p>During the afternoon the Adjutant left for Delville Wood Camp to interview the C.O. of the 49th Battalion, which Battalion was then occupying the Camp. On his return the Battalion advance party of 2 Officers, also of 10 other ranks per Coy. were sent off to take charge of Delville Wood Camp to prevent any outside Units from taking timber, iron etc. from the Camp.</p> <p>5 Colonel Wagstaffe, G.S.O. I Division, arrived and interviewed the C.O. concerning various matters connected with the front line system of trenches.</p>	

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SOMME	Dec.	6	<p>The weather was cold and dull and occasional very light showers fell during the day.</p> <p>The Battalion moved off under Senior Major for Delville Wood Camp, arriving at 8.45 a.m.</p> <p>The accommodation was found to be very fair, although only dug-out accommodation. Luckily however it was wet weather accommodation.</p> <p>On the Battalion's arrival, Companies immediately made arrangements for Company Drying Huts, and under these arrangements a fair number of wet socks were able to be dried. Work was also commenced to erect a drying shed in connection with the camp, next the A.M.C. soup kitchen.</p> <p>Lieut. W.E. O'Halleran and 2 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital. 3 other ranks rejoined ex wounded.</p>	
		8 a.m.	<p>Weather dull and cold.</p> <p>C.O. left for Brigade Headquarters to interview the Brigadier in accordance with a message received the previous evening and returned to Headquarters at 12 noon. The C.O. was informed by the G.O.C. Brigade that the Battalion would relieve the 54th Battalion in the support line the following evening.</p> <p>No fatigues of any description were carried out by the Battalion during the day, the men being allowed to rest.</p> <p>2 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital.</p> <p>31 reinforcements joined the Battalion.</p> <p>2/Lieut. Gordon and three other ranks rejoined ex leave.</p>	
		7	<p>Rain fell almost continually during the day.</p> <p>Brigade Operation Order was received regarding the move of the Battalion during the afternoon. C.O. thereupon issued orders to Company Commanders, and instructed them to move independently; the Battalion dispositions being "A" and "B" Companies at Needle Trench, "C" and "D" Companies with A.M.C. at Switch Trench.</p> <p>C.C. "A" Company notified Battalion Headquarters that his Company was just moving out. The other Companies with attached followed at short intervals.</p> <p>After the move of the Battalion from Delville Wood the Details remaining behind returned to Bernafay Camp.</p> <p>Lieut. R.M. Wilson and 6 other ranks left for Corps Bomb School. 5 other ranks left for Stokes Mortar and Lewis Gun Schools respectively.</p> <p>One man rejoined ex hospital.</p> <p>During the ^{day} Battalion pioneers were able to complete the Drying Shed next to the A.M.C. Soup Kitchen at Delville Wood. This Drying Shed was then taken over by Brigade for the purpose of having all gum boots in the Brigade dried.</p>	
8	<p>10 a.m.</p> <p>2.30 p.m.</p>			

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SOMME	Dec. 9	II a.m. 12.20 p.m. 4 p.m.	<p>Rain fell without ceasing throughout the day, the weather being very wet. Only self-supporting fatigues were supplied by the Details in Camp. Hot food was taken on mules to the Battalion in the trenches. The ground is again in an extremely bad condition and very difficult to move over. A fair number of men are being returned each day from the Battalion to the Battalion Rest Station for treatment, on account of colds, etc. 4 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital.</p> <p>During the morning inspection was held of both Needle and Switch Trenches after which all rifles were inspected, also the feet of all men. During the inspection the trenches were noticed to be in a rather dirty state but this was soon remedied by fatigue parties put on. A fatigue party of 50 men was also supplied at Needle Trench for the general improvement of the trench, also 100 men were supplied at Switch Trench for making shelters.</p> <p>Major Backtold of the Engineers called at Battalion Headquarters and discussed with C.O. various works which were in progress.</p> <p>G.O.C. Brigade, and Brigade Major arrived at Battalion Headquarters and after discussing several matters, C.O. returned with them to Brigade Headquarters.</p> <p>C.O. returned from Brigade after having arranged with Brigadier for the issue of Gum boots to all men in the Support trenches.</p> <p>Fatigue parties were supplied during the afternoon and Gum boots were drawn and issued to all men.</p> <p>Nothing else of much consequence happened during the remainder of the day or throughout the night.</p> <p>Rain again fell almost without ceasing throughout the day. The weather still continues cold. The construction of the drying-shed by the Battalion Pioneers at Delville Wood has now been completed and Brigade are using same for the purpose of drying any wet Gum boots which are returned from the trenches.</p> <p>During the morning word was received from C.O. 30th Battalion regarding 58 30th Battalion reinforcements recently allotted to the Battalion, and asking that same might be returned to 30th Battalion. This was agreed to.</p> <p>1 other rank was evacuated to Hospital sick.</p> <p>1 man was killed and two were wounded, one of whom remained at duty.</p> <p>Throughout the day very little of much importance happened in either of the Support trenches Usual fatigues as on the previous day were supplied, otherwise no alteration in the programme took place.</p> <p>The morning was fine and frosty. The afternoon, however, turned out showery.</p> <p>Lieut. W. E. O'Halloran and 7 other ranks rejoined ex sick.</p>	
		10		
		II		

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SOMME	Dec. 11		<p>Two other ranks rejoined ex schools. Lieut. C.T. Bentley and two other ranks were evacuated to Hospital sick. 3 other ranks were wounded by shell fire. A fair amount of aeroplane activity was noticed during the morning which resulted in Needle Trench receiving some attention from hostile artillery. Fatigue of 2 Officers, 8 N.C.O.'s and 100 men went forward to work on the communication trench leading to the Front line. A fair amount of work was able to be carried out by this fatigue owing to the fact that they were able to see what they were doing and were not hindered by darkness, as they had been during the previous week when made to work at night by the Pioneer Battalion. C.O. left to visit Switch Trench and see what progress was being made building fresh accommodation. On returning C.O. and Adjutant then went forward to look at the work which had been carried out on the communication trench by the Battalion party and found that excellent progress had been made. During the day it rained on and off though not sufficiently to interfere with the work which was being carried out. The day passed fairly quietly, nothing of much importance happening through hostile artillery. Snow fell during the early morning and the day turned out cold with frequent showers. All men in Detail Camp were employed on camp fatigue and assisting the Battalion Pioneers with hut construction in addition to providing carrying parties for hot food. 28 men were evacuated to Hospital during the day. Two men rejoined ex hospital. During the day Brigade Operation Order No. 52 was received containing particulars of moves of this Brigade up to and including 19th instant. C.O. went forward to Rose Trench to interview C.O. 54th Battalion and make arrangements about the relief which is to take place during the evening. On arriving back orders were issued to the effect that "C" Coy. would move from Switch Trench at 2 p.m. to Rose Trench, also the Battalion Headquarter Signallers, R.M.O. and A.M.C. details. The remaining Companies would move forward as soon as it became dark. Advance party from the 55th Battalion arrived at 2 p.m. to take over stores etc. at Needle Trench. "C" Coy. passed Needle Trench on its way to Rose Trench. This Coy. was followed by the remaining three Companies. C.O. and Adjutant moved to Rose trench arriving there at 5.20 p.m. The whole of the relief was completed by 9 p.m.</p>	
		9.30 a.m.		
	12			
		10.30 a.m.		
		4 p.m.		
		5 p.m.		

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SOMME	Dec. 12	9.20 p.m.	<p>The German Artillery put up an intense barrage in rear of the front line which lasted for 30 minutes. No casualties, however, were suffered and very little damage was done. The remainder of the night was quiet.</p>	
	13		<p>The weather was again dull and very cold, also occasional showers fell throughout the day. Men in the Detail Camp were employed on the usual fatigues. During the day Brigade Operation Order 53 was received to the effect that the Battalion would be relieved on the following evening and would move to Delville Wood Camp. Lieut Eddison and 2/Lieut. Bull returned ex leave and 4 other ranks rejoined ex sick. 2/Lieut. Benen and 14 other ranks departed on leave to the United Kingdom. No casualties were suffered during the day.</p>	
		10 a.m.	<p>C.O. went to the front line, visiting both flank Companies, also inspecting the condition of the trenches. During the inspection C.O. made inquiries from the men regarding their fitness and also concerning the condition of their feet, and the hot food they were obtaining. All men were quite satisfied with the rations and stated that their feet were in good condition. Whale oil was used as usual twice a day. The morning passed with the usual amount of shelling, which resulted in very little damage. 5 hostile aeroplanes commenced to fly towards the front line trenches but turned before reaching same.</p>	
		2.20 p.m.	<p>The front line trenches are still in a very bad state and owing to the fact that other Battalions who had occupied the trenches since the Battalion's last tour had undercut certain places the trenches were made worse, as owing to the wet weather they had fallen in. The men, however, were all cheerful. C.O. issued instructions during the afternoon concerning the relief to be carried out during the night 14/15th instant.</p>	
	14		<p>The weather was cold and dull, occasional heavy showers falling throughout the day. The ground is now in a very bad state. All available men in Detail Camp were sent to Delville Wood Camp for the purpose of cleaning up the camp and making all dug-outs habitable for the men on their arrival from the trenches. Wood was also collected and braziers prepared, also whale oil, rifle oil and flannellette were taken to the camp to be in readiness for the Battalion on arrival. Since the Battalion was last in Delville Wood Camp a number of dugouts were found to have been wrecked and the woodwork apparently used for fuel. At the last moment, however, Major Simpson was able to secure two sheds from the Camp Commandant; otherwise some of the men would have been without shelter.</p>	

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SOMME	Dec. 14	4 p.m.	<p>One man was wounded during the day. 4 men were evacuated to Hospital. During the morning C.O. visited front line trenches and also XXXXXXXXXX inspected communication trenches. During the afternoon C.O. 55th Battalion arrived to arrange about the relief.</p> <p>Word was received that the Medical Officer, his Details and also Headquarter Signallers had been relieved by the 55th Battalion. "C" Coy. at Rose Trench was relieved shortly afterwards. The whole of the relief was completed at 8.25 p.m. Companies moved independently from the front line trenches to Delville Wood Camp, halting on the way at Delville Wood Soup kitchen for the purpose of leaving Gum boots and obtaining a hot cup of soup. On arrival at Delville Wood Camp all men were given a hot meal and were than made to rub their feet with whale oil.</p>	
		15 9 a.m.	<p>Weather was cold and dull, rain and sleet falling at intervals throughout the day. C.O. made an inspection of the camp and returned to Headquarters at 11 p.m. Information was received today to the effect that Captain Lucas (sick) had been evacuated to England.</p>	
		16	<p>After the M.O's inspection of the Battalion during the morning it was found that about 40 men were suffering from swollen and sore feet. These men were immediately confined to their dug-outs and orders issued to Company Commanders that they were to receive special attention.</p> <p>2 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital and six rejoined ex hospital. The remainder of the day was devoted entirely to cleaning up and improving dug-outs.</p>	
		17 10 a.m.	<p>The weather was again cold and dull. However, very little rain fell during the day. The ground is still in a very bad condition which makes matters very difficult for the Transport. 20 reinforcements joined the Battalion during the day. 3 other ranks rejoined ex leave and two departed on leave.</p> <p>One N.C.O. was wounded by a high explosive shell. One Other rank was slightly wounded but remained at duty.</p>	
		18	<p>No work was carried out by the Battalion during the day, the men being allowed to rest as much as possible.</p> <p>Weather throughout the day was cold and foggy. C.O. inspected the Detail Camp, returning to Headquarters at Delville Wood at noon. Company inspections were held and men were exercised as much as possible along the duck-boards. 17 reinforcements joined the Battalion. 7 other ranks rejoined ex leave and 8 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital sick.</p> <p>The weather was again cold but fine. The ground, however, still remains in a very bad condition.</p>	

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SOMME	Dec. 18	10 a.m.	<p>C.O. carried out the usual inspection of Transport Lines and Detail Camp, returning to Headquarters at noon.</p> <p>The health of the men is now showing signs of improvement, especially those men who had sore feet.</p> <p>Since the Battalion was last in the trenches only three men have been evacuated with Trench Feet. This can be considered very satisfactory indeed, as it covers a period of roughly 10 days. The men are still being exercised as much as possible on the duckboards. Very little can be done on the ground in its present bad condition.</p> <p>Lieut. G. A. Williamson and three other ranks were evacuated to hospital sick. Three other ranks left for duty at Training Battalion, England.</p> <p>Lieut. Wilson and 15 other ranks rejoined ex school.</p> <p>4 other ranks rejoined ex hospital and two ex leave.</p>	
		19	<p>The weather was very cold and dull. Snow fell during the afternoon. The ground is now hard frozen and therefore a fair amount of exercise can be indulged in by the Battalion. Fatigue party of 100 other ranks was supplied during the day to carry duck-boards forward to Rose Trench. Otherwise no fatigues were supplied by the Battalion.</p> <p>Special attention is still being paid to the care of the men's feet; A plentiful supply of whale oil being always available and men being made to rub their feet twice daily, under the Company Officers' supervision.</p> <p>Major Simpson departed on leave to the United Kingdom. 3 other ranks rejoined ex school and 7 ex hospital.</p>	
		20	<p>Brigade Operation Order was received during the afternoon to the effect that the Battalion would proceed to Mametz Huts on the 21st instant and to Buire on the following day.</p> <p>The weather throughout the day was fine and the ground hard frozen.</p> <p>8.30 a.m. Fatigue party of one Officer and 50 other ranks reported to R.E. Dum, Bernafay Extension, for fatigue work. Otherwise no unusual fatigues were carried out by the Battalion. The health of the men is now becoming fairly good, very few men showing signs of sore feet.</p> <p>2 p.m. C.O. issued Operation Order as per copy attached, concerning the move to Mametz Huts. 24 reinforcements joined the Battalion. 6 men rejoined ex leave. 2 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital sick.</p>	
		21	<p>Rain fell at intervals. The weather was very cold.</p> <p>10 a.m. The Battalion moved off by Platoons to Mametz Huts arriving about noon. Battalion Transport left Bernafay at 11.15 a.m. and arrived at Mametz Huts about 1 p.m.</p> <p>5 p.m. C.O. issued Operation Order concerning the move to Buire on the following day. Lieut. Shannon and 10 other ranks departed on leave to the United Kingdom.</p>	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

267

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.

or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
SOMME	Dec. 21		On arrival at Mametz Huts orders were immediately issued by C.O. to all Company Commanders instructing them to devote the afternoon to a thorough cleaning of the mens' clothes, equipment etc., also to see that the mens' feet were thoroughly rubbed with whale oil. This was duly carried out and a considerable improvement was noticed the following day.	
	22		A few showers fell during the morning but about 11 a.m. the rain ceased and the remainder of the day was fine.	
	10.15	a.m.	The Battalion moved off from Mametz Huts and proceeded to Willow Siding, entraining there for Meaulte, from where they marched to Billets at Buire, arriving about 2 p.m. The Battalion transport left Mametz Huts at 11 a.m. and arrived at Buire about 2.20 p.m. The roads traversed by the Battalion Transport were generally speaking in very good order. The remainder of the afternoon was devoted to general settling down of the men.	
	23		<p>Capt. G.H. Mann and Lieut. Creber rejoined ex leave</p> <p>The Lewis Gun Section has now been disbanded and the personnel distributed amongst the various Companies.</p> <p>Weather fine and fairly cold.</p> <p>In accordance with instructions from Corps Commander that the men be given two or three days rest, no outdoor parades were held. The morning, however, was devoted to cleaning up of clothing, arms and equipment, inspection of feet and application of whale oil under supervision of Company Officers, and to ascertaining shortages.</p> <p>The afternoon was devoted to bathing - the Battalion sending 100 men to the Divisional Baths every hour from 1 to 4 p.m. inclusive under Brigade arrangements. Each man after being bathed was issued with a complete change of underclothing.</p> <p>During the morning C.O. inspected the parades and billets.</p> <p>3 p.m. General Birdwood called at Battalion Headquarters and discussed with C.O. matters in general concerning the Battalion.</p> <p>10.30 p.m. 2/Lieut. Hicks and 112 other ranks arrived at Battalion Headquarters to join the Battalion as reinforcements. No notification had been received that this batch of reinforcements would arrive. All the men were without blankets, and as there were no superfluous blankets at the Battalion Quartermaster Store, they had to do without blankets for the night.</p> <p>Lieut. Gilbey and 7 other ranks rejoined ex school.</p> <p>Lieut. Christiansen and 9 other ranks rejoined ex sick and 2 other ranks ex wounded.</p> <p>Lieut. Pitt rejoined ex 8th Brigade Headquarters.</p>	

WAR DIARY

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(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
BUIRE	Dec. 24		A few showers fell during the morning but the remainder of the day was fine. It was not particularly cold.	
		IO a.m.	Church parade was held at 10 a.m. In the afternoon Companies went for a short route march in clean fatigue, after which further drafts were sent to the Divisional Baths. The bath and the clean change tend to considerably improve the spirits of the men. No further parades were held during the day. 2/Lieut. Rew and three other ranks rejoined ex sick. 3 other ranks were evacuated to hospital.	
		25	The weather was dull and cold, with occasional showers. Staff Parade of N.C.O's was held at 8 a.m. and Church Parade at 10.30 a.m. No further parades were held throughout the day. II a.m. C.O. made an inspection of the Billets, and returned to Headquarters at noon. Captain Roberts and 2 other ranks rejoined ex School. 3 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital and three other ranks departed on leave to the United Kingdom.	
	26.		During the morning the weather was fine and cold - light showers fell almost continually in the afternoon. Training was commenced to-day in accordance with syllabus of Platoon Training submitted to Brigade. Physical exercises including running were carried out from 7.15 to 7.45 a.m., Inspection of men's feet was held and each man massaged his feet with whale oil, between 9 and 9.30 a.m. The later part of the morning was devoted entirely to Platoon inspection and drill. During the afternoon all Platoons carried out a short route march. Staff Parade of all N.C.O's was held at 8.45 a.m., at which the Adjutant carefully inspected every N.C.O., and afterwards explained their duties as N.C.O's, very fully. The Parades held were very satisfactory and although a considerable amount of room for improvement is still noticeable, the men appear to have settled down to their work with a result that a general smartening up all round is noticeable. During the morning C.O., inspected Billets and also visited Company Parades. The Transport Section is now working very hard endeavouring to clean harness of all mud, also the limbers. During the day practically all the harness was washed and afterwards dubbined. Lieut. J. Morison and 2 O/Ranks left for Divisional Infantry School. 2/Lt. W. Hicks and 3 O/Ranks left for Lewis Gun School. 8/O/Ranks were evacuated to hospital. 1 O/R., returned ex leave and 1 ex sick.	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118. 1917

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(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
BUIRE	Dec. 27		<p>Weather throughout the day was fine but cold. During the night a heavy fog prevailed. Training was again carried out throughout the day under Platoon leaders, the training being similar to that of the previous day. Owing to the fact that all Company Specialists are training with their Platoons during Platoon training it is possible for the Platoon Leaders to have quite a decent parade of their Platoons. No Specialist training is therefore being carried out until after the fifth day of Platoon training. In addition to the training an Instructor from the Divisional Infantry School reported to the Battalion for the purpose of instructing the N.C.O.'s of the Battalion in physical drill during the morning and in bayonet fighting during the afternoon. Each Company Commander selected four suitable N.C.O.'s to report to the Instructor for the above instruction. C.O. made the usual inspection of Billets during the morning.</p>	
		3 p.m.	<p>C.O. held a Meeting of Company Commanders and discussed several points which had been noticed during the two day's Platoon Training, also to discuss the training of Company Specialists.</p>	
		28	<p>5 other ranks left for duty on Railway Construction and two for Pigeon School. Three other ranks were evacuated to Hospital and 5 other ranks rejoined ex sick. A heavy frost prevailed during the morning and the weather throughout the day was cold and dull although no rain fell.</p>	
		10 a.m.	<p>Throughout the day the usual Platoon Training was carried out under Platoon leaders. C.O. inspected Billets. Each Platoon of "A" and "D" Companies sent three men for special instruction by the Divisional School Instructor in Rifle Grenades. The Battalion Pioneers were engaged in the construction of targets for marksmanship, which is to be carried out by the Battalion on the 29th instant.</p>	
		2.45 p.m.	<p>The Adjutant left to report at Brigade Headquarters to receive instructions regarding the Divisional Commander's visit on the following day.</p>	
		5 p.m.	<p>A message was received from Brigade to the effect that the Divisional Commander would inspect the Battalion on the following day and that the early morning parade was to be devoted to a general cleaning up of the Billets, equipment etc. These instructions were duly passed on to all Company Commanders.</p>	
	29		<p>2 other ranks were evacuated to hospital. Weather was fine and cold during the day. Throughout the night rain fell almost without ceasing. The original programme of work as laid down for Platoons was slightly altered, the early morning being devoted to cleaning up instead of to Physical Training.</p>	
		9.30 a.m.	<p>After all men had massaged their feet with whale oil Platoons moved off to Training ground to carry out Training as set down in the Syllabus.</p>	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118. 267

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(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices	
BUIRE	Dec. 29		<p>"A" Company carried out musketry on the 100 yards range from 7.30 to 12 noon, after which "B" Company Carried out musketry until dark. The results showed that the shooting as far as has been decided was very fair. A considerable amount of improvement, though, is still necessary. However, owing to shortage of Range accommodation it is not possible to carry out as much Musketry as is necessary.</p> <p>The Divisional Commander inspected the Battalion, also the Transport during the morning. "C" and "D" Companies supplied three men per Platoon for special instruction by the Divisional Infantry School Instructor in Rifle Grenades.</p> <p>2/Lieut. Benson and 7 other ranks rejoined ex leave.</p> <p>Lieut. Gilbey and 6 other ranks were evacuated to Hospital sick.</p> <p>18 other ranks rejoined ex sick and one man was sent to Cadet Training Battalion, England.</p>		
		30	<p>Weather throughout the day was fine and not so cold as on previous days. Training as laid down in Syllabus was carried out and in addition each Platoon in the Battalion supplied 1 other rank for instruction in bayonet fighting and physical exercises by an Instructor from the Divisional School.</p> <p>The usual inspection of billets was held during the morning.</p> <p>A Syllabus of training was prepared and forwarded to Brigade for work to be carried out whilst the Battalion is in "T" area.</p>		
			2.30 p.m.	<p>C.O., attended Conference of C.O.'s at Brigade Headquarters for the purpose of discussing matters relating to the Brigade's tour of duty in the trenches.</p> <p>3 O/Ranks were evacuated to hospital - 5 o/ranks rejoined ex leave - 2 ex school and two ex sick.</p>	
		31.		<p>Weather was again fine.</p> <p>Church parade was held at 10.30 a.m., - no other parades were held during the day.</p>	
			11.30 a.m. 12.15 p.m.	<p>C.O., inspected billets.</p> <p>2/Lt., Benson, Grenadier Officer left for Brigade Headquarters to interview Brigade Major in accordance with instructions received.</p> <p>2/Lt. G.R. Courtney rejoined ex wounded and 6 o:ranks rejoined ex sick. 3 reinforcements joined the Battalion.</p> <p>The Battalion Rest Station is has again been established and at present accomodating 27 men - practically all the men are suffering with sore feet caused by blisters sores etc. 6 O/Ranks left to attend Lewis Gun School and 1 to attend Armourer's Course. 3 O/Ranks departed on leave.</p>	

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OPERATION ORDER NO 21

by

LIEUT-COLONEL A.H. SCOTT, D.S.O., COMMANDING 56TH BATTALION, A.I.F.
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Reference Map - Albert 1/40,000 20/12/16.

MOVE.

1. The Battalion will move from present camp to Mametz on the 21st inst.

ORDER OF MARCH.

2. Companies will move independently by platoons at 50 yards interval at 10 a.m. Company Commanders will arrange for either an Officer or N.C.O., to lead and bring up the rear of each platoon. A.M.C., Details will move in rear of "C" Company. Each Company will arrange to collect their respective Details as the Company passes Bernafay Camp.

ADVANCE PARTIES

3. An Advance party consisting of one guide per platoon and one Signaller from H.Q., Signallers, under 2/Lt. Gordon, will assemble at B.O.R., ready to move off at 9 a.m.

MARCHING SICK.

4. Company Commanders will take steps to see that any men who are marching sick, are sent on ahead in charge of a N.C.O.

DRESS.

5. Full Marching Order - 1 blanket and waterproof sheet will be carried, also unconsumed portion of day's ration and the usual 24 hours iron ration - water bottles to be filled. Company Commanders will see that all packs are neatly packed.

DISCIPLINE.

6. Strict march discipline will be maintained - no men will be allowed to loiter along the road.

OFFICERS' BAGGAGE.

7. All Officers' valises and 1 box per Company containing Company records, will be dumped near "A" Company Hqrs., Delville Wood by 9 a.m. Officers' batmen will accompany baggage and act as baggage guard and brakemen, if required by Transport Officer.

TRANSPORT SECTION.

8. Company Cooks will be ready to move immediately after breakfast to the new camp. Transport Officer will make arrangements accordingly. Cooks will accompany Cooks and prepare hot meal for men on arrival at new camp.

CLEANLINESS OF LINES.

9. Company Commanders will personally inspect all dugouts now occupied by men under their command and see that such dugouts are clean and that no spare equipment or clothing is left behind. Certificates to the effect that this has been carried out will be forwarded to B.H.Q., Delville Wood, by 9.30 a.m.

(Signed) A.C. Chappell, Captain, Adjutant, 56th Battalion, A.I.F.

Issued at 2 p.m.
Copies to -

- No 2. O.C. "A" Coy.
- 3. "B" "
- 4. "C" "
- 5. "D" "
- 6. Transport Officer.
- 7. Quarter Master.
- 8. Medical Officer.
- 9. R.S.M.
- 1. War Diary.
- 10. Operation Order File.

BY

LIEUT-COLONEL A.H. SCOTT, D.S.O., COMMANDING 56TH BATTALION, A.I.F.

+++++

Reference Map :-

21/12/16

Albert - 1/40,000

MOVE,

- 1. The Bn., will move from Mametz Huts to-morrow, to Billets at Buire. The move will be carried out as follows :-
The Bn., will march to Willow siding and entrain for Meaulte where the Battalion will detain and from there march to Buire.

ORDER OF MARCH,

- 2. Order of march will be as follows :-
"A" Coy., - "B" Coy., - "C" Coy., - "D" Coy.
The undermentioned details will move with the respective Companies to which they are attached -
Bn., Pprs., A.M.C., S.B., Signallers, O.R. Staff.

TIME OF DEPARTURE.

- 3. Head of the column will be prepared to move at 10 a.m.

DISCIPLINE.

- 4. During the entrainment and detraining, the strictest discipline is to be maintained - no man is to entrain or detrain without orders.
The strictest discipline will be maintained on Coy., Parades, also during the march. Companies will march to attention until clear of the huts, when Coy. commanders may give the order - "March at Ease".

EQUIPMENT.

- 5. Special attention is to be paid at the Company parades before moving off, to the way the men are dressed. Web equipment will receive special attention. In case of rain to-morrow greatcoats will be worn and blankets carried in men's packs. In the event of fine weather greatcoats will not be worn - blankets will be carried round the men's packs according to regimental custom. All men's packs are to be properly packed.

MARCHING SICK.

- 6. Any men in Companies marching sick are to parade under a N.C.O., at 9.30 a.m. The N.C.O., will report to 2/Lt. J. Ball of "C" Coy., at a place to be notified later by 2/Lt. Ball.

COMPANY PARADES.

- 7. The Company parades will be formed up on the duckboards outside Company Huts.

OFFICERS' BAGGAGE.

- 8. All officers' valises and 1 box per Company containing Coy. records will be taken to the junction of the duckboards and sleeper road by 8 a.m. Officers' batmen will accompany baggage and act as baggage guard, also brakemen if required by Transport Officer. Transport Officer will see that all baggage is removed by 9 a.m.

TRANSPORT SECTION.

- 9. Transport section will move by road to Buire - time of departure to be arranged by Transport Officer. Company cooks will accompany transport - cooks will accompany cooks.

CLEANLINESS OF LINES.

- 10. Company commanders will render to B. O. R., by 9 a.m., certificates to the effect that all lines are in a clean and sanitary condition.

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OPERATION ORDER NO 22.

21/12/16.

ADVANCE PARTIES.

11. 2/Lt. W.F. Gordon will take charge of the Advance party which is to report to the Team Major (Major Sewey) at 9 a.m., to-morrow at Buire. A Representative from H.Q., Sigs and one man from each platoon will report to 2/Lt. Gordon at B.O.R., at 7 a.m., to-morrow.

NOTE.

12. Reveille will be at 6.30 a.m.
Breakfast at 7.30 a.m.

(Signed) A. J. Scott, Lt-Col.
Commanding 56th Battalion A.I.F.

Issued at

Copies to -

- No 2. O.C. "A" Coy.
- 3. "B" " "
- 4. "C" " "
- 5. "D" " "
- 6. Quarter Master
- 7. Transport Officer
- 8. Medical Officer
- 9. R.S.M.
- 1. War Diary.
- 10. Operation Order File.