

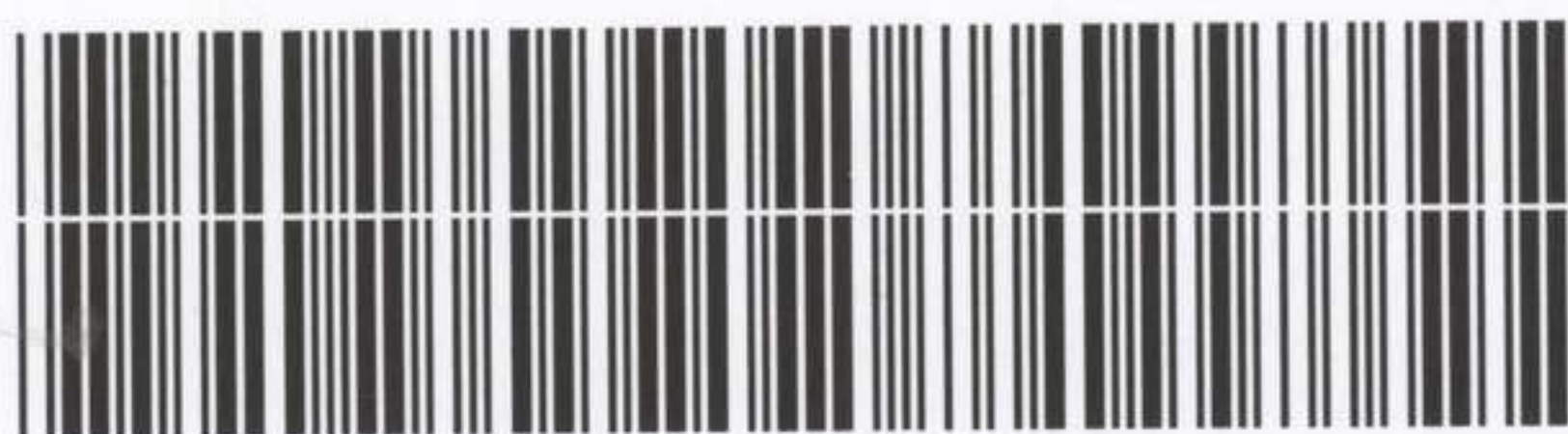
AWM4
Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War

Infantry

Item number: 23/68/7

Title: 51st Infantry Battalion

September 1916



AWM4-23/68/7

Vol. II

WAR DIARY

51st Bn.

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence
Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II.
and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages
will be prepared in manuscript.

Sheet 5.

 or
 INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

A. I. F.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
BRICK FIELDS ALBERT	September 1 st 1916		<p>Orders for operations were received at noon -</p> <p>For account of Battalion operations between Sept. 1st - 4th see Appendices as under:-</p> <p>Appendix. I. Bn operations.</p> <p>II. Intelligence Report MOUQUET FARM.</p>	<p>App I</p> <p>II</p>
ALBERT	5 th		<p>In billets CHURCH STREET. Reorganising & re-fitting - Strength 353 of all ranks.</p> <p>2nd Hinley from 4th Pioneer Bn joined.</p>	AmR.
WARLOY	6 th		<p>Bn moved at 10 am to its old billets in WARLOY. The remainder of the day was spent in re-clothing & equipping from the Bn Dump.</p>	
AMPLIER	7 th		<p>Bn moved to AMPLIER (about 12 miles). 120 other ranks went by motor-bus, bulk of Bn marched. Amidday halt of 2 hours was observed & the Bn went into huts at 2.15 pm.</p> <p>Surplus gear was dumped & preparations made for entraining.</p>	AmR.
	8 th		<p>Entrained at AUTHEULE STA. & left at 1.52 pm strength as per App. III.</p> <p>Arrived GODVAERSVELDE 7.40 pm. Marched 5 miles into billets 3 miles N. of STEENVORDE.</p>	<p>App III</p> <p>AmR</p> <p>AmR Libe</p>

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Vol. II.
Sheet 6

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

57th Bn.
A.I.F.

Army Form C. 2118.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
STEEENVORDE	1916 Sept. 9 th		Distribution to Pillars. Form. 1. - Bn. Coy. - F. 2 - C. Coy. - F. 3 A. Coy. - F. 4. Hq. & Tpr.	
Bn. Hq. (Co. instruction)			This the basis of reorganisation. Selection of men for specialists courses commenced.	AmR.
Sheet 27	10 th		Sunday. - Divine Service. Parade.	
K 15 D 5.6.	11 th		Training Routine commenced. Draft of 19 Reinforcements joined up. Sgt. J. J. McDERMOTT notified as appointed Lieut (dated 6 th Sept). Posted to C Co.	
			LT LOUGH took over duties of Adjutant vice Capt. A. H. ROWE (to command C Co.).	AmR.
	12 th		Training. Overhaul & re-paint of Transport commenced.	AmR.
	13 th		Training & Routine. Issue of new small box-respirators to all ranks.	
	14 th		Bomb & Scout Training in Pde.	AmR.
	15 th			
	16 th		Routine. Bn. bathed at STEENVORDE.	AmR.
	17 th		Pde Divine Service. Presentation of Military medals by Gen. Sir W. Birdwood.	AmR.
	18 th		3 Officers 12 ORs. One-day refresher Grenade course.	AmR.
	19 th - 20 th		Training Routine. Bn. Signal Scheme.	AmR.
	21 st		Bn. moved at 8 am via ABEELE to RENINGHELST. arriving 12.30 pm. Went into huts at Ontario Camp.	
RENINGHELST.	22 nd		Training resumed. Horse-standings commenced.	AmR.
Bn. Hq. G. 35. C. 2.0 (Sheet 28. N.W.)	23 rd - 25 th		Routine. Draft of 12 reinforcements (24 th).	

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Vol. II.
Sheet 7.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

51st Bn.

Army Form C. 2118.

A.I.F.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
PENINGSHELST	1916			
	Sept. 26 th		Training - Reconnaissance by officers of front-line trenches.	<u>AmR</u>
	27 th - 30 th		During this period (1) parties from the Battalion reconnoitred the front-line trenches. (2) training of new (3) equipping & clothing progressed. (4) horse standings were in hand.	<u>AmR</u>
			Strength of Bn -	<u>App. IV</u>
				<u>AmR</u> Lt Col of 51 st Bn

REPORT ON OPERATION AT MOUQUET FARM 1ST/4TH SEPTEMBER 1916.

"B" Company, Scouts and an advanced portion of Battalion Headquarters left BRICKFIELDS 6-30 p.m. 1-9-16 for purpose of relieving 47th. Battalion in MOUQUET FARM Sector. Three L.M.Gs accompanied this Party. The relief commenced midnight 1st/2nd Sept 1916. "B" Coy was complete by 3 a.m. and remainder by 5 a.m.. The frontage taken over was R.33.b.55-QUARRY a.77-a.81. Battalion Headquarters was established near R.34.c.51. The remainder of Battalion left BRICKFIELD after afternoon meal for LA BOISELLE at 4 p.m. Up till this hour reports received from B.Coy and L.M.G. Section showed situation quiet. Shelling of Saps on line 55-Quarry-81 generally ineffective. Smoke Bombs, Rifle Grenades, Flares, and Rockets were drawn and dumped at KAY DUMP during afternoon. No 3 Platoon (Ration Platoon) under an Officer took rations and water to Front Line, took over stores at KAY DUMP and placed a reserve of water there. Subsequently Battalion Grenade Officers issued Grenades etc, to Companies as they passed the dump. Two sandbags were carried on the man also 48 hours Rations (iron) No mess-tins, greatcoats, or blankets were carried. Grenade Dump was formed at QUARRY, 3 Grenades per man were carried. During the day the Scout Officer and his Platoon made a close reconnaissance of MOUQUET FARM, took bearings, made arrangements for Guides and laying tapes. A starting parallel on the line 55-77 was cut by the 47th. Battalion and the approach saps improved by them. Strong Point at 77 was relieved by an equal detachment from 50th Battalion. Detailed operation orders were conveyed to the Battalion at LA BOISELLE and explained to all ranks by the officers. Formations adopted were as practised in training. The forward movement of Battalion was commenced from LA BOISELLE at 9 p.m. The following arrangements for communications were made from Battalion Headquarters, Runners and two signal wires back to GIBRALTER, Runners forward to QUARRY, with a relay station (Runner) at 33.c.77. Pigeons arrived 3 p.m. Liaison Officer LAHORE Divisional Artillery was at Battalion Headquarters and remained there throughout. Zero time, final instructions and synchronisation of watches was given to Coys at KAY DUMP on passing in. The head of "D" Coy reached K. DUMP and entrance to KAYS TRENCH at 10-15 p.m. Companies then passed in on to the sap, tail of Battalions passed in at 11 p.m. Casualties up to entering sap head one man severely wounded. The following communication was established with flank Battalions during the day.

- (1) Firing Line Company 52nd Battalion near point 48.
- (2) By Runner with 13th. Battalion Cheshire Regiment. 400 yards W. pt 81. Runner reported Battalion Headquarters 3 p.m. All wounded clear of firing line by 9 a.m. Total Casualties 1 Killed 14 Wounded up to 10 a.m. R.M.O. and A.A.M.C. Details at Dressing Station near Battalion Headquarters One Section L.T.M.B. in position near QUARRY with targets at about 54. Wires held well throughout the day. At 11 p.m. situation normal Battalion deployed ready for attack 1-30 a.m. in seven waves "B" & "D" Companies in two waves Bombers and "C" Company in two waves Last Three Mopping-up parties, in waves 40 yards interval.

Old firing line held thus. Post 81 Company Bomb Team. Coy. L.G. Team Point 77 held by 50th. Battalion. Total casualties during operation 3 wounded. Deployment was made Reference Map. FM DE MOUQUET R.33.55-Pt 77. The central guiding tape was laid on to the objective on bearing of 88° from the QUARRY. Pegging out was done by Scout Officer and Platoon. Filtering out was commenced at 11 p.m. The order of Coys, was B.D.C.A. and the formation was that of six waves each Coy of two waves 50 yards apart, and an extension of two to three yards 1st wave consisting of 3 Platoons 2nd wave H/Qrs. Bombers, L.G. Sect, 4th. Platoon carrying picks and shovels. The 4th. Coy was as follows 2 Platoons with picks and shovels were digging communication sap forward from Firing Line, one Platoon garrisoning firing line with its L.G. Sect and H/Qrs, one Platoon on Ration and Water carrying. The whole Battalion was in position to attack by 2 a.m. There were no casualties during that operation or previous to the assault.

Operation orders and Barrage Map see Brigade Order No 16.

(2)

The Action. The Barrage was perfect, and the waves followed up closely. The two leading Companies pushed forward with little difficulty on the line 42-12 as ordered. 3rd Line C. Coy and Battalion Grenadiers who formed the Battalion mopping up party, they at once began clearing up the MOUND, FARM and Dug-outs (for description of the farm see Intelligence Officer's Report) Eventually 60 prisoners were captured, 3 dug-outs were cleared out and two machine guns were destroyed - one deliberately - one from shell fire after capture. Machine guns are fired from the dug-out entrances, 10lb bombs and Rifle Grenades also. These openings are very difficult to discover. C. Company commenced to dig in the support line at the Farm and dig back to firing line to meet A. Company sap. Touch was obtained on the Eastern side of the Farm with a few men of the 52nd Battn. but touch was never gained with the 52nd Firing Line and 52nd Battn. The latter Battalions left hand Company apparently lost direction and shortly retired. Thus opening the way for the Enemy to come in from a North Easterly direction on our Right Flank. Enemy Barraged all our support lines and communication trenches at 9-30 a.m. and opened a very heavy bombardment with 9.2 shells on the Farm itself. There was much sniping and M.G. Fire from all directions shell holes etc. This combined with enemy's threat on both flanks caused the firing line to ask for support which C. Coy sent up in the form of 50 men. The heavy shelling and rifle fire soon told on the "mopping up" parties and the Farm became untenable. Finally it had to be evacuated by the remains of C. Coy. and grenadiers at 10-30 a.m. the remains of "B" & "D" Companies then became isolated.

The isolation of the Front Line is to be accounted for in the following manner.

- (1) There is not the slightest doubt that the advance was on the true line and reached the objective ordered namely about 200 yards past the Farm-mound and overlapping Pt 42. But, no troops of the 52nd Battalion were ever on the line 73 to 42 to join hands with this Battalion.
- (2) The enemy's shelling and some of our own was very severe about Pt 42 and the casualties on the right of the front line were heavy and consequently reduced the chances of linking up.
- (3) Of the 3 platoons 52nd Battalion which were supposed to join up at the Farm (having started on the line 33.B.48-27.D.C.) only 1 N.C.O. and about 30 men arrived - these helped our support line at the N.E. Shoulder of the FARM-MOUND, and buildings - subsequently they were ordered forward about 9 a.m. to look for the 52nd Battn. firing line east of Pt 42, but were never seen again. The enemy on the exposed flank were then coming on strongly and so
- (4) I was offered and accepted a Company of the 50th. Battalion. I requested that the Company might pass up on the line 35-59-42 and act as a counter-attack and fill the line between near 73 & 42. This company never went but stayed near 55, subsequently joining my Command in the evening.
- (5) Shelling made it impossible to sap backward communications through this was attempted by a Platoon.

Messages ~~timed~~ up to 8 a.m. were received at Battalion Headquarters from Front Line, all their messages state that the two Companies were still hanging on in the old German Trench near 42. They were being bombed from towards 27 D.73 and from 27 D.14 and sniped all round. At about 7-30 aircraft came over asking for flares - there were then plenty of men near 42 (I believe that the aeroplanes reported this) - additional flares were sent up to the advanced line but it is doubtful whether they ever arrived.

Communications between the Front and Farm were finally broken between 8-30 and 9 a.m. by parties of the enemy coming in on the right and also up from near Pt 12. At this time the enemy were coming on strongly and the O.C. "C" Company at the Farm was unable to hold on owing to severe shell fire. He did not retire until there were left only 3 Officers and 30 Men out of a mopping-up party of nearly 200. The Farm was evacuated at 9-30 a.m. The original firing line 55 Quarry 77 was then held by the remains of 3 Platoons of A. Coy and a few details of C. and other Companies and 50 men of the 50th. Battn.

(3)

In addition to these there were 4 Vickers Guns in the line & the Guns & strong points at 81 & 77.

The total prisoners captured amounted to about 80. Two machine guns were taken. One was destroyed on the Farm-the other was brought back but destroyed by shell fire near our lines.

The approximate number of rounds fired during the period 2nd-4th Sept was:-

i. Rifles	40,000 rounds
ii. Lewis Guns	5,000 "
iii. Bombs	1,800 "

During the actual attack a length of about 200 yards of backward communication trench of about 3 feet deep through shell holes was constructed.

Supplies.

i. The supply of Rations and Water was worked by 1 Platoon under an Officer and worked well. ii. the supply of ammunition, bombs, etc flares at KAYE'S DUMP and as arranged by Brigade was excellent. Wounded were evacuated successfully. The enemy allowed us to work under flag for about one hour every morning and sometimes for a longer period. The evacuation once the firing line was cleared was very rapid. The method of having very advanced Dressing Stations is really the best provided that they are in solid dug-outs. These should be reserved solely for stretcher cases.

Communications are still very bad, the saps in the whole area being repeatedly blown in. The wires held very well during the period between Bn. H/Qrs and the advanced Signal Station. All communications forward from Battalion Headquarters was by Runner-Relays being established at about every 500 yards. During the deployment all saps were kept clear and all turnings marked by scouts of the Scout Platoon.

The number of Prisoners taken and for which receipts were obtained by this Battalion was 58. In addition to these many were hit in course of being brought in and some declined to come in when under fire. It is under exaggeration to say that at least 80 prisoners were taken. Over 70 Germans were killed in the Farm Ruins alone and probably many more in the dug-outs.

Suggestions-Tactical lessons etc.

- (1) The communications are still very bad-The difficulty in getting a really good jump-off are great. The remedy is to have Pioneers and Engineers continuously repairing communication saps-It is obvious to the most impractical that there should be 1 Pioneer Battalion to every Infy Bde. or else a digging Battalion-I only saw the Pioneers once between the 2nd and 4th. Sept. and they were carrying Rations & Water! There seemed little attempt at drainage.
- (2) A series of waves in an attack is essential- Great depth. The German is secure in his dug-out during the barrage and he comes up with his Machine Gun as soon as he feels the lift pass over. The only way to catch him is by some wave coming right on to him and I am inclined to think that our attack under barrage these days should be made in QUICK TIME THROUGHOUT.
- (3) When filling up previous to attacking in force-the necessity of having good traffic arrangements and staff control was again proven.
- (4) I would suggest that Engineer TAPE be carried as permanent stores in infantry Battalions. This is useful for so many purposes in Training for modern warfare. Pegging out attacks, patrol work etc.
- (5) For a short period (say 72 hours maximum) in the trenches-men should come in as lightly equipped as possible.
- (6) I think that an official Battalion Scout badge would be a great encouragement.
- (7) The counter-battery work is always required as soon as an attack is launched-Our counter-battery work was very ineffective-The enemy shelled all his usual targets throughout the action and although I believe that the Heavy Artillery of 4 Corps was doing counter-battery work this was quite inadequate. The enemy was able to turn a heavy counter barrage on our jumping off line and also on his own trenches when held by our men-Heavy artillery fired from thiepval direction continuously. Moreover at about 5 p.m. on the same day the enemy was able to search and sweep the whole area between POZIERES & MOUQUET RIDGE more severely with guns of 5.9 and under than at any period during the two tours that this Battalion has been up there.

(4)

- (8) The old principle of having Engineers in an attack by Infantry seems to have been dropped? I consider this a great mistake.
- (9) Neighbouring Battalions should overlap before attacking and- This was previously suggested by me.
- (10) Overhead Machine Gun fire unless it is a daily and nightly affair always simply gives warning of an attack if used beforehand. The same remark applies to Trench Mortars. For the same reason heavy artillery bombardments of the objective within 24 hours of an attack are undesirable.
- Broadly speaking there seems to me to be a lack of coordination in tactics as between all these arms and the infantry.
- (11) Eight Lewis Guns per Battalion is an inadequate number-Each company should have a minimum of 2-there should be a Battalion reserve of 4.
- (12) It is suggested that some lighter form of stretcher be provided. Also that the minimum Battalion Establishment of bearers be 40.
- (13) I consider that a Battalion should be launched square on to its objective-the task then becomes comparatively light.
- (14) The trenches require much more sign-boarding.

General Notes:- Reserves.

The disposition of the reserves beyond what is above stated was-
 1 Platoon of A Coy in old firing line, roughly 10 yards per man.
 1 Lewis Gun and 1 Section at Battalion Headquarters.
 Scout platoon (when withdrawn after pegging out) at Battalion H/Qrs
 The latter was afterwards used for special Patrol Work.

Lewis Guns.

8 guns in all were taken into action, of these 5 were brought out & two are known to have been blown to pieces.

Scout Platoon.

was used:-
 For intelligence work the day before taking over the line as guides and markers at turnings.
 Telay out the tapes and act as pegging-out party for the deployment for attack.
 As special patrols.

Bombers.

The Battalion bombers carried 28 bombs per man into the Farm.
 An intelligence report on Mequet Farm has already been forwarded.

Am Ross

O.C. 51st. Battalion. Lieutenant-Colonel.

ADDENDA TO REPORT.

MORALE OF THE MEN.

In view of the failure for the second time of this Battalion to obtain its objective. I am very anxious to clear the men of anything but the highest praise-when it is remembered that:-

- (1) This was an entirely new Battalion without traditions.
- (2) That in their two attacks the casualties have been over 650.
- (3) That this is the only Battalion of the Brigade that has been over the parapet on both tours near POZIERES.
- (4) That on the ~~XXXXX~~ last occasion the men received fewer Military Medals than another Battalion which had not left the trenches.
- (5) That on neither occasion have they started square on to their objective.
- (6) That on this occasion 8 of their officers were killed outright during the attack and the whole thirteen who went forward-only one has returned-- of -- and he wounded.
- (7) On both attacks they have been unsupported on the flanks after advancing.

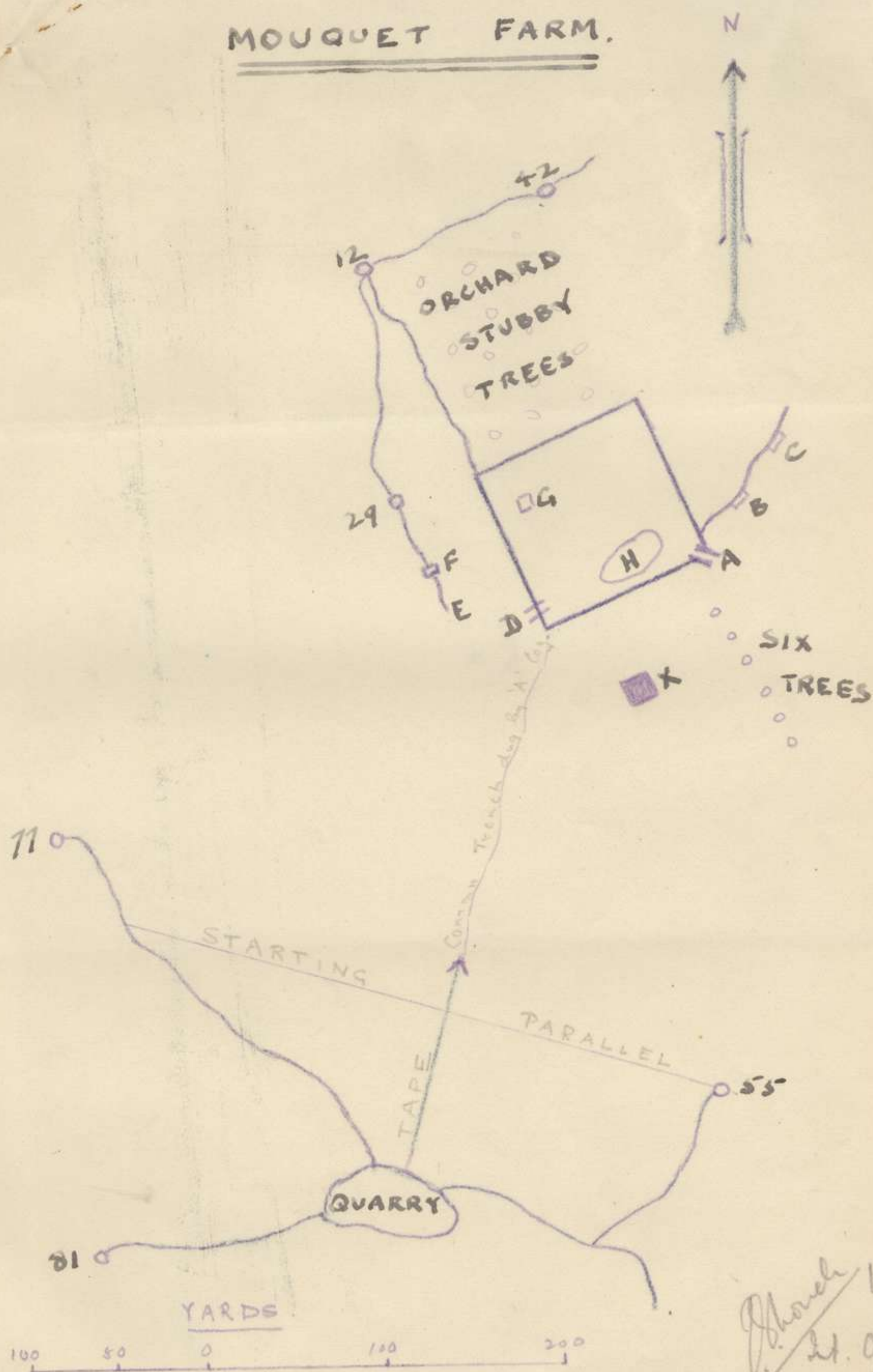
I consider that nothing good enough can be said for such men. I can only trace 12 men who did not actually go forward in perfect order. Not a single man fell out from lack of heart or physique or sore feet during the whole March from ALBERT to ANFLIER. Their demeanour since coming out has been entirely cheerful and exemplary to date.

Am Ross

O.C. 51st Battalion.

Lieutenant-Colonel.

App II.

MOUQUET FARM.

Shore L^r
Lt. Off.
51st. Bn.
5-9-1916.

Report of MOUQUET FARM compiled from information supplied by Bombers of 51st. Battalion A.I.F.

Reference enlarged sketch of Farm.
.....

X. Mound to S. of Farm.

This was apparently a building on the South of the MOUQUET-COURCELETTE Road-now a ruin. There is a big dug-out here-which was bombed. Three snipers were killed here. After the 1st Mopping up party, a German Machine-gun opened fire from here-but it was put out of action almost immediately-presumably by another mopping-up party.

A.

This appears to be the most important dug-out. A German machine-gun was in position here, bombs were thrown by us and one machine gunner was killed and the remainder captured (8)-also the gun. This was sent back to the QUARRY with the prisoners (who carried it) (Information from another source states that the Gun was subsequently destroyed by a German Shell)

A party then went down the dug-out and found a wooden partition at the bottom-apparently a Temporary affair as it was chiefly composed of deal boards. A Lewis-gun was fired into it and part of it was destroyed. Bombs were then thrown through the breach by both sides. Our party then retired up the steps and dropped a smoke bomb-but the smoke all came back in our faces. A German prisoner was then brought and he invited the others to surrender but they did not do so-and our bombers left a Guard over the entrance and the remainder moved on.

B.

Cement dug-out -entrance covered with bags old clothing etc. one wounded German captured here. Informant thinks this was connected with A. by underground passage.

C.

Several battered dug-outs here.

D. Two wooden air-shafts here -unable to see down-bombs were dropped down.

E. Some old Machine-gun positions here-blown in.

F. One of our Lewis-guns was placed in position here but subsequently sent forward.

G. Battered dug-out bombed.

H. Very large celler-about 20' deep-a smoke bomb was dropped down and smoke was seen to issue from the debris in a number of places in the area within the circle. (H) Informants do not think H. was connected with A.-and the fact that the celler had no sound roof would rather support the theory that this is one of the old farm cellars and not a German bomb-proof.

There was a battered trench C-B and continuing on through the Farm which our "C" Company started to deepen with the idea of joining up with the Communication Trench from the S.W. corner of the Farm to the head of the tape being dug by "A" Company. Both these trenches were subsequently obliterated by German shell fire.

(s)

Generally

All seem of the opinion that the Farm area is full of under-ground galleries, as when it was shelled with heavy artillery the whole place seemed to shake.

Eight very large shells probably 1st coming from the direction of THIEPVAL fell on the Farm but the fire ceased abruptly.

A reliable man who was in a shellhole near F. throughout the day of the 3rd August 1916 and came in on night of the 3rd/4th, states that he did not see any Germans in the Farm, but that they were working round the East of the Farm through the gap between the 51st and 52nd Battalions. He states that "B" and "D" Coys. were North and East of the Farm and that there was no one to the left of the Farm. He and two other wounded men crawled back along SIX TREES and came in on line held by party of 50th Battalion near point 55.

51st Battalion.
5-8-16.

Am Row

Lieutenant. Colonel
Int. Officer 51st Battalion.

App III

MARCHING OUT AND ENTRAINMENT STATE OF 51ST. BATTALION.

U N I T		Officers	Other Ranks	Horses	Mules	2 Wld.	4 Wld.cles	M.G.Carts	
51st. Battn.		12	541 361	29	26	22	4	9	3

Am Ross
O.C. 51st. Battal. Lieutenant-Colonel.

51st. Battalion. *Aph. IV*

13th. Aus. Inf. Bde.

30-9-16

DAILY STRENGTH

U N I T	On Establishment				Attached.				Remarks.	
	Offs.	O/Ranks.	Tot.	Horses.	Offs.	O/Ranks.	Tot.	Horses.		
51st. Battalion	18	536	554	56	2	4	6	Nil	From Reins	13
Details.	3	169	172						Hos.	1

Am Ross
Lieutenant-Colonel.
O.C. 51st. Battalion.