

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

Railways

Item number: 15/6/2

Title: 5th Australian Broad Gauge Railway
Operating Company

December 1917



AWM4-15/6/2

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.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

59th
AUSTRALIAN B.G.
FLY. O. BOY.
No.
Date 3.1.18

Army Form C. 2118.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
<u>Original</u>				
<u>Confidential</u>				
<u>War Diary</u>				
<u>59th (Australian) Broad Gauge Railway Operating Boy</u>				
<u>From</u> 1.12.1917 <u>To</u> 31.12.1917				

59th (Aust.) B. G. Rly Operating Coy

WAR DIARY

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Peselhoek	1/12		Weather. Cold, cloudy	
BELGIUM	1/19		<u>Railway Operations</u> Traffic quiet. Mine earth continues to occupy first place. During the night an overloaded truck of this material derailed twice before it could be off-shunted. It was loaded with about fifteen tons and was only in a condition to carry about five. These low-sided trucks used for this class of traffic are subject to a very heavy strain, and old trucks are continually collapsing.	
	2/12		Weather. Cold & showery	
	1/19		<u>Railway Operations</u> Four trucks of an empty troop train left the rails at South Loop whilst being shunted into a siding. Spread rails were responsible.	

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Pe set back	3		<u>Weather</u> . Cold & windy.	
BELGIUM	12/19/17		<u>Railway Operations</u> . The troop train again derailed at South Loop when being stalled in siding, the defective tracks being responsible.	
	4		<u>Weather</u> . Mild. Slight fall of snow.	
	12/19/17		<u>Enemy Action</u> . Enemy planes over during the night, and bombs dropped. Landing near the Depot.	
			<u>General</u> . A parade was held at 14.30 o'clock, and the vote of the men available from duty was taken on the Conscription Referendum. Lts Bolton and Johnston acting as Returning Officers.	

59th (Aust) B. G. Rly Oh boy.

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Peselhaek	5 - 17		<u>Weather</u> . Frost. Clear bright day. <u>Enemy Action</u> . Hostile aircraft very active over our lines during the day.	
	6 - 17		<u>Weather</u> . Frost again and another bright day. <u>Enemy aircraft</u> very active during the night. Shunting & general operation considerably interrupted. <u>Railway Working</u> . Four trucks derailed at east end of yard, due to "splitting" of points. The break-down gang repaired same in good time.	
	7 - 17		<u>General</u> . Lieutenant Bolton left on 14 days furlough. <u>Weather</u> . A thaw set in during the night, mild day. <u>Railway Operations</u> . Ordnance traffic heavier than usual to-day. Empty munition boxes are gathered here from advanced dumps & reloaded to Calais. Chinese labor is used for sorting and reloading. This work is under the direction of the X.C.B. Ordnance staff.	

59th (Australians) B. G. Rly Op. Coy

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Pesethoek	8/12/19		<p><u>Weather.</u> mild & sunny</p> <p><u>General.</u> Water supply for engines is now available at St Jean. A pumping plant has been installed on the Yser Canal bank, and pipe line laid to St Jean, where a 10000 gallon overhead tank has been erected.</p> <p>Voting on the Subscription Referendum took place here to-day. A majority of the votes available were recorded.</p>	
	9/12/19		<p><u>Weather.</u> Showery</p> <p><u>Railway Operations.</u> A number of trucks were damaged and derailed near St Jean through a collision</p> <p><u>General.</u> The polling booth again opened to record votes on the Referendum this morning.</p>	

159 1/2 (Aust.) B.G. Railway Operating Boy

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Pesethoek	10		Weather fine - sunny	
Belgium	12		General. To secure all the votes of our men in the forward section as far as Wietze, a special train was run, composed of a covered truck & engine. Tables were arranged in the truck and a corner screened off for the voters. Lieut Johnston acted as returning officer with L.S.M. Grant assisting Sapper Jenkins as Poll Clerk. The train stopped at all cabins where there were votes to collect. Along the Yser Canal, votes were taken of a crew of men who are standing by a big gun with an engine. At St Jean a number of votes were collected, and then, attaching to assembly truck train, the last vote was collected at Wietze. Overhead hereabouts a fleet of Gothos was returning from a bombing raid along the line we just had passed over, and their lighter escort were being actually attacked by our aircraft. Our heavy guns	

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Pesethoek BELGIUM	10 12 17	Cont	were reground, replying to the German attempts to regain Baaschendale, whilst a line of enemy balloons looked down on us, directing here and there, their artillery's attempts to catch our line or the moving columns streaming along adjacent roads. Voting under these conditions makes a memorable occasion, and the novelty of the polling booth on rails excited much curiosity among the officers and men of the British force along the line. Enemy Action. In addition to the bombing by the Gotha as above noted, the enemy shelled St Jean station during the morning. A number of casualties occurred amongst the troops stationed in the vicinity, but the yard escaped damage. During the night, gas was freely used by the enemy over a large area. The alert alarm was given in this	

59^{1/2} (and) B.G. R.O. Coy.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Reselhoek BELGIUM	10 12 14		Gas depot between 8 and 9 p.m.; but no gas penetrated this far.	
	11 12 14		Weather. Cold. Enemy planes overhead during the night. Heavy bombardment proceeding.	
	12 12 14		Railway Operations. During the week troop trains with our staffs have been running between Godeswaerwede (half way between Poperinghe & Hazebrouck) and Willebe, via Ypres a run of approx. thirty kilometres.	
			Weather. Mild. Railway Operations. Apart from the regular traffic, a considerable quantity of ammunition is being shunted to the X.C.B. dumps.	

59^M (Am.) B. G. Ply. Ch. Coy.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Peselhoek Belgium	13 <u>12</u> 17		<p><u>Weather</u> - Continues mild.</p> <p><u>Enemy action</u> - During the day the enemy shelled Hazebrouck with long range guns. Owing to damage to the French lines there, Bone could not accept any empty mine earth trucks. Telephone lines were also blown down, and only one line was available to Bone.</p>	
	14 <u>12</u> 17		<p><u>Railway Operations</u>. The following are the figures for Total loaded wagons conveyed for the week ending yesterday</p> <p>troops 1636 Ordnance 682 Construction 1257 Ambulances 280 a total of 3855. The total loaded wagon kilometres being 29109.</p> <p>In this return, in accordance with a new R.O.D. regulation credit is taken for all traffic worked over the section, whether by our engines or otherwise.</p> <p>Enemy still shelling Hazebrouck - but Bone accepted our traffic to-day.</p>	

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Peselhoek Belgium	15/12/17		<u>Weather</u> . Snowing lightly. <u>Enemy action</u> . During the day Diepbeke was heavily shelled. A line was blown up, isolating an engine until repairs were effected.	
	16/12/17		<u>Weather</u> . Cold & snowing. <u>General</u> . Chinese who have been employed at this spot on loading and general fatigue have been withdrawn and Jamaicans substituted.	
	17/12/17		<u>Weather</u> continues very cold. <u>Railway Operations</u> . Most of the engine power is being utilized for work towards the head of the section. One engine is with the 113 R.E. Construction Co., another standing on a 9.2 gun of the 58 th Battery at B5 near the Yser Canal, five are stationed at Reigensberg for shunting and banking to and at the advanced stations.	

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Reselhook BELGIUM	18 12 17		<p><u>Weather</u>. Frost.</p> <p><u>General</u>. Pumping plant at Yper Canal supplying St-Jean's tanks fails. No water available. Fitter in charge effecting repairs.</p> <p><u>Enemy Action</u>. Heavy bombardment proceeding in this section. St-Jean's station shelled during the afternoon. The troop train, with Sgt Goldworthy in charge, had to draw out of the station and load the troops from a safer position.</p>	
	19 12 17		<p><u>Weather</u>. Frost continues.</p> <p><u>Enemy Action</u>. The only damage to the rolling stock at St-Jean's yesterday was one brake van which registered a direct hit, resulting in complete wreck. These lines were blown up. Repairs were promptly carried out by the B.G.</p>	

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Peschoek BELGIUM	20 12 14		<p>Weather. Frost continuing.</p> <p>Railway Operations. The following figures cover operations in loaded traffic. Troops 782 trucks, Ordnance 249 construction 1060 and Ambulance 128. Loaded wagon kilometres 16839. It will be noted these figures generally reflect the comparative quietness of this front. Two other main lines, under R.O.D. control supply our advanced section. The main line running from Poperinghe to Ypres where it junctions with the Ypres-Boesinghe line, and the line from Dunkirk via Bergues and Proven which joins the Ypres-Boesinghe line about a mile north of where the Midland junctions. Ambulance trains work over this latter line to Proven (Mendughem), whilst general traffic is worked via Ypres-Poperinghe line. Our daily troop train which works from Peschoek</p>	<p>maps in preparat- ion to illustrate</p>

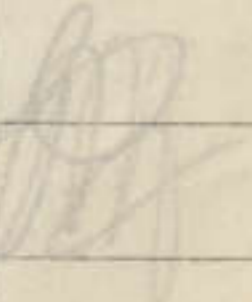
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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Peselhook Belgium	20 12 17		<p><u>Cont.</u> - to Wiltje leaving here at 5.30 am daily with a labor boy and completing the loading at Hospital Farm & Brielev. This train is utilised when necessary to run empty to Godewaersvelde - between Poperinghe and Hazebrouck, picks up a load of troops, returning to Wiltje in time to return with the troops for detrainning on this line.</p>	
	21 12 17		<p><u>Weather.</u> Frost continuing - giving to most of our men two new experiences. The sight of a frost enveloped world, and the chance to slide or skate upon the frozen ponds.</p> <p><u>General.</u> 296 R.C. Coy advise patrol have been withdrawn from the Midland line.</p> <p>Water is available to day at St-Jean, but can only be supplied during the daytime.</p>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Peselhook BELGIUM	21 13 17		<p><u>Strength of Unit:</u> ^{Duty} NCOs & men, 228, Hospital 5, Attached Trench Interpreters 1. A.S.L. Motor Drivers 2. Total 236 R.O.D.R.E. attachment Duty 42, leave W.W.K. 15. Absent without leave 2. Total 59. Total on Duty 290.</p>	
	22 13 17		<p><u>Weather.</u> Frost thawed mild bright day. <u>General.</u> Lieut. Bolton returned from W.K. furlough <u>Reinforcements.</u> Eleven Australian reinforcements arrived and attached.</p>	
			<p><u>Railway Operations.</u> Generally quiet. Some trouble with unloaded stone at "Hors' Fours" not cleared and impossible to move emptied trucks.</p>	
			<p><u>Strength.</u> Hospital 5. Leave 1. Duty 238 attached leave 2 Duty 4 R.O.D.R.E. do. Absent 2 Leave 15 Duty 38 Total Duty 280</p>	
			<p>A6945 Wt. W11422/M1160 350,000 12/16 D. D. & L. Forms/C./2118/14.</p>	

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Peselhoek BELGIUM	23 12 19		Weather. Hard frost. Bright day.	
			Enemy planes very active during the night.	
			Strength. Hospital 5. Leave 1. Duty 238 Attached:- Leave 2. Duty 8 R.O.D.R.E. " Absent 2. Leave 15. Duty 48 Total Duty 287	
	24 12 19		Weather. Frost thawed. Misty showers.	
			Reinforcements. Five men arrived from the light Railways, being part of the detachment brought here by mistake in October & later sent on to the light Rlys.	
			Strength. Hospital 5. Leave 1. Duty 238 Attached:- leave 2 " 8 R.O.D.R.E. do. do. 14 Absent 1 " 44 Total Duty 290	
	25 12 19		Weather. Mild - light snow fall Railway. Quiet day. Troop train cancelled. Operations	

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Peselhaek BELGIUM	26 12 17		<p><u>Weather</u> Snowing</p> <p><u>Enemy Action</u> Wiertze station and vicinity heavily shelled. One line blown up. Concentration of troops trains there and at St Jean evidently observed.</p> <p><u>Strength</u> :- Hospital 5. Leave 1. Duty 243</p> <p>Attached:- do 2. do 8</p> <p>Ro. D. R. E. do. Absent 3 do 13 do 43 <u>Total Duty 294</u></p>	
	27 12 17		<p><u>Weather</u> Snowing clear during night.</p> <p><u>Enemy Action</u> Planes over during night but no bombs dropped near. Heavy bombardment of artillery.</p> <p><u>Railway Operation</u> Truck badly derailed at Buffs Rd between Wiertze & St Julien. Break-down Gang out to replace</p>	
			<p><u>Strength</u> Total for Duty 298. 2 R.E. returned from leave 2 of the Hospital patients returned</p>	

A6945 Wt. W11422/M1160 350,000 12/16 D. D. & L. Forms/C./2118/14.

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Peselebeck BELGIUM	28 12 17		<p><u>Weather</u>. Very cold. North wind blowing. Snow freezing.</p> <p><u>Enemy Action</u>. Wicly station shelled. One line blown up.</p> <p><u>Railway Operations</u>. R.O.D. 44 returns for week ending yesterday shows a large increase in loaded troop wagons, i.e. 1550 against 782 for the week previous. Ordnance 214. Construction 1073 & Ambulance 112. New little change. The total loaded wagon kilometers 23188.</p> <p><u>Strength</u>. HoP. 2 Leave 2 Duty 245</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Attached:</td> <td>do.</td> <td>2</td> <td>do.</td> <td>8</td> <td>Total Duty</td> </tr> <tr> <td>R.O.D. R.F. do.</td> <td>Absent</td> <td>3</td> <td>do.</td> <td>12</td> <td>do.</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> <td>44</td> <td>297</td> </tr> </table>	Attached:	do.	2	do.	8	Total Duty	R.O.D. R.F. do.	Absent	3	do.	12	do.					44	297	
Attached:	do.	2	do.	8	Total Duty																	
R.O.D. R.F. do.	Absent	3	do.	12	do.																	
				44	297																	
	29 12 17		<p><u>Weather</u>. Mildew - wind dropped.</p> <p><u>Railway Operations</u>. K.O.C. spur on the Kortelbeek branch is the situation of a salvage dump. Our service is not moving an increasing quantity of salvage from this place.</p>																			

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Peselkoox	29 12 19		Strength. Hope. 2 leave 2 Duty 245 attached: ✓ do. 2 do. 8 Total Duty 297	
BELGIUM	30 12 19		R.O.D.R.E. do. absent 3 do. 12 General. The weather today is mild and the snow thawing. Traffic is very quiet, and routine duties are the main occupation.	
	31 12 19		Weather. Freezing again Enemy action. A large fleet of hostile aircraft over at 6 p.m. Bombs were dropped in the neighbourhood. One dropping close to the camp was luckily a dud, its 'mate' struck the road further on, shaking up & splattering our huts. No damage resulted to any of our lines, although the dumps at Arrival Farm and P.A. ^{sidings} were was bombed - unsuccessfully. Water supply. Pipe line between tank and International Corner Pumping Station burst through water freezing.	

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Peselthock	31		<p>Cont^g Health. December. Generally speaking the health of the company has been excellent. There were six hospital cases, inclusive of two men of the R.O.D. R.E. attached. One of these R.E. 239496 Sapper Mycock removed to hospital on the 13.12.1917 died there the same day. The other R.E. was a V.D. case. Of our four men, two returned from hospital and the others still remain there. Sickness and casualties to Hospital show July-6. August-13. September-22. October-13. November-5. The weather in the latter part of December has been very severe, but so far the men are standing it well.</p> <p>Strength. Hospital 2. Leave 5. Duty 242 attached ✓ do 2 do. 8 ^{total} R.O.D.R.E. do. do. 1. do. 10 absent 2 do. 46 ^{total} 296</p>	
BELGIUM	12/17			
	30			
	31			
	12/17			