

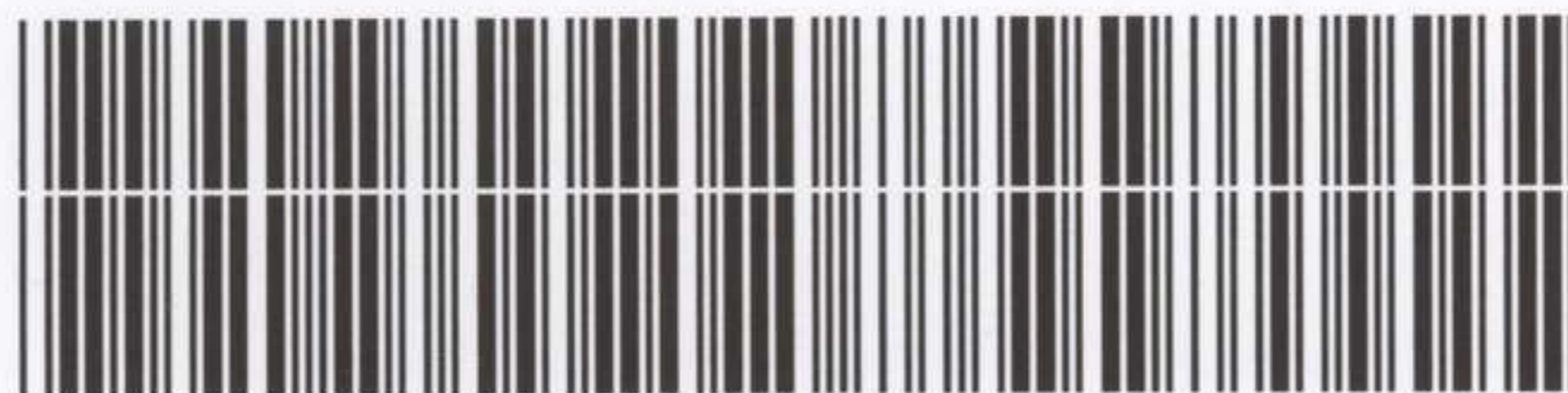
**AWM4**  
**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,**  
**1914-18 War**

Infantry

**Item number:** 23/70/14

**Title:** 53rd Infantry Battalion

September 1917



AWM4-23/70/14

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WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
1917	1917			
Lyndee	Sept 1		Lieut - Col. O. M. Croshaw D.O. resumed command of the Battalion today	
	2		1 Platoon per Coy to carry out new attack formations, remainder of Battalion carried out route march	
	3		Lieut W. C. Jennings marched in from 14th Training Battalion	
	4		Lecture on Anti-Gas measures at 5.30pm at Blarneyham for officers	
	5		Battalion Parade for inspection by G.O. & training in offensive action	
	7		Training of Platoons in offensive action carried out during the morning - Afternoon training Lewis Gunners under 2 <sup>nd</sup> Lieut Ridley, Bombers under bombing officer, Signallers under Signalling officer - Remainder of Coys for Assault Training under A. S. M. Bingham Lecture to officers at Blarneyham on the systems of supply from Base to Rail-head.	
				P. J. Roberts Capt.

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Place	Date 1917	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Lyndee	Sept 8		<p>Training - Signallers, Lewis Gunners, Bombers under specialist officers, Remainder of Coys Assault Practice.</p> <p>Lecture at Blarneyham for officers, "Employment of Bombers in Attacking the New German Defensive System."</p>	
		9	<p>Church Parades, 7 of P marched in &amp; posted to Coys.</p>	
		10	<p>Battalion carried out Attack Scheme</p>	
			<p>12 of Panks marched in &amp; are posted to Coys.</p>	
			<p>Lecture at Blarneyham for officers on "Forward Traffic Communications during offensive operations"</p>	
		11	<p>Battalion carried out Attack Scheme. G.O.C. 5th Division &amp; G.O.C. 14th</p>	
			<p>Brigade were present.</p>	
			<p>Promotion - Capt J.R. S. G. Beard M.C. (P.M.O) to be Major.</p>	
			<p>2 of Panks marched in from details and are posted to Coys</p>	
		12	<p>Battalion carried out an Attack Scheme. G.O.C. 5th Aust Division</p>	
			<p>&amp; G.O.C. 14th Brigade were present.</p>	
			<p>Lecture on Anti Gas Measures for 7 Coys at Blarneyham by P. J. Roberts Capt.</p>	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118. 267

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Lyndee	13 <sup>th</sup> Sept		<p>P.M.O. carried out foot inspection &amp; reported the feet of the men in good order. He then gave a lecture on 'First Aid'.</p> <p>Cops at the disposal of Coy Commandant for inspection &amp; taking shortages in equipment etc.</p> <p>Pay available today.</p>	
	14 Sept		<p>Lecture on 'Artillery' at Blarneyham for officers.</p>	
	15 <sup>th</sup> Sept		<p>Battalion carried out attack as part of the brigade G.C. 6th Division &amp; G.C. 14th Brigade were present.</p> <p>Baths available this afternoon.</p> <p>The Divisional Gas Officer gave all men of the battalion a smell of 'Mustard Gas'.</p>	
	16 <sup>th</sup>		<p>Church Parades.</p>	
	17		<p>The Battalion moved by march route to Menwood area. Light lunch &amp; tea provided for all ranks on the march. March discipline good.</p>	

P. J. Roberts  
Capt.

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WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1917			
Steenwoorde	Sept 18		The Battalion move by March Route to Remunghurst. March discipline good.	
Remunghurst	19		Coys at disposal of Coy Commanders for rifle inspection etc.	
	20		Battalion resting. Boy Respiration drill carried out after dark 18 W Ranks marched in (Reinforcement & details) were posted to Coys Battalion ordered to be ready to move at short notice.	
	22		Battalion moved to Half-way House & to be in Reserve.	
Half Way House			No casualties during move.	
	24		29 W Ranks (Reinforcement & details) marched in and are posted to Companies.	
	22/29		Detailed report attached herewith.	
			Health & physical condition of troops during month was good.	

P. J. Roberts  
Capt.

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ACCOUNT OF OPERATIONS TAKEN PART IN BY THE 53rd BATTALION  
BETWEEN 22nd AND 30th SEPTEMBER, 1917.

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(1) In Reserve and Support.

At about 5.30 p.m. on 22nd September the Battalion moved from the CHATEAU SEGARD AREA to the HALFWAY HOUSE AREA where it bivouaced in trenches and shelters. The strength of the Battalion was 21 Officers and 676 other ranks. The Battalion remained here in Reserves until the night of 24/26 September: parties from the Battalion were on various tactical working parties, the remainder resting. The enemy shelled this vicinity at periods and caused a number of casualties. On the night of the 24/25 September the Battalion moved into Support in front of GLENCOURSE WOOD where it remained until moving up to the assembly point. Only 3 casualties were suffered moving up. Very heavy shell fire was encountered during the whole time the Battalion remained in Support, "B" Company especially suffering very heavy losses and having one Officer (Lieut. W.C. JENNINGS) killed.

(2) Assembly and Formations.

At 12 midnight 25/26 September the Battalion moved up to take its position at the Assembly Point, 1 Officer and 5 Other ranks being wounded on the way up (the Officer Lieut. A.O. CORREY, subsequently dying of his wounds).

The Battalion reached its position at 3.15 a.m. being delayed owing to a barrage being put up by the enemy the crossing of which would have entailed heavy casualties.

The Battalion was assembled on a 2 Coy. front covering an area of 550 Yards by 20 Yards. "A" Coy. were in front on the left with "B" Coy. in Support, "D" Coy. were in front on the right with "C" Coy. in Support. The formation (as far as the natural cover afforded by the shell holes allowed) was lines of sections in single file. Battalion H.Q. was in the middle of the 2 Support Companies.

The Signalling Officer (2/Lieut. J.E. BLACKNEY) had been sent back to details by the R.M.O. that afternoon and the Lewis Gun Officer (Lieut. H.C.W. PAIN) was evacuated with Shell Shock as the Battalion was moving up to the Assembly Point.

While waiting at the Assembly Point the enemy shelled the area at intervals, most of the shells however burst behind the Battalion and only 1 casualty was sustained.

The R.M.O. established his AID POST on the outskirts of GLENCOURSE WOOD.

The strength of the Battalion at zero hour was 16 Officers 507 other ranks.

(3) The Attack.

Punctually at zero hour (5.50 a.m.) our barrage opened and the Battalion immediately rose and doubled across "No Man's Land" till reaching about 60 yards short of the barrage where the men knelt down waiting for it to begin to creep forward. The formations of sections in single file was kept here and throughout the operations.

When the barrage began to creep two platoons preceded by a line of scouts went forward, the remainder following when the proper distances had been set up. The two rear Coys. moved in column of platoons with each platoon in lines of sections in single file the two rear platoons of each rear Company keeping behind Battalion H.Q. as the Battalion reserve.

P.T.O.

P.J. Roberts  
Capt.

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The formations and methods of Attacking strong posts as laid down and practised proved entirely satisfactory and effective, and I cannot suggest anything to better these principles. Resistance from "Pill-Boxes" and strong posts was encountered almost immediately but in no case was the Advance checked. In one case a strong post was encountered and machine gun fire opened on the attackers; immediately a C.S.M. and about half a dozen men worked round the flnks while a Lewis Gun and team opened direct fire on the position drawing the enemy fire off the enveloping parties who were then easily able to work round, rush the position with bombs and the bayonet, and account for the occupants and capture the gun.

In spite of a fairly heavy mist direction was well maintained by working on compass bearings which had been previously taken. On reaching the BUTTE the two platoons which had been previously detailed to occupy it rushed the position and established themselves on the top after slight fighting. Sentries were placed on all entrances to the dugouts and bombing parties were organised and worked down the passages, several of these were met with fire from inside the dugout and retaliated with grenades, eventually driving the occupants into one compartment, and as they still continued firing grenades were thrown amongst them and several wounded; the remainder consisting of 2 Officers and 56 others then surrendered.

The objective was reached at 6.25 a.m.

Companies were at once organised and began to consolidate under cover of the protected barrage.

Just before reaching the objective the Commanding Officer (Lt. Col. O.M. CROSHAW, D.S.O.) was reported missing and Captain P.T. ROBERTS assumed command of the Battalion.

The casualties in the actual attack are estimated at 2 Officers (Lt. Col. CROSHAW, whom it afterwards transpired died of wounds, and Captain C.A. JHONSON, who was wounded in the arm) and about 40 other ranks.

(4) Communications.

Immediately the mist lifted communication was established with Brigade by means of the Lucas Lamp and during the whole of the operations communication was maintained by pigeon service, relay runner posts and power buzzer.

(5) Consolidation, Counter attacks, etc.

By the time the barrage moved on towards the 2nd objective the Battalion was established on the RED Line having dug well in though under heavy fire from Machine Guns and Snipers on the right front and enemy planes which were flying very low over our lines. Communication had also been established on both flanks. Very shortly after reaching the objective an immediate counter attack was launched against the BUTTE but was easily repulsed with Lewis and Machine Gun Fire and about 20 more prisoners including 1 Officer surrendered.

During the attack 9 Machine Guns were captured one being used from a strong point on the left flank and 2 by the party from the 14th Brigade Machine Gun Coy. attached to the Battalion, the remainder, all of which were wholly or partially destroyed, were also handed to the Machine Gun Company. No difficulty was experienced in getting ammunition for the supply of these guns.

(6) Several patrols were sent out in and around the Battalion Area to deal with individual snipers and in every case these were successful.

Machine Guns were mounted on top of the BUTTE where they had the very best of observation and a splendid field of fire and were able to render invaluable service in assisting to beat off all threatened counter attacks, and the excellent work done by this party from the 14th Brigade Machine Gun Company is deserving of every praise: observation of their shooting showed the excellent results achieved by them and the casualties inflicted were enormous. Communication was maintained with the Advance Battalions and at the request of the O.C. Firing Line, 56th Battalion 3 Machine Guns and all S.A.A. that could be spared were sent forward.

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The Battalion had consolidated in depth but owing to heavy shell fire on all back areas and heavy casualties these parties had to be brought forward to the RED LINE. One and a half Companies were kept well under cover on the BUTTE as a Battalion reserve. Two Aid Posts were established and Stretcher Bearers dealt with all wounded at these Posts. As far as possible prisoners were used as bearers, but before long all means forward the removal of wounded were exhausted.

This lasted till next morning, when the R.M.O. came forward bringing up 20 bearing parties with him and from that time the steady evacuation of all wounded was maintained.

The First Heavy Counter Attack on the BLUE LINE was at about 7 p.m. that evening when the enemy made several attempts to attack, but on each occasion was frustrated and very severe casualties inflicted by the Artillery and Machine Guns. The Artillery F.O.O. attached to this Battalion (2/Lieut. MONEY) rendered invaluable service in this connection.

The supply of ammunition and rations under Brigade arrangements could not have been better.

The period from the night of 26/27 September till the Battalion came out on the night of the 29/30 September was occupied by improving the line and continuing the work of consolidation, wire being erected along the whole front and good trenches dug. The enemy shelling was heavy but not continuous. Several attempts to counter attack were made but none at any time reached the stage of becoming really serious, owing to the magnificent barrage put up by our Artillery and Machine Guns.

On the morning of the 27th September an enemy plane of the "GOtha" type flew low along our lines firing its machine gun; several Lewis and Machine Guns opened fire, and the plane was brought down just in rear of our lines and behind the Battalion on our right flank.

The spirit of the men at all times was excellent and showed them to be in splendid physical condition. On the night of the 29/30 September the Battalion returned to HALF WAY HOUSE area and on the following night to PIONEER CAMP.

On both occasions getting through with no casualties.

The total casualties suffered by the Battalion were:-

	Officers.	Other Ranks.
KILLED AND DIED OF WOUNDS... ..	3	63
WOUNDED... ..	4	222
HOSPITAL... .. (N.Y.D.N.)..	1	41
MISSING... ..	-	16
Total... ..	8.	342

The new method of the wearing of the Entrenching Tool Head proved very efficacious. At least three instances in this Battalion casualties were averted as Machine Gun bullets were found embedded in the Web Covering of the Entrenching Tool Head.

P. Y. Roberts  
Capt.