

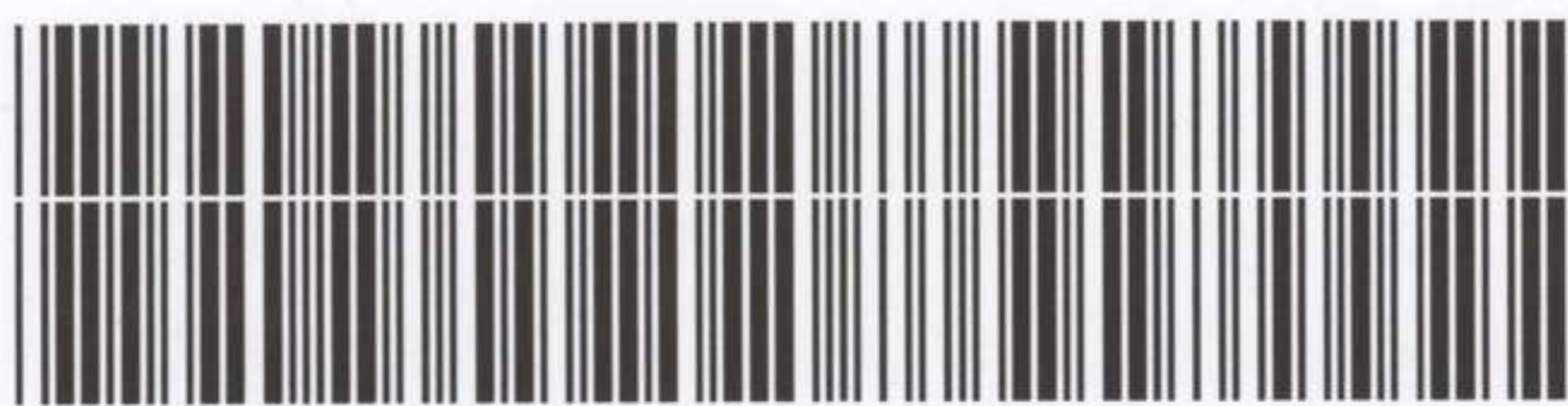
AWM4
Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War

Infantry

Item number: 23/70/17

Title: 53rd Infantry Battalion

December 1917



AWM4-23/70/17

CONFIDENTIAL

261

ORIGINAL

WAR DIARY

53RD BATTALION

VOLUME N^o 22

PAGES N^o VII

APPENDICES N^o IV

A.I.F.

1-12-17 to 31-12-17

W Cheeseman
LIEUT COLONEL

COMMANDING 53RD BATTN

WAR DIARY
 or
 INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Par. 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
KENMEL AREA 1917 FAMILLIES CAMP	Dec. 1		<p>Companies were at the disposal of Coy Commanders for reorganisation and training during the morning. In the afternoon the opening match of the football season was played between the Officers and N.C.O.'s. The latter winning by a small margin after an exciting game.</p>	
	2		<p>The Battalion attended the various Combined Church Services at KEMMEL. During the morning the Divisional Commander inspected FAMILLIES CAMP and expressed his satisfaction with the appearance of the men and orderly conduct of the Camp.</p>	
	3		<p>All Respirators and P.H. helmets were inspected by the Brigade gas representative. There was a general resumption of organised training. The hours of training were from 8.30 am to 12.30 pm. Lieut N Jackson rejoined the Battalion from the 14th Training Battalion England.</p>	
	4		<p>Besides the usual training, parties were engaged on the</p>	

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RAMILLIES CAMP	1917 4		erection of walls around all huts as a protection against bombs from hostile aircraft. This work was carried on daily till the Battalion moved from the camp.	
	5/8		Pay was distributed. The Battalion carried out ² route marches of about 8 miles each, through KEMMEL, LOURE, DRANOUTRE and through NEUVE EGLISE, DRANOUTRE to Camp. The men just from the line had made a marked improvement in the bearing of the men who were also enthusiastic in their training and sports. Capt C.A. THOMPSON MC, Lt AH PETTIFER and 2nd Lt AW COOPER, who were wounded in the fighting around YPRES, rejoined.	
	9		Capt T Manning reported to the Battalion to take over the duties of Capt J Kennedy, ^{D.50} R.C. Chaplain, transferred.	
	10/ 11		Baths were allotted to the Battalion and clean clothing obtained. A muster parade of all ranks was held to check nominal rolls etc preparatory to moving out of the area to rest billets.	

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RAMILLIES Camp	1917		<p>N^o 1667 Lt Cpl P Gossin of C Coy was awarded the Military Medal for conspicuous gallantry while the Battalion was in the WYTSCHEETE sector. Colonel W. R. Chessman M.C. left for PARIS on leave & Major J. J. Murray M.C. assumed Command of the Battalion during his absence.</p>	
RAMILLIES Camp DESUVRES	13		<p>The Battalion moved to DESUVRES en route to the FRENGA rest area by march route to DE KENNEBEK and train from that place to DESUVRES. (Operation order see Appendix II). We arrived at 9 pm and were billeted in large Cement works 1 1/4 miles from the station.</p>	<p>Operation order Appendix II</p>
DESUVRES MENTY	14		<p>Hot ka was served out as the men marched from the train. The remainder of the journey was made by march route to MENTY - via SAMER - a distance of about 8 miles. (Operation order see Appendix III). Our billets were fairly comfortable but were scattered over a considerable area. Headquarters were at MENTY and the Companies at other small villages about a mile distant. Platoons were also scattered.</p>	<p>Appendix III</p>

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MENTY	1917 Dec 14		The surrounding country being flat with a high range of hills forming a background, not a mile distant, fair promise of good training and recreation for the future.	
	15		The day was given over to the improvement of billets which were made more comfortable by the addition of straw and general repairs. The transport, which had made the journey from FAMILIES Camp by road, arrived during the day after a four days trip.	
	16		2Lt JH Griffin and 2Lt CM Webb joined the Battalion together with 6 other reinforcements. The first snow of the season fell during the afternoon and night.	
	17		Snow continued to fall, the whole country being covered to a depth of 2-4 inches.	
	19		The C.O lectured to all officers on "Lessons learnt during our recent tour in the line". Several interesting subjects were discussed.	

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MENTY	1917 Dec 20/24		<p>Several improvements were made to billets and the men supplied with straw & palisades. 12 reinforcements joined the Battalion, these men looked fit and were up to the usual standard of reinforcements.</p> <p>Spirits [Davis and HM Risnor who left in August to attend the Cadet School at Oxford, while NCO's rejoined.</p> <p>Training was carried out during the mornings the work was chiefly - Duties of guards & sentries, Platoon and Coy drill, physical exercises, bayonet fighting, musketry, gas drill and lectures on trench and open warfare for the benefit of new men.</p>	
	25		<p>The CO issued the following special order: "I desire to wish all ranks a Happy and as Bright a Xmas as is possible under the circumstances and to express my appreciation of the excellent work done by all ranks during the year. Hope the standard of efficiency will be maintained</p>	

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MENTY	1917 Dec 25		<p>during the Coming Year so that fresh laurels may be added to the already illustrious name of the 53rd. Messages were received from the Corps, Division and Brigade Commanders (see Appendix IV). Feasting accommodation was arranged for each Coy and the men sat down to a dinner which more than satisfied even the most voracious and was unparalleled in the history of the Battalion. We were grateful to the Aist Comfort Fund for their help in this direction. The C.O. addressed the men during their dinner.</p>	Appendix IV
	26/31		<p>Parties worked on the construction of bombing and rifle ranges. The morning's training - 8.30 am to 12.30 pm included: field work by platoons in the new organisation of sections, musketry, a Battalion outpost scheme, bomb throwing and range firing. In the afternoon sporting events were contested and on Rugby, Soccer and</p>	

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MENTY	1917 Dec 26/27		Australasian rules teams played in the Brigade competition matches.																													
			The old year went out quietly leaving the Battalion with a faster determination, more experience and equal fighting qualities and strength to that of last year, ready to take its share of the struggle in 1918.																													
			<table border="0"> <tr> <td>Effective strength</td> <td>1st Dec</td> <td></td> <td>31st Dec</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Actually with unit</td> <td>26</td> <td>647</td> <td>30 754</td> </tr> <tr> <td>On Brigade duties</td> <td></td> <td>48</td> <td>45</td> </tr> <tr> <td>In hospital</td> <td></td> <td>29</td> <td>23</td> </tr> <tr> <td>at school</td> <td>2</td> <td>15</td> <td>5 34</td> </tr> <tr> <td>On Command</td> <td>8</td> <td>95</td> <td>6 48</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td><u>36</u></td> <td><u>834</u></td> <td><u>41 - 904</u></td> </tr> </table>	Effective strength	1 st Dec		31 st Dec	Actually with unit	26	647	30 754	On Brigade duties		48	45	In hospital		29	23	at school	2	15	5 34	On Command	8	95	6 48		<u>36</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>41 - 904</u>	
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- (1). The Battalion will move to FRENCQ Area on 13th/14th. instant.

- (2). On the 13th. inst. the Battalion will move by train to DESVRES.

- (3). Order for the march from DESVRES to FRENCQ Area will be issued later.

- (4). Routine for tomorrow will be as per tonight's Routine Orders.

- (5). The Battalion will entrain at DE KENNEBEK and proceed to DESVRES by rail.

- (6). The Battalion will move from present Camp at 10 a.m.
Order of March... "H.Q.", "A", "B", "C", and "D" Companies.
"H.Q." to pass southern end of Camp by 10 a.m.

- (7). DRESS. Full marching Order. One blanket to be carried, rolled round
pack. Officers will wear caps. Other ranks, felt hats.

- (8). Lieut. W. McN. SMYTH will act as Battalion Entraining Officer and will
report to Brigade Entraining Officer at 9.30 a.m. at Entraining
Station.
Captain W.G. WILSON and 20 other ranks from "A" Company are detailed
as Brigade Entraining Party. This party will move out and entrain
with the Battalion.

- (9). A rear party consisting of 2 men per Company and 2 from Head Quarters
will report at 9.45 a.m. to Lieut. PETTIFER who will receive instruc-
-tions from the Adjutant.

- (10). Second blankets will be rolled in bundles of 20, securely labelled
and stacked outside B.O.R. at 8.30 a.m.
Officers kits, Company and B.O.R. boxes etc. will be stacked at B.O.R.
ready for loading by 8.30 a.m.
As transport proceeding by train will not rejoin the Unit until day
after arrival in new area, the R.Q.M. will arrange for all necessary
cooking utensils to be taken to the new Area on train or lorry.
Motor transport will meet train on arrival and convey blankets etc.
to billeting Area.
Two motor lorries will be available for the purpose of carrying
stores etc.
The Battalion will move out with all stores and kit and full echelon.

- (11). All remaining transport will entrain at 6 p.m. 13th. inst. at BAILLEUL
and proceed to WIZERNES where they will billey on the night 13/14th.
inst. & rejoin the Battalion on the following day. Lieut. A.N. BALDREY
will go in charge of this party which will be at BAILLEUL STATION
at 4 p.m. 48 hours rations will be carried by personnel and animals
travelling by this train.

- (12). Os.C. Companies and H.Q. will render usual certificates of cleanliness
to B.O.R. before moving out.

- (13). All ranks will be warned that no one is to ride in brake vans or on the
roofs of trucks, also that no one is to get in or out of the train
except by orders of an Officer.

- (14). Watches to be synchronised at B.O.R. at 8 a.m. on the 13th. inst.

- (15). Marching out states (in detail) to be at B.O.R. by 8.45 a.m.

- (16). ACKNOWLEDGE.

(Sgd). A.C. ELLIOT. Lieut.
Adjutant 53rd. Battalion A.I.F.

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APPENDIX. III

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OPERATION NO. 10

COPY No. APPENDIX. III

53RD. BATTALION A.I.F.

13/12/17.

- (1). The Battalion will move tomorrow, 14th. instant, to MENTY by march route
- (2). DRESS. Full marching Order. Officers will wear Caps, other ranks felt hats.
A blanket is to be carried rolled round pack.
- (3). The routine for tomorrow will be:-

REVEILLE	7.00 A.M.
BREAKFAST	7.30 A.M.
SICK PARADE	8.15 A.M.
- (4). Order of march will be:-
"H.Q., "A", "B", "C" and "D" Companies.
- (5). The head of the column will be outside entrance to billets at 9.15 a.m.
- (6). ROUTE..... LES TOMBES-LONG FOSSE-SAMER-MENTY.
- (7). Second blankets to be rolled in bundles of 20, securely labelled and stacked outside B.O.R. by 8 a.m.
Officers kits to be stacked outside Church by 8.30 a.m.
- (8). The following intervals will be maintained on the march:-

Between Companies	100 yards.
Between Battalions.....	500 yards.
- (9). 2 men per Company and 2 from H.Q. will remain behind as a rear party reporting to Lieut. A.H. PETTIFER "A" Coy. for cleaning up billets and handing over to Camp Wardens. A certificate of cleanliness to be obtained if possible.
- (10). Marching out states to be at B.O.R. by 8.15 a.m.

(Sgd). A.C. ELLIOT Lieut.
Adjutant 53rd. Battalion A.I.F.

5TH. AUSTRALIAN DIVISION.

APPENDIX. IV¹¹

Headquarters,
19/12/17.

I wish all my comrades of the 5th. Australian Division a Happy Christmas - as happy as it can be under existing conditions. I hope indeed it will be the last we shall spend away from Australia.

I take this opportunity of thanking you all for the splendid and loyal assistance you have given me during the last twelve months. By your gallantry, efficiency and good discipline you have won for the Divisiona reputation of which we may be justly proud - a reputation that inspires the hope that in the coming struggle we shall with honour and distinction take our full share.

(Sgd). J.T.HOBBS.
Major-General,
Commanding 5th. Australian Division.

HEADQUARTERS AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

France 25th. December 1917.

On the occasion of our fourth Christmas on Active Service I send my heartiest greeting to all members of the A.I.F. Another strenuous year is drawing to a close - a year in which the magnificent traditions of the A.I.F. have been fully upheld by the gallant and loyal service of one and all. During this period, BAPAUME-BULLECOURT-MESSINES and YPRES have been added to the splended list of honours, which begins with the landing at GALLIPOLI-LONE PINE⁶⁶ and later POZIERES - names which are indelibly recorded in the History of Australia, and which will never be forgotten.

At this season of the year, our thoughts go out especially to those who have fallen, and those now in hospitals as a result of sickness and wounds. The memory of our gallant comrades who have made the supreme sacrifice can but strengthen our determination to achieve complete victory over our enemies in this struggle for the preservation of right, and the establishment of a peace under conditions which will permanently safeguard the freedom of the world.

I know that all in France will join with me in sending best wishes to our comrades in Hospital for their rapid and complete recovery.

(Sgd). W.R. BIRDWOOD.

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APPENDIX IV

14TH. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE.

APPENDIX IV

Headquarters,
24th. December 1917.

The G.O.C. 14th. Infantry Brigade wishes all ranks of the
Brigade a happy Christmas and prosperous New Year.

He also thanks Officers, Non-Commissioned Officers and
men for their loyal support on all occasions during the past
year, and wishes that before ~~Christmas~~ another Christmas
arrives and honourable peace will have been concluded."

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