

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

Infantry

Item number: 23/67/10

Title: 50th Infantry Battalion

April 1917



AWM4-23/67/10

WAR DIARY

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.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

50th Bn A.I.F. Page 37

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Front line	1917			
apl	1		<p>on 31st March</p> <p>Brigade Orders received for attack on NOREUIL village + ground to NE of it. 50th Bn still holding outpost line about 850 yards South of village with two boys. Frontage 1500 yards B Coy on right. D Coy on left. A + C boys in reserve on NE edge of VAILLX-VRAUCOURT Bn HQ also in that vicinity. 52nd Bn holding ground on our right on LAGNICOURT 51st Bn holding ground on our left. S + SE of LONGATTE Orders for attack issued before noon on 1st April see Operation order No 18 attached. Strength of Bn less details 21 Officers 826 other ranks</p>	Operation order No 18 attached also sketch
April	2		<p>zero hour was set down at 5.15 am. The tape was laid out on the pumping off line shortly after midnight + coys commenced to move from their old positions at 2.30 am. There was no rain or snow & the weather was cold & fine. The attack though met by strong opposition was quite successful. All objectives were gained shield. The prisoners taken belonged to the 119th R.I. R. + 120 R.I. R. see report on operations attached.</p>	Report on operations attached
	3		<p>During night 3/4th int our front line was pushed forward 100 yards</p>	
	4		<p>at 2.35 am. 50th Bn was relieved by 49th Bn. 50th Bn in Reserve at NE edge of VAILLX-VRAUCOURT. at 11 pm. 50th Bn was moved forward in support to a position 800 yards S.W. of LAGNICOURT in support to</p>	

H. Salisbury R. Col

WAR DIARY

or

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50th Bn A.I.F.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
1917				
4	Apr	5	the Bn holding the right sector of Bde front. This Bn was the 15th Bn of 4th Bde which had been lent to 13th Bde. Patrols having reported the enemy had fallen back between 800 & 1500 yards. Battalions holding the line were ordered to advance during night 5th/6th April. A Coy 3 officers & 120 men formed from the remains of B & C Coys was to report to O/C 15th Bn if required. They stood by from 9 pm until 1 am. but were not required.	
		6	On night of 6th/7th the Bde front was altered - about 1000 on the left being taken over from English troops & the same amount on the right being given up to troops of the 1st Australian Division. The alteration of disposition of the Bn was altered very slightly only one coy (B Coy) moving a short distance to the left & a few hundred yards forward.	
		7	The 13th Bde was relieved on night 7/8th by portions of 4th & 12th Bdes. 50th Bn moved out at 10 pm & went to shelter in the open near BEUGNATRE becoming with the remainder of 13th Bde the Divisional Reserve	

A. Salisbury Lt-Col

WAR DIARY

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

50th Bn A.I.F. Page 39

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Bengnake	april	8 9 10	Bn in Divisional Reserve + employed on fatigue work	
"	"	11	4th + 12th Bdes attacked Hindenburg line between Queant. + Bullecourt. at 4.30 am. They were driven back into their old line about 8 am. Bn moved from Bengnake to Vaulx-Vrancourt at 12 noon and took up position on N.E. edge of Vaulx	
Vaulx -Vrancourt	"	12	12th Bde again took over line on night 11th/12th 50th Bn in Bde reserve + remained N.E. edge of Vaulx	
"	"	13	Bde relieved by 5th Bde. 50th Bn relieved by 20th Bn at 4 pm. removed back to Bengnake Area	

At Salisbury held

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

50th Bn A.I.F. Page 40

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
BECOURT	14/4/17		Marched to Bapaume then drew packs & extra blanket. Left Bapaume by train at 4.30 PM, arrived & disembarked at Albert at 7.30 PM. Marched to Becourt Camp. BN billeted in huts.	
	15/4/17		Rest.	
	16/4/17		Cleaning equipment & clothes. BN had use of baths.	
	17/4/17		Range Practice. 200 yds. grouping & rapid firing. Weather. Very wet & windy.	
	18/4/17		CO granted leave to O.K. Major Loubet to command during absence.	
			3 OR granted leave to O.K. 1 OR to hospital	
	18/4/17		Specialist training, Musketry instruction, Close Order Drill. Bayonet fighting. Lewis gun instructor from Corps School attached to BN for duty. Bayonet fighting instructor attached to brigade & allotted to BN for duty.	
			1 OR to hospital.	
BUIRE	19/4/17		Battalion moved to Buire. Left Becourt at 10.44 AM arrived Buire 1.30 PM.	
			100's class & Lewis gunner class from 3.30 PM to 4.30 PM.	
	20/4/17		Specialist training, Musketry, visual training, & judging distance. Extended order drill & use of gas mask. Lecture on dealing with hostile machine gun positions.	
			100's class from 3.30 PM to 4.30 PM.	
	21/4/17		Specialist training, Musketry, bayonet fighting. Whole Coy. How to fire Lewis gun. Inspection of transport by G.O.C. Inter Coy football matches during afternoon.	

By order of the

WAR DIARY

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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50th Bn A.I.F.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
BOIRE	APRIL 22		BN allotted use of Broom Baths. All coys bathed. No church parade on account of bathing. Voluntary service during evening. 2/Lt HUNT joined BN from O.T.C.	
	23		Rifle range allotted to BN for musketry practice. Application & rapid practice carried out. Shooting good. Other training. Platoon attack formations & use of ground. Specialist training. 1 OR to hospital.	
	24		Route March 6 miles. Dress Fighting Order. Lecture by Coy Protection at inst. Platoon as a pursuit & sentry group. NCO's class.	
	25		ANZAC DAY. - Sports. -	
	26		Musketry instruction, Platoon in attack. (Tools. Lewis gun panniers & bomb bullets to be filled & carried). Platoon acting as vanguard. NCO's class.	
	27		Route March 6 miles. Lecture Coy in attack. Lewis gun training for whole Coy.	
	28		Coy in attack, as for platoon on the 26 th . Advance guards. CSM Edwards & Nablet. & Sgt Harding & Lynel officer promoted to commissioned rank dated 24/4/17. 13 NCO's & men awarded military medals for work done at the capture of NOREUIL. (Authority -)	
	29		Church Parade. Gen Bridwood presented ribbons to men awarded M.M.	
	30		Musketry practice a range for all coys. Musketry instruction.	
				H. Salisbury Hbd

OPERATION ORDER No, 18,

Copy No.....

By.

LIEUT COLONEL. A.G. SALISBURY, COMMANDING,
50th, BATTALION.In the Field,
March, 31st, 1917.

Reference Map, 57.C.N.W.20,000.

1. The 13th, Aus Inf Bde will on the morning of 2nd April capture NOREUIL and the high ground North East of it. The Bde Objective will be on the road running North West from LAGNICOURT through C.11.c, C.11.a, C.11.b, & C.4.a.

Zero hour will be notified later.
2. After securing the objective, and on the lift of the consolidation barrage, strong patrols will be pushed forward to the Railway with a view to establishing posts on about that line. The posts North of LAGNICOURT will then be advanced to link up with these forward posts.
3. The 50th, Battalion will be in the centre.
The 52nd Battalion will be on our Right and will move its left flank forward to C.11.d.1.0.
The 51st Battalion will be on our Left and will attack NOREUIL on South Western side and move through to the ground on the North East of the village.
4. The 50th, Battalion will attack (in accordance with barrage table to be issued later) from the present line of sentry groups from C.17.c.5.3. to C.22.a.8.7.
Frontage about 700 yds.
Coys will be distributed from right to left as follows :-
A.Coy (with one platoon of B.Coy in reserve) 360 yds.
C.Coy 180 yds.
D.Coy 180 yds to the road inclusive.
The road from C.22.Central to NOREUIL will be the left boundary.
B.Coy, less one Platoon will be in reserve at centre of our old outpost line.
On reaching NOREUIL "C" & "D" Coys will clear village leaving behind mopping up parties.
The Battalion will then pivot on right flank of A.Coy about C.16.b.7.9. and move forward to road mentioned in para 1.
Picquets and Supports will be dug in and strong patrols pushed forward to Railway line as in para 2.
C.Coy will get into touch with each other & flank Battns.
5. Two Vickers Guns will move with A.Coys reserve and be prepared to protect right flank & front against counter attack when objective gained.
6. Two Stokes Guns will move down road through C.16.d. & C.16.b.
O.C., Section will arrange to engage barricades about C.16.b.31. and C.16.a.5.0. when barrage commences.
One gun will follow troops into village and one gun will follow A.Coy to deal with any strong point encountered.
7. Troops will be formed up in attack formations on the assembly position one hour before zero.
D.Coy will leave four standing patrols of three men each to cover their old front.
B.Coy will leave four standing patrols of three men each to cover old A.Coy front.
Before forming up, attacking Coys will each push out standing patrols 100/200 yds to protect their front.
On the commencement of our barrage all standing patrols will push forward until checked by our own barrage when they will become absorbed in the leading line & move forward with it.

(2).

8. A Contact Plane will fly over line about 7 a.m. when flares will be lit. Flares will be ~~distributed~~ carried and well distributed among attacking troops.
9. Position of Battn H.Qs., Aid Post etc will be as under :-
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------|
| Bn H.Qs. | C.26.d.4.5. |
| Runner Relay Station. | C.22.b.1.3. |
| Forward S.A.A. & Bomb Dump. | C.22.b.1.3. |
| Aid Post. | C.26.b.5.2. |
| Bn O.P. | C.26.d.4.5. |
10. Watches will be synchronised at 7 p.m. & 3 a.m. under arrangements made by Bn Signalling Officer.
11. All copies of orders issued to Coys will be returned to Bn Headquarters one hour before zero.
12. After Coys have been re-organised and objective ~~gained~~ consolidated the centre Coy will fire four white Very Lights to signify that Coys are ready to push strong patrols out to Railway as in para 2.

Tom Fowler

Captain,

Adjutant, 50th, Battalion.

Copy No,	2.	File.
::	2.	C.O.
::	3.	Senior Major.
::	4.)	
::	5.)	War Diary.
::	6.)	
::	7.	A.Coy.
::	8.	B.Coy.
::	9.	C.Coy.
::	10.	D.Coy.
::	11.	51st Bn
::	12.	52nd Bn.
::	13.	13th, Aus M.G. Coy.
::	14.	13th, A.L.T.M.B.

INSTRUCTIONS IN CONNECTION WITH OPERATION ORDER No, 18.

BLANKETS
&
GREATCOATS.

At 9 p.m. or earlier on 1st April, blankets & greatcoats will be dumped as under :-

A. & C. Coys	at	En. H. Qs.
B. & D. Coys	at	Coy H. Qs.

DRESS.

Dress for attack - Fighting Order with Jerkins and Water Proof Sheets.

TOOLS.

Coys will carry as many tools as possible. All riflemen should carry a shovel under the belt diagonally across back, the blade to be on left hip.

POSITION
of
ASSEMBLY.

Position of assembly will be taped by the Intelligence Officer.

Coys will move to position of assembly in order following order :-

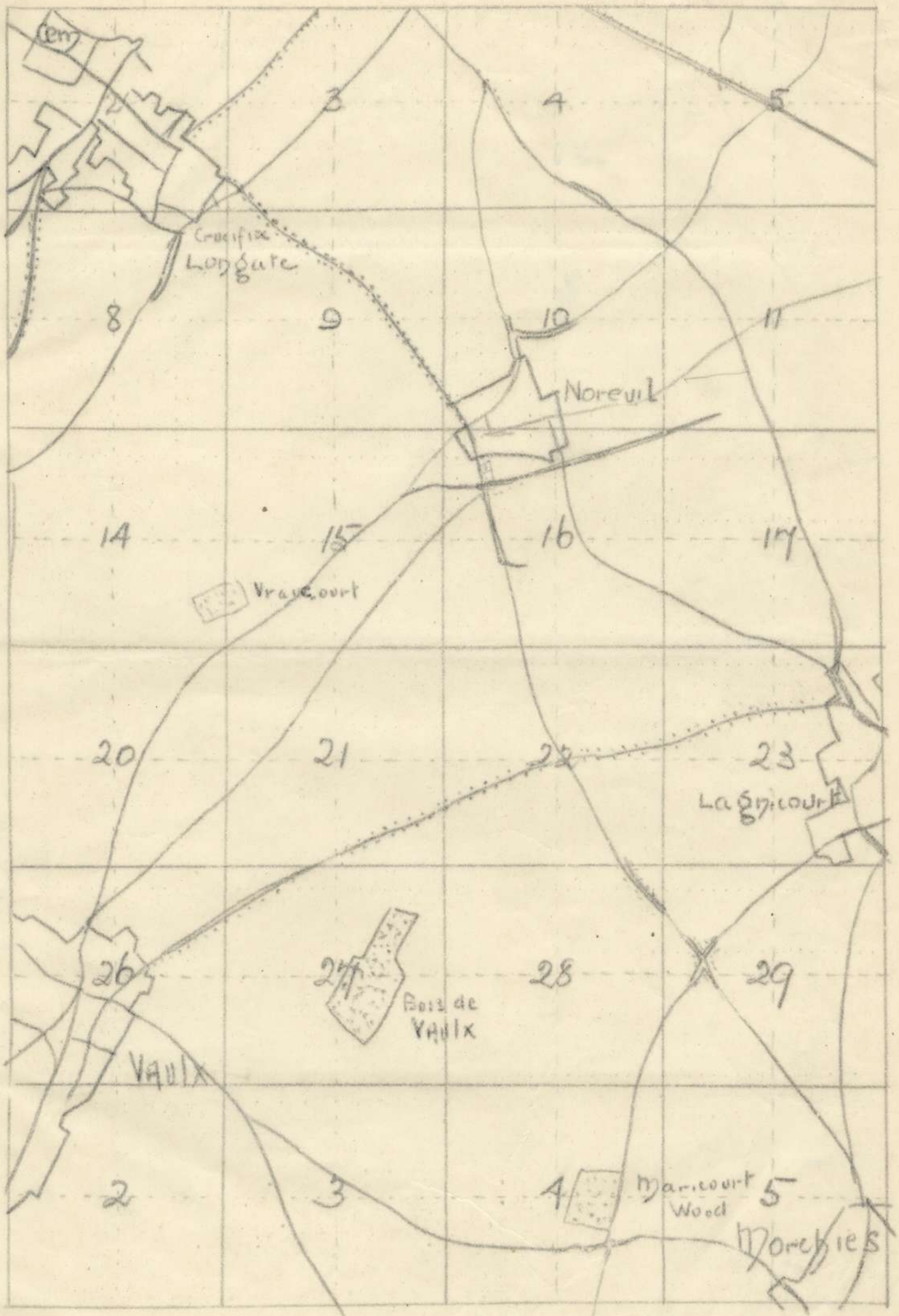
D. Coy.	2.30 a.m.
C. :	3.0 a.m.
A. :	3.30 a.m.

PRISONERS.

Prisoners captured will be sent without delay to Battalion Headquarters.

Tom Fowler
Adjutant, 50th, Battalion.

Captain,



REPORT ON ATTACK ON NOREUIL AND GROUND TO NORTH EAST.

The 50th Battalion in conjunction with 51st Bn attacked the village of NOREUIL at 5.15 a.m. on the morning of 2nd April, 1917. 50th Battalion attacked from the South East, with A.C. & D. Coys in the assault, B. Coy in Reserve. C & D. Coys in two waves made for the village, A. Coy in one wave with a Platoon of B. Coy in support, attacked the ground to the right of the village.

The moppers up in C & D Coys followed in the last line. A strong bombing team moved on to the left flank of D. Coy to deal with a machine gun position.

Attacking troops formed up in the position of assembly an hour before zero and moved on to the lining up tape 15 mins before zero. The enemy shelled very little while the troops were forming up.

The troops started forward well to time on the fall of the barrage, which was unfortunately not thick enough. The troops kept well up to the barrage and had to slow down once or twice to avoid walking into it. The enemy's barrage came down on our tape after our troops had left it.

On reaching the village, hostile machine guns from many places were able to open fire owing to the thin barrage. As previously arranged the leading wave continued to advance firing from the hip which proved most effective. At a few places the line was held up by Machine Guns, but troops on either side pressed forward, enveloping and silencing the guns with the aid of rifle grenades and bombs.

The strong bombing team on the left of our flank did good work in overpowering hostile opposition at a substantial barricade.

The right Coy was temporarily held up by wire which it eventually got through and succeeded in capturing 30 - 40 prisoners.

The left flank then pressed forward through the village, leaving behind moppers up and commenced to pivot on the right Coy before moving forward in a North Eastern direction, in accordance with the plan of attack.

The wheel was successfully completed and the line again moved forward.

About this time owing to the peculiar formation of the ground and the distance to go forward before getting in touch with right Battalion, a large number of the enemy who were holding the ground here strongly were able to get in on our right flank and captured two of our Officers and a number of our men of the right Coy. This left the right Coy without any Officers, the third Officer having previously been wounded. Machine Guns then opened from the right flank, enfilading our line. In spite of this the line pushed forward and secured themselves within 100 yds of their objective, having advanced over 1700 yards.

Our right flank was not in touch with the right Bn and the enemy made repeated attempts to get round our flank, but a platoon from the reserve Coy thrown in did good work in preventing this.

About this time a report was received from a Unit on the left saying, that the village was not completely mopped up. The two remaining platoons of the reserve Coy were then pushed into the village when all there was found quiet. These two platoons then moved out to our right flank and though not succeeding in linking up with the Battalion, they, with the help of a Vickers gun covered the greater part of the gap and strengthened our right flank.

Towards evening the enemy appeared to be preparing for a counter attack. Our S.O.S barrage was put down but the attack did not develop.

The Battalion suffered very heavy casualties amongst Officers.

The Battalion captured between 70-80 prisoners including 2 Officers, and two Trench Mortars in village, and 2 Machine Guns, 4 bomb throwers, and a large number of rifles.

There is evidence in the village to show that the enemy had no intention to give it up for the present.

(2).

During the night B.Coy on the right pushed forward posts & securely linked up with the right Battalion (52nd Bn). A heavy snow storm came on and a Coy from the reserve Battn, (B.Coy 49th Bn) took over the ground held by C & D Coys of 50th Bn.

The Battalion casualties were as under :-

	Officers.	O/Ranks.
Killed.	5.	91.
Died of wounds.	-	4.
Wounded.	2.	163.
Wounded, still with Bn.	-	4.
Missing.	3.	88.
	10.	350.

Of the Missing, 1 Officer & 28 men are believed killed & 2 Officers and 60 men captured.

*A. J. Salisbury Lt Col
C.O. 50th Bn*