

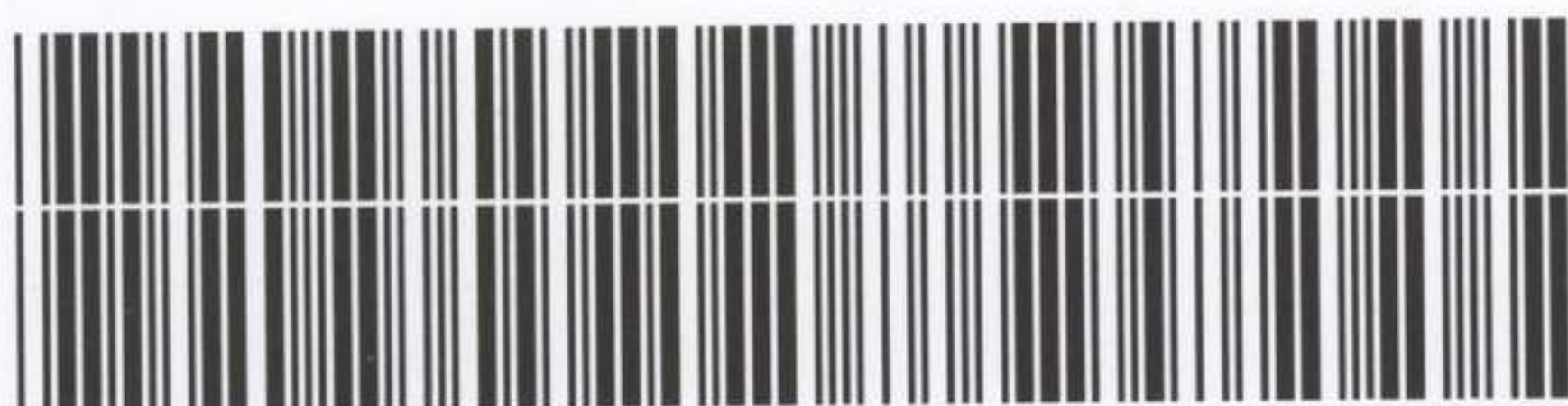
**AWM4**  
**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,**  
**1914-18 War**

Infantry

**Item number:** 23/71/33

**Title:** 54th Infantry Battalion

October 1918



AWM4-23/71/33

ORIGINAL.  
DUPLICATE.  
TRIPLICATE.

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W A R      D I A R Y.

of

FIFTY FOURTH BATTALION, A.I.F.

for

From 1st. to 11th. OCTOBER, 1918.

Signature of Officer Commanding.

P. Hargrave Lt Colonel

Signature of Officer compiling.

W. J. Harrison Lt  
asst adjt



# 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.)

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
NAUROY	October 1st		<p>At 1 a.m. instructions were received from the Brigadier over the phone that the Battalion would co-operate in an attack upon an allotted frontage lying North of NAUROY (see App.1) This was immediately confirmed by wire; Company Commanders and Specialist Officers were then called to a meeting by the C.O. and after details had been discussed orders were issued for the move and subsequent operation.</p> <p>ZERO hour was fixed for 6 a.m.</p> <p>At 3 a.m. rain was still falling and showed little promise of clearing, yet shortly afterwards a slight breeze springing up cleared the sky and made the atmosphere for marching more favourable. The move to the assembly position was made independently by Companies: Headquarters having the pack animals carrying technical and medical gear and tools took the road route by way of BELLICOURT. It had been arranged with the 29th Battalion that guides were to meet companies near the cross roads in G.10.b.8.3. but these failing to report to time caused a considerable amount of delay until a further party was furnished by that Battalion. The route from this point was subjected to a fair amount of shelling: in places too, marching was particularly laborious on account of the clayey nature of the ground.</p> <p>By 5.45 a.m. Companies were in position and at Zero (6 a.m.) the barrage opened; three minutes later this lifted and the infantry assault commenced. The country lying before the attacking troops was undulating with rising slopes and right up to the BEAUREVOIR Line hardly any trench system of strength existed; indeed the ground afforded little scope for prolonged defense if subjected to heavy artillery fire and little resistance was met with. Here and there only, in isolated places, Machine gun posts held out, but the crews of these were either rapidly put out of action or taken prisoners. By 6.45 a.m. the first objective was reached and half an hour later report was received that the final objective was being consolidated.</p> <p>The ease in which the attacking troops progressed and the lack of any enemy defensive measures suggested that the German retreat had been of such a precipitate nature as to necessitate a still further advance on our part if touch was to be kept and the best results obtained.</p> <p>Shortly after 8 a.m. the 56th Battalion on our right, following the tanks, pushed through ESTREES and covered that village by a circular line about its outskirts, the 54th Battn. in the meantime occupying the high ground running from G.6.b. to H.1.c. The advance to these positions brought our patrols in touch with the BEAUREVOIR Line which was strongly held by the enemy and where it was apparent he intend to make a stand. The topographical lay of ESTREES made its occupation particularly undesirable. The village, running out like a</p>	



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## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
NAUROY (Cont.)	October 1st.		<p>salient into the valley, commanded by a strong German defence system, and having practically no flank protection would have been a dangerous point in the event of a determined counter attack and have placed its garrison in a very critical position. Recognising this, Colonel Marshall D.S.O., M.C. at once returned to Battalion Headquarters with the intention of advising Brigade of the situation and pointing out the necessity of that unit withdrawing to the high ground in rear of the village. Before this message could be communicated however the following was received from Brigade :-</p> <p>" 8th Brigade are to capture and consolidate BEAUREVOIR system from JONGCOURT Hill to ESTREES-BEAUREVOIR ROAD in ASSEGAI VALLEY inc. aaa 54th and 56th Bns. are to be withdrawn into reserve in G.Y.b. &amp; d. and H.d.a. &amp; c. aaa 54th and 55th Bns. will stand fast on line at present held until assault troops of 8th Brigade pass through and will then withdraw to reserve positions."</p> <p>This move was not carried out.</p> <p>At 4 p.m. telephonic instructions were received and later confirmed:-</p> <p>" Move from <del>present</del> position and take over line from 15th Brigade between A.23.central and the intersection of present line with the following line which will be your right boundary aaa G.23. central - CABRET COPSE - MINT COPSE aaa 53rd Battalion join you at A.23. central aaa 56th are being relieved by 8th Brigade and are withdrawing to H.l.a. &amp; c."</p> <p>Company Commanders were at once given instructions, Colonel Marshall and Lieut. Steber going forward before hand to pick up the new line. It was found at this time that the 58th Battalion had similar orders to ourselves and communication was a once made with 14th Brigade H.Q. and the situation reported. The C.O. was then instructed to make arrangements direct with 15th Brigade : the result of this was that the 54th Battalion would take over from the 58th Battalion after that unit had established itself. This was completed by 6 p.m. Soon after this it was intimated that the 54th Battalion would come under the 8th Brigade for relief that night. This relief did not take place. Headquarters of the 54th Battalion was at this time established at G.6.d.2.7. it being considered not worth while moving to a more central position in view of the impending relief. The days casualties were singularly light 10 killed and 28 other ranks wounded and these later mainly by our own artillery barrage.</p> <p>The day was an auspicious one in the history of the Battalion. It was only one month previous that it had successfully encountered the enemy at PERONNE and captured that town after a stubborn fight. Yet the two ventures afford no comparison. In the earlier operation the</p>	



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
NAUROY (Cont.)	October 1st.		<p>enemy, placing faith in his advantageous position and the strength of his defences fought with a violence only encountered in the earlier days of the war. This time, demoralised with the knowledge of his vaunted stronghold - The HINDENBURG LINE - broken, closely followed up and placed in a location where effective defences were few, the enemy resistance savoured very much of the small boy who finding a fight inevitable deals a few weak frightened blows with the fervent prayer that his antagonist will be merciful in return.</p> <p>The one difficulty met with in earlier in this operation was the question of food supply, but the discovery that the Red Route leading from BELLICOURT to LE CATELET FARM was passable to limbers solved this. It was on this night that Capt. Hunt the Q.M. was killed. He had been to Battalion H.Q. to arrange the next days supply of rations and was caught by a random shell whilst passing through BELLICOURT. Capt Hunt was an old Battalion identity and possessed characteristics which were familiar to all who came within his acquaintance. His dark appearance, his twitch of the eye, his volubility, his thoughtful moods, his shrewdness and his impetuosity, made him one of the most well known officers in the Brigade.</p>	
G.6.d.2.7.	October 2nd.		<p>Except for occasional shelling in the support areas the day passed in comparative quietness. At 6 p.m. a wire was received stating that the 54th Battalion came under the orders of the 7th A.I. Brigade. The C.O. was later informed that the 2nd Division would pass through our front line next morning at 6 o'clock after which the Battalion would withdraw to a location West of VILLARET. About this time too, report came to hand that the enemy were massing for a probable counter attack along the 5th Brigade front. Upon this the C.O. sent out the following message to 66ys.</p> <p>"Following from 96th Brigade on right of 5th Brigade:-</p> <p>'Enemy reported massing for probable counter attack along front of 5th Brigade. Posts should be warned to be especially alert. You are to push out protective patrols to the road running N.E. and S.W. in A.24.b. working along the road as far as outskirts of GRANDCOURT and covering your whole front. These patrols are not to be withdrawn until attacking Battalions have passed through. I would suggest that patrols be sent out about 12 midnight to find out what they can about the road and return. Fresh patrols could then be sent out under guidance shortly before dawn and remain out until passed through by the attacking Battalion. The above patrols are to be mutually arranged between Coy. Commanders. Action in this matter must be taken immediately. Please report what you are doing in regard to it.'"</p>	



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
G.6.d.2.7. (Cont.)	October 2nd.		<p>The reply to this was forwarded by Capt. Vine Hall at 3.15.a.m. on 3rd. and was as follows:-</p> <p>" A patrol of 6 men under Lieut. Christie has been sent out from right of Battalion line with orders to proceed along the road to outskirts of GRANDCOURT and report back. Same patrol will go out again at 4 a.m. for the same purpose and will remain out until attack passes through and then return. This patrol will send in a report while out."</p>	
G G.6.d.2.7.	October 3rd.		<p>At 6.5 a.m. the attacking troops of a unit of a 2nd. Australian Division passed through our front line. Shortly afterwards Companies moved independently to the rendez vous in the old trench system on the high ground in rear of BELLICOURT and previously occupied on 29th &amp; 30th September. Here a hot meal was served from the cookers and a stay of about two hours made prior to moving to VILLARET. During this halt an opportunity was taken by two Headquarters officers to visit the BELLICOURT tunnel and satisfy a curiosity regarding the existence of a "Cadavera" factory which, it was rumoured furnished irrefutable evidence of a ghoulisn undertaking. The middle entrance of the tunnel was by means of a narrow stairway cut out at a steep angle in the earth. The descent was made with the aid of pocket torches and candles, which gave but a feeble light in the obscurity. The scene in the tunnel may well have been taken from an adventure in the "Arabian Nights", and Schenezarede himself could hardly have wished for a more fantastic setting. A wharf ran the whole length of the subterranean portion of the canal, and was lined with barges of every description. Upon these in circular groups and around brazier fires sat parties of Australian troops who had temporarily converted these nocturnal dwelling places into their homes. Further on and past a dangerous part of the wharf, which had evidently been hastily blown in before the enemy retirement one came upon a new aspect. The wharf at this place was wider than elsewhere and gave more scope for movement in the intense darkness: Many here walking with cautious steps, moved candles about over the still waters of the canal endeavouring to see its depths, but a flotsam of debris on its surface covered all secrets. It was said that a hand to hand fight had taken place nearby, and that the antagonists losing their footing had fallen into the dark waters and were seen no more. Whatever truth there may have been in the rumour it attracted the credulous and brought many visitors to the spot. The intense entrance to the alleged "Cadavera" factory was near the ST QUENTIN entrance</p>	



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
G.6.d.2.7. (Cont.)	October 3rd.		<p>to the Canal: after climbing a few stone steps a large stone room opened out: built against the wall were two small coppers which certainly did not seem large enough for the <del>horrible</del> work rumour almost credited. In the far corner of the room were the corpses of two German soldiers partially clothed and badly mangled. The coppers were half filled with a thick greenish substance, and in one, part of a hand protruded. Yet this could imply anything, despite the fact that a light railway truck only a few yards away was full of the Hun <del>and</del> dead. What evidently is the correct story regarding the affair, is that a shell passing through the wall killed the two soldiers whilst cooking and blew part of their bodies into the tubs. The evidence was not enough to substantiate any definite accusation that a corpse factory existed, although the prevailing indignation would only too readily attribute such a ghastly practice to the enemy on the flimsiest of facts.</p> <p>At the entrance near the room the tunnel opens out and the canal winds around a deep cutting which must have demanded immense labour.</p> <p>A stone designation slab over the tunnel entrance shows the canal was constructed by Napoleon during the years 1802 to 1810.</p> <p>The waters at this point are perfectly still and clear, the Huns for some reason or <del>eth</del> other preventing any running by building a solid concrete wall from one side to the other.</p> <p>The Battalion having breakfasted began the march and VILLARET was reached at 11.30. a.m. The area allotted to the Battalion proved to consist of an old trench system affording scarcely any shelter to the men. Trench shelters were consequently drawn and erected.</p> <p>Nothing was done during the remainder of the day and the night passed by in quietness.</p>	



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## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
VILLARET.	4th. OCTOBER.		<p>No training was carried out during the morning, the hours being devoted to cleaning equipment and technical gear. Towards mid-day the neighbouring areas became astir with the movement of Cavalry towards the Line. Whether this was intended merely as demonstration or not no one was able to say, but the Cavalry went up in a great hurry and at 5.p.m. in the afternoon returned in the same manner.</p> <p>Enemy bombing planes were active in the surrounding areas during the night, but little damage was caused.</p>	
do.	5th. OCTOBER.		<p>Orders for the move to LE MESNIL were issued to Coys. at 3.a.m. (see Appendix 2 ). Lieut. STEBER was sent to HORNOY as a forward billeting officer, and Lieut. WARK to LE MESNIL. The march commenced at 9.30.a.m. The weather was cool and could not have been more favorable for marching. At 11.50.a.m. a halt was called and the mid-day meal eaten. By 4.30.p.m. the LE MESNIL hutments were reached, and by 6.p.m. a hot meal had been issued.</p> <p>Late at night it was given out that the move to HORNOY was postponed for 24 hours and would not take place till the 7th instant.</p>	App. 2
LE MESNIL.	6th. OCTOBER.		Nothing of note occurred during the day.	
TOURS-en-VIMEU.	7th. OCTOBER.		See Appendix...3... attached.	App. 3



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
TOURS-en-VIMEU.	8th. OCTOBER.		<p>There was no training during the day. In many places readjustment of billets was necessary on account of the circumstances under which the troops were billeted the previous night. By 3.p.m. this was completed.</p>	
do.	9th. OCTOBER.		<p>The Commanding Officer was instructed during the morning that the original intention of withdrawing the 54th Battalion as a fighting unit from the field was to be proceeded with. The procedure of distribution of personnel however, was (for various reasons not stated) altered, the decision being that the 54th Battalion was to amalgamate with the 56th Battalion with the designation 56/54th Battalion. Lieut.-Colonel MARSHALL.D.S.O.,M.C., was to command the new unit. In order to preserve the "esprit de corps" of the old unit and to gratify a sentiment, the men were allowed to retain their old colors.</p> <p>The effect of this new arrangement was entirely in contrast to the situation created on the 23rd September, by the previous order. The latter method was recognised to be the best possible way in which the question could be dealt with, and was unanimously accepted. As a matter of fact the alteration being purely administrative, hardly effected the men from a personal point of view, and apart from the very necessary transfer of some officers to different Battalions, it was expected that everything would go on exactly as usual without any variations.</p>	
do.	10th. OCTOBER.		<p>The work of completing the Battalion records and making the necessary administrative preparations for "winding up" were proceeded with under the supervision of the Assistant Adjutant (Lieut.W.J.HARRISON).</p>	



# WAR DIARY

or

## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices																																										
TOURS-en-VIMEU.	11th. OCTOBER.		<p>At 11.a.m. a Battalion Parade was held and Lieut.-Colonel N.MARSHALL.D.S.O.,M.C. officially took command of the new unit. As was expected no demonstration occurred. The work of compiling the returns progressed. In the afternoon an amount of 35,000 francs was drawn from the Divisional Paymaster and issued out for Company payments. The distribution of officers to units is shown on attached list (see Appendix 4). App. 4. The strength of the Battalion before the "withdrawal" was as follows:-</p> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th></th><th>Officers.</th><th>Other Ranks.</th></tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>With Unit.</td><td>22</td><td>388</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hospital.(in FRANCE).</td><td>1</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Schools.</td><td>1</td><td>7</td></tr> <tr> <td>Brigade Duties.</td><td>-</td><td>22</td></tr> <tr> <td>Attached 14th A.L.T.M.B.</td><td>1</td><td>10</td></tr> <tr> <td>On Command.</td><td>-</td><td>56</td></tr> <tr> <td>On Leave.</td><td>5</td><td>42</td></tr> <tr> <td>Seconded.</td><td>19</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>AUSTRALIA Leave.</td><td>4</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Wounded.</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>Hospital (ENGLAND).</td><td>2</td><td>-</td></tr> <tr> <td>To T.B. ENGLAND.</td><td>2</td><td>5</td></tr> <tr> <td><u>Total.</u></td><td><u>59.</u></td><td><u>530.</u></td></tr> </tbody> </table> <p>The reorganisation of the 56/54th Battalion under the new arrangement is as follows:-</p> <p>"A".&amp; "C".Coys. of 54th Battalion to constitute "C".Coy. 56/54th Battalion.            "B".&amp; "D".Coys of 54th Battalion to constitute "D".Coy. 56/54th Battalion.            Two Coys. of the old 56th Battalion were similarly reorganised.</p>		Officers.	Other Ranks.	With Unit.	22	388	Hospital.(in FRANCE).	1	-	Schools.	1	7	Brigade Duties.	-	22	Attached 14th A.L.T.M.B.	1	10	On Command.	-	56	On Leave.	5	42	Seconded.	19	-	AUSTRALIA Leave.	4	-	Wounded.	2	-	Hospital (ENGLAND).	2	-	To T.B. ENGLAND.	2	5	<u>Total.</u>	<u>59.</u>	<u>530.</u>	
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WAR DIARY

of

FIFTY FOURTH BATTALION, AIF.

for

OCTOBER, 1918.LIST OF APPENDICES.

<u>No.</u>	<u>Subject.</u>
1.	Report on Operations during period 28th September to 3rd. October, 1918.
2.	Battalion Operation Order No.45.together with Administrative Instructions.
3.	Report on Move from LE MESNIL Area to ST.MAXIME Area.
4.	Nominal Roll of Officers transferred.



## 54TH. BATTALION, A.I.F.

REPORT on OPERATIONS of 54TH. BATTALION during period 28th September to 3rd. October, 1918.

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The Battalion having been reorganised to meet the exigency of the situation the move to the HERVILLY Area was made on the evening of the 27th of September.

A stay was made there on the 28th: on the evening of that date the Brigadier called a Conference of Commanding Officers and Officers Commanding Specialist Units under the Brigade Command, and after delineating the operation program discussed details.

The role of the Brigade was revealed in 14th Brigade Battle Instructions, Series "E", No. 5, dated 28th September and the dispositions are best outlined by questions:-

"Objectives are as follows:-

8th. Brigade Group. JONCOURT RIDGE (with exploitation to LEHANCOURT RIDGE), JONCOURT HILL (inc-).

The 14th Brigade Group is to follow the 8th Brigade Group and to be disposed in the area between NAUROY and ESTREES, East of the GREEN LINE, as support Brigade to the Division.

Time of movement will be contingent on that of the 8th Brigade. Relative positions of Battalions to be as follows:-

54th Battalion Line Right.

55th Battalion Line Left,

with the other Battalions of the Brigade in support.

The 9th Corps is to attack in conjunction with and on the right of the 30th American Division, and if successful in crossing the Canal will move forward on the right flank of that Division."

The move was to be made via way of the BLACK ROUTE.

The Battalion assembled and marched off at 8.30.a.m. on the 29th.

The scene on the road that morning was a memorable one. French country roads are seldom good, and this one, deep in mud with the recent rain, pitted with shell holes, and strewn with the debris of barbed wire and broken timber, it would have presented even to ordinary traffic a problem. On this morning heavy guns forced their way along: heavily laden ammunition limbers, Cavalry, Tanks and long lines of Pack Transport: intermingled with these, often marching in single file were the infantry. To disturb still further the order of things a heavy fog settled on the low ground West of BELLICOURT and for a considerable time brought movement to a standstill.

Upon reaching the high ground about G.8.d. a block occurred on the road and the Battalion had to be sheltered in the trench system nearby. It is well this precaution was taken for shortly afterwards heavy fire was directed on the area from enemy Batteries in the direction of NAUROY.

At this juncture I reconnoitred forward and finding that further progress was unlikely for some time issued orders for the trench system in G.8.b. & 9.a. to be occupied. This position later came under heavy shell fire and the Battalion was moved into the system of trenches South of the road (approximately G.9.central) and overlooking BELLICOURT. These dispositions were approved by the Brigade Major who further intimated that the 55th Battalion would be brought up into line on the left and that we were to remain in that position pending further instructions.

At 4.p.m. I again went forward and got into touch with the 30th Battalion who were then about 200 yards to the South of BELLICOURT as 8th Brigade Reserve and in the trench system approximately G.10.c. & d.



At 11.p.m. a meeting of Battalion Commanders was held at the 53rd Battalion H.Q. Here details of an operation to be carried out by the 53rd Battalion with the 55th Battalion in support, the next morning were gone into. This minor operation was to be in a Northerly direction along RAILWAY RIDGE and to link up with the 41st Battalion at about the KNOB in A.10.a. - Trench System LE CATALET-NAUROY LINE to be the right of their advance.

At 3.p.m. on the 30th I visited the Brigade Forward Report Centre and got into telephonic communication with Brigade H.Q. Upon returning to the Battalion the following order was issued to the C.O., 56th Battalion:-

"C.O., 56th Battalion.

Following from G.O.C., 14th A.I. Brigade through me:-

You are to move your Battalion and take up position in square A.27. to be in position of readiness to support the 53rd and 55th Battalions.

H.Qrs. of 53rd Battalion G.4.a.4.2. from whence there is telephonic communication on to Advanced Brigade Headquarters. Position should be reconnoitred and move carried out at once.

Would advise you getting into touch with Colonel CHEESEMAN and finding out forward situation from him.

My Headquarters G.9.b.3.5. and am not moving at present."

4.45.p.m.  
30.9.18.

(Sgd).N.MARSHALL, Lt-Col.

This was confirmed by Brigade Memorandum No.301.

At 1.a.m. on the morning of the 1st October the following message was received over the 'phone and later confirmed by Brigade Memorandum 310:-

"The 56th and 54th Battalions are to attack tomorrow morning at 6.a.m. as under aaa With 31st Battalion on right of 56th and 59th on left of 54th aaa 56th Line Right 54th Line Left, 1 Coy. in line 1 Coy. in support aaa Start Line G.12.a.1.5. - G.12.d.1.0. aaa Boundaries WATLING STREET exclusive on right aaa Trench G.12.a.1.5. G.6.c.8.0. G.6.b.6.6. B.25.c.5.7. on left aaa Interbattalion G.12.c.65.80. H.1.c.3.7. H.1.b.0.5. aaa Objective to be governed by final barrage line which runs B.25.c.3.7. H.1.d.9.7. aaa Exploitation to be made as far forward of that line as possible aaa 4 tanks allotted to each attacking Battalion aaa O.C. of Sections make detailed arrangements with C.O. aaa 6 guides per Battalion from 29th Battalion at present holding sector await Battalion at Eastmost house on BLACK ROAD aaa Artillery barrage descends 500 yds. in advance of Infantry "Start Line" at Zero and advance at 100 yds. lifts each 3 minutes to the final line aaa Liaison posts to be established by 56th Battalion with 31st. on "Start Line" and at H.7.a.9.7. and by 54th with 59th under direct arrangements aaa 54th 56th Bn. H.Q. move to approximate G.10.b.6.2. where 29th Battalion are and line is being run from our Report Centre aaa Brigade H.Q. remains present location aaa Acknowledge aaa"

A meeting of Company Commanders was then held at B.H.Q. After details were discussed orders were issued for the move to the "Start Point". At 3.p.m. the Officer in Charge of the Tanks - Capt. CHICK - reported and was informed of the dispositions made.

Rain had fallen earlier in the night which by 3.a.m. had turned into a heavy downpour. At that hour the weather could not have been more unpropitious. By 4.a.m. a sudden change had occurred and the march was undertaken under a starry sky.

It had been arranged that guides from the 29th Battalion were to be picked up near the Cross Roads at G.10.b.8.3. but these failed to report to time. Considerable delay consequently ensued until a further party could be obtained from the 29th Battalion Headquarters which was then situated about G.10.b.9.3.



3.

The route from here was subjected to considerable attention from enemy artillery, but no casualties were suffered. By 5.45.a.m. the positions allotted on the "jumping off" line were occupied. At 6.a.m. the barrage fell; at 3 minutes past 6 the Infantry Assault commenced but little opposition was met with. In isolated places only machine gun fire was encountered but these posts were rapidly put out of action. The following messages were then received in order:-

(No. 1.)

"A. & C. Coys. are up to first objective - gained at 6.20.a.m. We are in touch with left and right troops. Left 59th Bn. right 56th Bn."  
6.25.a.m. (Sgd) S.A.BENSON, Captain.

(No. 2.)

"D. & B. Coys. are up in line with A. & C. Coys. To fill gaps between A. & C. Coys. and 59th Bn. Casualties were light. Tanks working in front of us."  
6.30.a.m. (Sgd).S.A.BENSON, Captain.

(No.3.)

"We are at present reorganising on line from Halte at H.l.d.4.l. to trenches at B.25.c.2.2. at 7.30.a.m. Opposition nil. Identifications nil. On the left flank we are in touch with 59th Bn. On the right 56th Bn. The 56th Bn. are now up to us; we started off without them and took over their sector with No.1. Coy. No.2. Coy. coming up to get touch with 59th Bn. At present we are getting into our correct sectors and digging in. The tanks have gone back; they report the village of ESTREES clear of enemy troops. Our casualties are light and estimated about 10 Other Ranks caused by gunfire from our own artillery barrage."  
7.40.a.m. (Sgd).S.A.BENSON, Captain.

(No.4.)

"We will be moving forward to village of ESTREES will you please notify artillery."  
8.15.a.m. (Sgd).S.A.BENSON, Captain.

This disposition was immediately communicated to Brigade H.Q. by telephone at 8.30.a.m.

(No.5.)

"I am established in old railway line behind A. & C. Coys. - 10.a.m. - shelling a little - few casualties."  
10.a.m. (Sgd).A.VINE-HALL, Captain.

(No.6.)

"We are being shelled by our own guns. We cannot advance on left of village (ESTREES) owing to machine gun fire. Am remaining on objective."  
11.a.m. (Sgd).A.VINE-HALL, Captain.

(No.7.)

"We are consolidating on line shown on attached map. Coy.H.Q. is at present at H.l.b.0.3. The 56th Bn. are not occupying their full sector and the 15th Brigade are crowding us down to the right so we are at present in the sector marked. On reaching the objective 1 Coy. of the 56th Bn. and "A".Coy. of ours exploited forward to the middle of the village. "A".Coy. passed on the left flank of it. The 56th retired because his other Coys. would not support him so I ordered A.Coy to come back and consolidate. The 15th Brigade did not go over the final objective at all. The enemy is engaging all movement with artillery and machine gun fire. The enemy is holding the BEAUREVOIR LINE with advanced posts in front and many machine guns."  
11.15.a.m. (Sgd).S.A.BENSON, Captain.

During that afternoon I visited the front line with the intention to check the dispositions. The 56th Bn. were at this time in an extended formation encircling the village of ESTREES with the 8th Brigade on their right. The 54th Battalion was in occupation of the trench system running from G.6.b. into H.l.c. It was clear that the situation would be a critical one for the 56th Bn. in the event



of an enemy counter-attack. I therefore returned to B.H.Q. with the intention of advising Brigade of the situation and pointing out the necessity of that unit withdrawing to the high ground in rear of the village. Before this message could be communicated the following was received from Brigade:-

"8th Brigade are to capture and consolidate BEAUREVOIR SYSTEM from JONCOURT HILL to ESTREES-BEAUREVOIR ROAD in ASSEGAI VALLEY inc. aaa 54th and 56th Bns. are to be withdrawn into reserve in G.6.b.& d. and H.1.a.& c. aaa 54th and 56th Bns. will stand fast on line at present held until assault troops of the 8th Brigade pass through and will then withdraw to reserve positions aaa"

This move was not carried out.

At 4.p.m. telephonic instructions were received which were later confirmed by Brigade Memorandum 323:-

"Move from present position and take over line from 15th Brigade between A.23.central and the intersection of present line with the following line which will be your right boundary aaa G.23.central CABARET COPSE MINT COPSE aaa 53rd Bn. join you at A.23.central. aaa 56th are being relieved by 8th Brigade and are withdrawing to H.1.a.& c."

Coy. Commanders were at once given orders to this effect, Lieut. STEBER and myself going forward beforehand to pick up the new line. Finding that the 58th Bn. had similar orders to ourselves I at once got into communication with 14th Brigade H.Q. and informed them of the situation whereupon I was instructed to get into touch with the 15th Brigade and make arrangements direct with them. This was done with the result that it was agreed that we were to take over from the 58th Bn. after they had established the position and gained touch with their flanks. This movement was completed.

Communication was at this time established with the 55th Battalion on the left and the 20th Battalion on the right.

At 6.p.m. information was received that the 54th Bn. would come under the 8th Brigade for relief that night. This relief did not take place. Headquarters of the 54th Bn. were at this time established at G.6.d.2.7. it being considered not worth while moving to a more central location on account of the impending relief.

The next day was passed in comparative quietness.

At 6.p.m. on the 2nd. the 54th Bn. came under the orders of the 7th Brigade. The same night information was received that the 2nd. Aust. Division would pass through our front line next morning at 6.o'clock, after which the Bn. would withdraw to location West of VILLARET. I then sent out the following message to Coys:-

"Following from 96th Brigade on right of 5th Brigade:-  
Enemy reported massing for probable counter-attack along front of 5th Brigade. Posts should be warned to be especially alert. You are to push out protective patrols to the road running N.E. and S.W. in A.24.b. working along the road as far as outskirts of GRANDCOURT and covering your whole front. These patrols are not to be withdrawn until attacking Battalions have passed through. I would suggest that patrols be sent out about 12.midnight to find out what they can about the road and return. Fresh patrols could then be sent out under guidance shortly before dawn and remain out until passed through by the attacking Bn. The above patrols are to be mutually arranged between Coy. Commanders. Action in this matter must be taken immediately. Please report what you are doing in regard to it."

In response to the above the following report was received from Captain VINE-HALL at 3.15.a.m.:-

"A patrol of 6 men under Lieut. CHRISTIE has been sent out from the right of Bn. line with orders to proceed along the road to outskirts of GRANDCOURT and report back. Same patrol will go out again at 4.a.m. for the same purpose and will remain out until attack passes through and then return. This patrol will send in a report while out."



5.

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Earlier in the evening I had in company with Lieut. SENN visited the front line and met a few of the officers (including the G.O.) of the Battalion which was to pass through us in the morning. I was able to give them useful information concerning the front and pointed out lines of approach for their troops in the morning.

The attacking Bn. passed through my front line at 6.5.a.m. on the 5rd. whereupon Coys. withdrew to a location in the trench system in G.9.b. which had been previously occupied on the 29th. Here breakfast awaited them and after a very short stay movement was made to our allotted area West of VILLARET. By 10.30.a.m. H.Q. and Coys. were in position and report to that effect forwarded to Brigade.

6/10/18.

(Sgd) N. MARSHALL, Lieut.-Col.,  
Commanding 54th Battalion, A.I.F.



54th. BATTALION OPERATION ORDER NO.45

Headquarters,  
4th October, 1918.

1. The 54th Battalion will move from the present area to LE MESNIL tomorrow, preparatory to entraining for HORNOY on the 6th instant. Detailed orders for the entraining will be issued later.
- 2.(a) Order of march will be as follows:-  
Headquarters, "D" Coy., "B" Coy., "C" Coy., "A" Coy. Transport.  
(b) Starting Point:- Cross Roads L.15.b.5.0. Head of column to pass at 1005.  
(c) Route:- HERBECOURT.(L.13.c.7.2.) Cross Roads K.33.a.-Cross Roads Q.2.a.6.0.- CARTIGNY-LE MESNIL.  
(d) Halts of 10 minutes to the clock hour will be made beginning at 0950. Mid-day halt will be made from 1150 to 1300.  
(e) Distances of 100 Yds. between Coys. & 500 Yds between Battalions will be maintained.  
(f) First Line Transport will move with unit.  
Strict march discipline will be maintained throughout
3. ADVANCED PARTIES:- Lieut. STEBER and 1 Other Rank will meet the Staff Captain at Div. H.Q., HERVILLY, at 0745 sharp tomorrow morning, thence proceed by lorry to HORNOY. 2 days rations to be carried.  
Lieut. K.WARK to report to Brigade I.O.at old Bde. H.Q. LE MESNIL at 1030 5th instant. Areas recently occupied will be taken over.
4. O.C. "A" Coy., will detail 1 officer and 10 men as Rear Guard to pick up stragglers.
5. Report that Coys. are in occupation in new area to be sent to B.O.R. immediately on arrival.
6. Battalion H.Q. will close at present location at 1000 and open at a place(in LE MESNIL) and time to be notified later.
7. Administrative Instructions are attached.
8. ACKNOWLEDGE.  
"B" & "D" Coys. by wire.

*M. J. Harman*  
Lieut.,  
A/Adjutant.,

Issued to.	Copy No.
"A" Coy.	1.
"B" "	2.
"C" "	3.
"D" "	4.
H.Q.	5.
Q.M. & T.O.	6.
<u>Copies to:-</u>	
C.O.	7.
14th A.I.Bde.	8.
War Diary	9-11.
File.	12.



54TH. BATTALION. A.I.F.

ADMINISTRATIVE INSTRUCTIONS TO ISSUE WITH  
OPERATION ORDER NO.45

Headquarters,  
4th Oct., 1918.

1. ROUTINE.

Reveille	0630.
Breakfast	0700.
Sick Parade	0730.

Lunch will be served on march at 1150. Q.M. to arrange for hot tea to be issued.
2. Lewis Guns and Panniers, Stretchers and technical gear will be carried on transport. Lewis guns to be properly cleaned and oiled before being loaded on limber. Above gear to be stacked by the Q.M. Store not later than 0800.
3. AMMUNITION. The extra ammunition, etc., carried on the man i.e:-  
1 bomb, 50 rds. bandolier S.A.A., 2 flares and smoke bomb will be formed in two dumps: one at B.H.Q. the other at "D" Coy. H.Q.  
S.O.S. Signals and Success Rockets are to be handed in to Q.M. and receipts obtained.  
Inventory of material on dumps to be handed in to B.O.R. (Coys. to arrange).
4. The cookers will move with transport.
5. All trench shelters and tents are to be ready:-  
"B" & "D" Coys. at "D" Coy. H.Q. at 0730.  
"A", "C", & H.Q. at B.H.Q. at 0745.  
These will be collected by T.O. and returned to Area Commandant, HERVILLY.
6. Officers' valises and packs of Nucleus and Mess gear will be stacked at :-  
"B" & "D" Coys. at "D" Coy. H.Q. at 0815.  
"H.Q.", "A" & "C" Coys. at B.H.Q. at 0830.  
Approx. number of valises and packs to be carried 3 valises and 60 packs.  
Limber will pick these up at times stated.  
Orderly Room gear will be ready at 0900.
7. Officers' chargers to be at <sup>S</sup> respective H.Q. by 0930 sharp.
8. Certificate is to be handed to B.H.Q. at 0915 certifying that Coy. Lines are in a clean and sanitary condition.
9. Marching Out States will be rendered at 0955.

*O'Hanion*  
Lieut.,  
A/Adjutant.,



54TH. BATTALION, A. I. F.

REPORT on MOVE from LE MESNIL Area to ST. MAXENT Area.

The LE MESNIL Area was vacated at 0830, 7/10/18, the Brass Band of an American Unit nearby playing the Battalion to PERONNE Station.

All 1st. Line Transport had been loaded by 0700 according to Brigade instructions, and at 0915 - 5 minutes after the personnel arrived - "all clear" report was sent to the R.T.O.

The train moved out at 1010 - 20 minutes before schedule time - and took approximately 11 hours to run the journey to the detraining station, OISEMONT.

At LONGPRE Station a detachment of reinforcements from the Base under the charge of Captain WEBSTER, entrained. These were subsequently taken over with the Battalion to TOURS for the night and distributed to their Battalions the following morning.

Upon arrival at OISEMONT detraining immediately commenced. Coys. were clear of the Station by 2130 and the transport by 2215.

During the process of detraining the vehicles, a G.S. Wagon laden with Mob. Stores was overturned through the train shunting without warning: practically no damage was done.

The march to billets occupied 2 hours. The villages of TOURS and HAMICOURT being allotted to this Battalion, Headquarters, "A" and "C" Coys. moved to TOURS, "B" and "D" Coys. to HAMICOURT; hot meals were then served from the cookers.

By 0030 on the 8th instant the whole of the Battalion including transport was billeted.

The entraining officer at PERONNE was Lieut. K. WARK. D.C.M.  
The detraining officer at OISEMONT was Lieut. J. STEBER.

10/10/18.

*M. J. Harrison*  
Lieut.-Colonel,  
Commanding 54th Battalion, A.I.F.



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Supplementary to REPORT on move from LE MESNIL Area  
to TOURS-en-VIMEAU on 7/10/18.

FOOD ARRANGEMENTS.

Before moving from LE MESNIL all water bottles were filled: hot breakfast was served at 0715.

It was expected that the journey would take at the most not more than 6 hours - which would land the troops at their destination about 1800 and in the hours of light. A hot meal was then to be issued.

The prolonged railway journey however prevented this as a meal issued in the darkness of the yard or adjacent fields would have given little satisfaction.

Although the hot stew had been prepared on the cookers whilst aboard the train, when warmed up and issued at midnight to the troops in billets, it was quite good.

Mid-day meal was taken from the unexpired portion of the day's ration.

11/10/18.

*M. Harrison*  
Lieut.,  
for Lieut.-Colonel,  
Commanding 54th Battalion, A.I.F.



NOMINAL ROLL OF OFFICERS TRANSFERRED TO  
53rd. BATTALION.  
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Name.	Remarks.
Major F.V. TRICKEY.	AUSTRALIA Leave.
Captain H.H. YOUNG. M.C.	14th Training Bn.
Captain J.H. CROMBIE.	" " "
Lieut. C.T. WINTERBOTTOM.	AUSTRALIA Leave.
Lieut. C.J. SMALL.	Seconded Wounded.
Lieut. G.N. BENNETT.	" "
Lieut. C.E. DAVIS.	" Aust. Corps H.Q.
Lieut. A.F. SMITH.	AUSTRALIA Leave.
Lieut. W.J. TRELOAR.	Seconded 3rd. Training Brigade.
Lieut. W.A.L. SENN.	With Unit.
Lieut. V.F. BACK.	Hospital.
Lieut. J.D. MCGREGOR.	U.K. Leave.
2/Lieut. J.L. CHESTER.	Hospital.
2/Lieut. E.L. LLOYD.	On Leave.
2/Lieut. S.H. WRIGHT. "MM".	On Leave.
Lieut. F.C.R. SMALL.	Attached 14th A.L.T.M.B.
2/Lieut. J.G. DODDMEAD.	Seconded Wounded.

NOMINAL ROLL OF OFFICERS TRANSFERRED TO  
55th. BATTALION.  
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Captain J.A.S. MITCHELL.	Seconded Wounded.
Captain C.E. SHAW.	With Unit.
Captain A.P. VINE-HALL.	School.
Lieut. R.A. SMITH.	With Unit.
Lieut. T. SEYMOUR.	Seconded Wounded.
Lieut. A.C. ASKHAM.	With Unit.
Lieut. H.R. ALLEN.	Seconded Invalided.
Lieut. J.F. SOMERVILLE.	With Unit.
Lieut. J. BURNS.	Sec. 14th A.L.T.M.B.
Lieut. J.H. BARTON.	On Leave.
Lieut. F.A. PICKUP.	Seconded Invalided.
Lieut. R.J.D. MIDGLEY.	With Unit.
Lieut. C.C. HART.	Seconded Invalided.
Lieut. R.T. GILLIGAN.	Wounded.
Lieut. N.W.C. PATMAN.	Seconded Wounded.
2/Lieut. A.F. FRASER.	With Unit.
2/Lieut. L.S.F. ROBINSON.	Wounded.

NOMINAL ROLL OF OFFICERS TRANSFERRED TO  
56th. BATTALION.  
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Lieut. Colonel N. MARSHALL. D.S.O. M.C.,	With Unit.
Captain S.A. BENSON.	" "
Captain R.G. DOWNING. M.C.	On Leave.
Captain H.R. GOLLAND. M.C.	Seconded, B.M. 15th A.I. Bde.
Captain D.E. WEBSTER.	Brigade School.
Captain D.A. McNAB. M.C.	AUSTRALIA Leave.
Lieut. J. ADAMS. M.C.,	Seconded Wounded.
Lieut. K.N. WARK. D.C.M.	With Unit.
Lieut. M.F. CARRICK.	" "
Lieut. J.H. WICKS.	Seconded Aus. F.C.
Lieut. J.H. POLLOCK. "MM".	With Unit.
Lieut. W.L. PALMER.	Seconded Wounded.
Lieut. C.W. HARVEY.	Hospital.
Lieut. W.J. HARRISON.	T.B. ENGLAND.
Lieut. A.E. ROWE.	With Unit.
Lieut. A.W. WHEEN. "MM".	Seconded Wounded.
2/Lieut. R.W.S. TUCKERMAN. "MM".	With Unit.
2/Lieut. A.P. CHRISTIE.	" "
Lieut. G.A. DICKINSON.	" "
Lieut. C. UPSOLD.	" "
Lieut. A.G. BATES. M.C., D.C.M.	" "



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<u>Name.</u>	<u>Remarks.</u>
Lieut. W.L.AGNEW.	With Unit.
Lieut. J.G.STEBER.	T.B.ENGLAND.
Lieut. H.BREWER.	With Unit.
Lieut. F.MORLEY.M.C.	With Unit.