

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

Signals

Item number: 22/25/1

Title: Australian Corps HQ Signals
Company Wireless Section

April 1916-February 1919



AWM4-22/25/1

D. 87

BRIEF HISTORY OF THE AUSTRALIAN CORPS WIRELESS SECTION.

FORMATION OF UNIT.

Soon after the arrival of the Australian main body of troops in France, and whilst occupying the line in the vicinity of Fleur - Baix, it was decided, in order to bring the Australian troops into line with the British to add to the personnel of each Divisional

Signal Coy, a Wireless Section consisting of 6 men and 2 Wireless sets.

During April, May, and June 1916 applications were called for by A.D. Signals 1st Anzac, acting under instructions from ^{2nd} ~~1st~~ Army, and men were selected by the O's C Divisional Signal Coys.

These men, in almost every case were drawn from Infantry Battalions and were selected on account of having some knowledge of Wireless either on the operating or the electrical side.

They were 1st sent to 2nd Army Wireless classes - Chateau Cuckoo - for training about April 1916 and at intervals thereafter to Zuytpeene. Both these places were adjacent to 2nd Army Headquarters at Cassel.

The courses of instruction were generally of about 6 weeks duration and were almost exclusively for Trench Warfare. They comprised:-

- 1 Indoor training in operating.
- 2 " intensive training in ciphering.
- 3 Training in special Wireless procedure.
- 4 Lectures on elementary principles of Wireless, illustrated by simple demonstrations and experiments.
- 5 Construction and repair of small Wireless sets.
- 6 Outdoor schemes of practical work with trench Wireless instruments, including ordinary line work and stepping up tactics for use during advance.

At the end of the course written examination were held on each subject and reports on each man retained for record.

The instruction was good, and the instructors very keen and enthusiastic but at that period the instruments were very unreliable. The trench sets used were either a combination of the Stirling Transmitter (50 watt) and Mark 1 or mark 2 Receiver, or a combination known as the B.F. set. This set was nothing more than a clumsily constructed and very inefficient toy, but notwithstanding this fact the men took a great interest in their work, and by the time the 6 weeks of instruction had expired, every man had attained a high degree of efficiency at least so far as the preliminary training concerned. The real training was received later during active operations on the

Somme and elsewhere.

The lectures on the elementary principles of Wireless by Corp'l Ferguson R.E. were particularly interesting and proved a welcome change from the incessant monotony of ~~learning~~ ciphering and Wireless procedure.

During July the sections, which by this time had been equipped and sent to their respective Divisions moved Southwards into the 5th Army area and came under control of Lieut. Middle R.E. (attached 1st Anzac)

1st SOMME OFFENSIVE 1916.

During the early part of July preparations were being made for the operations ^{at} of Pozieres, consequently a party of 4 men were detailed to man a directing station at ALBERT and remainder attached 1st, 2nd, and 4th ~~Bixt~~ Australian Divisions with Instruments and gear for manning 2 stations per Division.

The Directing Station was equipped with a Wilson - Mark 3 set, and was situated, 1st near a ruined factory in Albert and shortly after, ^{warden} shifted to TARA HILL which became Headquarters of Division in line.

Here, an enormous amount of difficulty was experienced owing to fact that no proper arrangements existed for charging and maintaining accumulators. The accumulators were provided charged by Army, but on discharge had to be ~~either~~ sent back to Army or charged on any circuit which might be available. It was practically impossible to keep instruments and accumulators in order.

^(now Lieut) Sergeant Harper who was then electrician to the Corps Section deserves special praise for the ^amanner in which he faced the almost impossible task before him, but although he worked night and day improvising and superintending work generally, yet, with the lack of organisation which then existed, added to the fact that (so far as the trench sets were concerned) the instruments were not fitted for the work, it was found difficult to maintain communication by Wireless even though the operators themselves put forward every effort and carried out their duties with enthusiasm.

Lieut. Middle, too, did all in his power to improve ^a matters but he had no definite lines on which to work. The Wireless Sections at that time were " Nobody's Children " Nobody owned them, nobody wanted them, ---- They were regarded as an experiment at a time when everybody was too busy to spare time, or take risks by experimenting.

On July [?] the attack on POZIERES took place. One station was erected at SAUSAGE VALLEY in an old German dugout and another detailed to ~~take~~ up a position near CHALK-PIT which was then Advanced Brigade Headquarters. This last party under Sapper (now Lieut.) Boyce showed great determination in hanging on in their position, repairing

masts and aerials etc under, particularly heavy shell fire. They were eventually forced to evacuate^{entire} after having had their station gear destroyed or rendered useless.

Right^{through} the 1st SOMME operations the men displayed the greatest courage and enthusiasm but, although in several cases Wireless did quite good work, yet, it did not come up to expectations, and in certain quarters was considered an unnecessary addition to the Signal Service. However, considerable experience was gained by the operators, and after due consideration of the circumstances under which they had to work, they acquitted themselves creditably.

YPRES SEPTEMBER 1916.

During September 1916 the 1st, 2nd and 4th Australian Divisions moved into the 2nd Army area in the vicinity of YPRES.

Wireless personnel ~~xxx~~ were withdrawn from the Div. Sig. Coy's and placed in charge of Lieut. (now Captain) Broadwood R.E., as a CORPS WIRELESS SECTION.

Corps Directing Station was situated at RENINGHELST and Divisional stations at Brigade or advanced Brigade positions at various points in 1st Anzac area.

By this time most of the original B.F. sets had been recalled and a set of the same type but of better design and construction, called the Trench Set issued in its ~~place~~ place. This improved the working greatly and ensured Wireless stations always being in communication unless, of course, aerials were destroyed by shell fire etc.

Under the new arrangements of pooling all Divisional Wireless operators, the O.C. Section was able to exercise more careful supervision over the working generally. The supply and issue of stores and charging of accumulators ceased to present difficulties. A "Ballot" 1 k.w. charging set was installed and a workshop opened at RENINGHELST. Fresh supplies were obtained from 2nd Army. A 30 cwt Lorry was also put at the disposal of the Section by Army, and all stores, rations etc delivered at a central position (YPRES) at regular intervals. Considerable^{difficulty} was, however, still experienced in inducing the Signal Service to Accept, and make full use of Wireless as part of their scheme of communications.

During the months of APRIL, May and JUNE at ZUYTPEENE Wireless school, in addition to Wireless classes, men were being trained in use of a special instrument of French design and construction, which was spoken of as I.T. The most an outsider could learn of this I.T. was that it was a system whereby conversations over Phones or Morse and Buzzer signals could be intercepted. Certain^{Australian} personnel were being trained in the use of these instruments, mostly men who spoke German. The I.T. proved to be the instrument now known universally as the Amplifier and was then in a very elementary

and crude state. Investigations and experiments were, however, being carried out in various quarters and at 2nd Army under Capt Wright R.E., the Wireless workshop staff were very busy designing and constructing experimental apparatus. The French designed a new instrument which embodied most of the points of their previous Amplifier but which was not one quarter the size and worked very efficiently.

Whilst the Section was at ~~RENINGHEST~~^L, some of these Interpreter operators were sent to man a listening post near HILL 60. Numerous German conversations and Buzzer messages were picked up at this place and the information received was a valuable nature. In addition research work was ~~xx~~ carried out by Lieut. Broadwood, who often spent days at the post experimenting with various ^{improved} apparatus.

THE REORGANISATION OF THE SECTION.

During September 1916 it was decided to reorganise the 1st Anzac Wireless Section and further applications were called for from units under 1st Anzac.

The entire section was recalled from the line and sent to the 2nd Army Wireless School at ZUYTPEENE for reconstruction. Up to this time the Sections had been controlled by R.E.'s and it was considered advantageous to make it an Anzac Section throughout; consequently an Officer was transferred from an Australian Unit to take over the work of reorganising the Section. The Officer chosen was Lieut. R. Wilkinson 4th Pioneer Battalion. Lieut. Wilkinson in co-operation with Lieut. Broadwood immediately set to work to have the men thoroughly trained in all subjects ~~xx~~ likely to be of any use to a Section of this kind. By the addition of the 20 men selected from various Anzac units the strength of the Section was increased to 45.

The original members of the Section were instrumental in facilitating the training and did all that lay within their power to help the new comers. The general scheme so far as practical work was concerned, was to place 1 member of the old Section in charge of a party of 2 or 3 and correct working or advise where necessary.

A special feature of the course was the series of lectures on principles of Wireless by Lieut. Broadwood R.E.. These lectures, illustrated by simple and convincing experiments and demonstration, were the means of giving the men a thorough grounding in the theoretical side of Wireless. Perhaps the most interesting lectures of the series were those dealing with the Valve, its history, action, and applications as an Amplifier, rectifier, and generator of high frequency. The C.W. set was then in its experimental stage and the exact principles on which it worked were, to the majority of the Section, very little understood, but as the result of these lectures, the mystery was cleared away and every man was on familiar terms with, at least, the principles of C.W.

~~in~~ Indoor training comprised:-

Lectures on procedure, constant practice in ciphering, and buzzer practice.

A rather effective indoor substitute for station work, during wet weather, was arranged as follows:-

In a large room several parties were arranged, each group or party representing a Wireless Station. These groups were each provided with a buzzer and were controlled by a Directing group which took the place of a Wireless Directing Station. Each station had its entire office staff:- Operator, Cipher Clerk etc, and carried on in the same way as if manning an actual Wireless station. This scheme was very effective in showing how very necessary it is to have proper controls in order to cut down jamming. Breaches of procedure detected and corrected by an instructor, were quickly traced to the proper source, and a few minutes explanation by the instructors was far more effective in correcting the error than a great deal of energy vainly expended in abusive cross-talk between stations, via Wireless.

The outdoor training was similar to that carried out at previous schools, but in this case special attention was directed to stepping up tactics which would come into operation should the warfare assume a mobile character.

Apart from the technical training, the men were also thoroughly trained in Military Discipline, and a general smartening up resulted. During the course, ~~for~~ ^{four} Australian Interpreter Operators, who had been attached to Imperial Units joined the Section. These men had previously been sent to G.H.Q. for a course of instruction, and pending the formation of the Anzac Section, had been engaged on duties in various parts of the line, attached to Royal Engineers.

During November, the Section was completely equipped with all technical gear by 2nd Army and orders received to proceed southwards to join 1st Anzac which by this time had moved to the SOMME.

FRICOURT - BULLECOURT 1916 - 1917.

Lieut. Wilkinson left ZUYTPEENE ^{during November} on ^{about 20th November} to arrange details of position etc, and on the entire Section moved by motor bus to the SOMME. The journey, which occupied 2 days, was rather in the nature of a picnic. Lieut. Wilkinson met the Section about half way and gave instructions to proceed to FRICOURT about 8 miles ~~from~~ ^{from} of ALBERT.

During the evening of the 2nd day the Section arrived at FRICOURT and slept for the night in whatever accommodation was handy. The following day details of duties were arranged and parties detailed to huts and dugouts. The Engine was installed and provision

made for charging accumulators and repairing instruments etc. The accommodation was rough and the landscape most ^{un}inspiring - Just a collection of huts and dugouts amongst the ruins of what had once been a beautiful Chateau, - A maze of broken and battered trenches crossing and recrossing amongst a host of shattered tree stumps, and everywhere mud and shell-holes. This was their home of the Section during the end of 1916 and ^{the early part of} 17, but it was their home and before many days had passed everybody was comfortable.

Within the next few days three stations were put out, 1 trench set at a position between SERPENTINE DUMP and NEEDLE TRENCH, another trench set at Brigade Headquarters *in Gun Valley* and directing station with a Wilson set at LONGUEVAL. Signals were good all round, but, owing to the conditions under which the men had to work and the difficulty experienced in keeping the sets insulated and the positions dry, it eventually became very difficult to work with any degree of certainty. It was not that the wrong positions had been chosen, they were the best it was possible to obtain, but at that time every dugout and shelter was the same. The whole district was knee-deep in mud and water.

However, the stations kept fairly good communication and several messages were sent and received, particularly between *Gun Valley* and LONGUEVAL which had a direct telephone line to FRICOURT.

The working was necessarily slow, but not unduly so owing to fact that everything had to be enciphered, and ciphering in a cramped dugout with water half way up to the knees and conditions generally about as miserable as they possibly could be, was quite a different thing to ciphering in a warm class-room, where there was no necessity to get out several times during the day and night to repair aerials broken by shell-fire. The school did little more, really, than prepare the men for the work they learnt, as such work can only be learnt, under Active Service conditions.

As time went on the operators became more proficient and mistakes and delays were reduced to a minimum.

A press set was also installed at FRICOURT and official English, French, and German press intercepted. The French and German was translated by Interpreter Operators and the whole, forwarded, one copy to each: - "G" Staff, A.D. Signals and Intelligence, for information.

On December 20th 1916 2 operators were sent to a position at CHEESE ROAD (A company Headquarters near FLERS) with an Amplifier and Power Buzzer. Power Buzzers were also placed at flanking Battalion on 1 side and flanking Company on the other. This was the first time that Power Buzzer & Amplifier system of communication was used by 1st Anzac, and in this position it proved to be so successful that it was adopted as a regular forward system.

Not only were the Companies and Battalions able to keep in communication, but messages were also intercepted on the Amplifier, from neighbouring Battalions, which enabled the Commander of the formation to which the Amplifier was attached, to keep himself informed of the situation. A complete diary was kept by the operators who recorded everything overheard. In this way it was possible to Police all the lines in the vicinity and it was found that conversations of a most incriminating nature were carried on in forward areas. Immediate action was taken by Corps and in consequence conversations became more guarded and every effort was made to prevent any information reaching the enemy through this channel. How dangerous it was, was proved by fact that ^{at} CHEESE ROAD Amplifier post several German Messages were intercepted. It is highly probable that the Germans also had Amplifier ^{posts} ~~posts~~ in the vicinity and had used them to advantage in getting information in connection with relief of units etc.

During January considerable alteration took place in the disposition of the stations, the general policy throughout being to place a Wireless Station in a position central to various Brigades or Battalions as the case might be. Owing to shortage of instruments it was impossible to place even one Wireless station at each Division and Brigade. Positions chosen were generally adjacent to report centres or even test dugouts, so that should line communication fail in any one direction, messages could be transmitted by Wireless to station nearest addressee of message, or sent to directing station to be disposed of by Division.

Wireless had now reached the state when it was considered necessary to attach a 2nd Officer to the Section for the purpose of carrying out training etc. The Officer chosen for the position was (late) Lieut. H. V. Masters ⁹ B'n. About this time it was decided to hold classes at Corps Wireless Headquarters FRICOURT for purpose of instructing Battalion Signallers in the use of the Power Buzzer and Amplifier. Each class lasted about 4 days and was composed of about 12 men drawn from various Battalions. The course was ridiculously short but the men took a great interest in the work.

Early in February, Wireless stations were installed at MARTINPUICH and LESARS Buzzer Power and Amplifier stations were also placed at these, and other Brigade and Battalion positions in the area and a complete chain of Wireless communications, linking up Battalions, Brigades, and Division was brought into operation. The Amplifier at LESARS had been previously put out for purpose of intercepting German, but owing to fact that very little was intercepted and personnel were urgently required to complete

chain of communications, the post was converted into a Battalion Power Buzzer - Amplifier station. Excellent results were obtained, but on February 23rd the German ~~XXX~~ evacuation commenced and the whole scheme had to be altered.

EVACUATION OF BAPAUME.

When the evacuation commenced, the directing station was pushed forward from LONGUEVAL to MARTINPUICH and power Buzzer - Amplifier parties sent to new positions taken up by our advancing Infantry. The station at LESARS ceased to function as a forward station, but still remained open for S.O.S. Trench sets were held in readiness to be pushed forward as soon as positions were taken up, and directing station at MARTINPUICH warned to keep a special watch both for Infantry and also Cavalry stations ^{which} might come into operation at any time. During these operations the Power Buzzer - Amplifier stations were able to keep in touch with one another throughout the whole advance, and at the same time remain in communication with the rear station which kept a sharp look out for S.O.S signals from all forward stations. Meanwhile, trench sets were moved with Brigades, to each new position occupied and kept in touch with directing station during the whole period. These semi-mobile operations continued until about the 22nd on which date the directing station took up a position at the MONUMENT, outside BAPAUME, and trench stations were installed with Brigades which by this time had advanced some miles beyond BAPAUME and were carrying out minor operations, preparatory to a general attack on the main HINDENBURG line.

BULLECOURT

On March 26th H.Q. of ^{Bullecourt} Section was moved from FRICOURT to the MONUMENT near BAPAUME and all stores and personnel transferred to the new position. During April and the early part of May several minor operations were carried out with more or less success. Wireless stations were pushed out to NOREUIL, HERMIES and MOCHIES and directing station to VAULX-VRAUCOURT. The station at the MONUMENT however did not move but carried on as Army control station, directing the work of Corps, assisting where necessary, and exercising supervision generally over Wireless communications in the Army area.

Throughout these operations which lead up to the now famous battle of BULLECOURT the whole Wireless system worked excellently. In the forward positions the Power Buzzer - Amplifier communications continued without a break and on several occasions was the only existing means of communications with rear. The spirit of the men throughout these operations was excellent. Their courage and tenacity,

their skill and common sense, was in a large measure responsible for their success, a success which placed the 1st Anzac Section amongst the foremost Wireless Sections of the British Army.

PERIOD OF REST.

On May 23rd the Section was relieved by ~~the~~ Wireless 4th Corps and advanced party sent to HENENCOURT near WARLOY to prepare a camp. By the 26th the entire Section had moved to HENENCOURT to enjoy a well earned rest. Up to this time Wireless had been a special branch of the Signal Service, with a separate organisation, but, owing to fact that it had now passed beyond the experimental stage and reached a point where it could no longer be regarded as a subsidiary, but as a regular means of communication in the field, it was decided to abolish the Army Signal Companies as such and to add a Wireless Section as an integral part of each Army, Corps and Divisional Company. Consequently the Wireless Section formed in 1st Anzac as part of An Army Wireless Company was, as temporary measure, attached to " K " Signal Company as the Wireless Section of the latter.

The Wireless Sections of the Australian Divisions were formed by transfer to each Divisional Signal Company of 9 operators from the Corps Section. In order to increase the number of skilled Wireless operators with a Division, and to bring the strength up to establishment of 18, 9 office telegraphists were transferred to respective Wireless Sections from the H.Q. of the Signal Companies. The Training was arranged for and provision also made as opportunity offered for training of all Office Telegraphists and Brigade Section pioneers in the practical use of Wireless instruments.

The training was carried out, in the first place by the Corps Section but later, when a Wireless Officer was appointed to each Divisional Signal Coy, training was carried out under Divisional arrangements. The Section allotted to Corps Signal Company consisted of 2 sub-sections one of which provided the personnel necessary for 2 directing stations and for repair and overhaul of instruments and accumulators, the other the complete personnel necessary for 2 listening posts. The O.C. Wireless Section, Corps Signal Coy, in addition to his duties as O.C. Section, was appointed to act as Staff Officer for Wireless duties to A.D. Signals. He was responsible for inspection and coordination of all Wireless work and training throughout the Corps, for the supervision of supply and allotment of Wireless stores to Divisions, and for the repair and upkeep of all Wireless apparatus. All matters regarding technical details of Wireless work, training, or equipment, could be submitted to him by O'sC, Divisional Signal Coys, for advice. These changes were brought into effect during June and July

1917.

During the previous 8 months the Section had made rapid strides and had carried out their work in a very creditable manner. It had been a decidedly uphill fight in the beginning, owing to shortage of instruments, and owing to fact that Wireless had never really been proved, but as the result of the energy, enterprise and determination of the O.C. section, and the initiative and enthusiasm of the men themselves, the work was completely successful and Wireless took its place as a recognised branch of the Signal Service. Owing to the shortage of personnel, it was very often necessary for men to remain in forward positions for weeks, or in some cases months on end, in positions where it was extremely difficult even to supply them with rations. In some of the very forward positions, Amplifier posts etc, where it was necessary owing to the nature of the work to establish themselves sometimes in NO MANS LAND, the work called for the greatest courage and perseverance in order to achieve any results. But the work was always carried out.

The supply and transport of accumulators and other working stores to these positions presented problems which were only solved by the amazing effort put forward by all ranks. Perhaps the best evidence of the work carried out by the Section during this period lies in the fact that no less than 9, out of a total of about 45 men were decorated for acts of gallantry during the operations. The day previous to the sub-sections being sent to their respective Divisions, the entire Section was ordered to parade before the Corps Commander, General BIRDWOOD, who personally thanked them for the work they had done throughout the whole period.

The Corps Wireless Section remained at HENENCOURT conducting Power Buzzer - Amplifier schools and giving demonstrations before the staff of Australian Divisions until July 26th on which date the camp was moved to MORBECQUE near HAZEBROUK.

The schools were continued in the new position and all sections brought up to establishment by 2nd Army. Experiments and trials were also carried out with C.W. sets and the new ground antennae sets. The latter did not prove successful owing to fact that they were too easily jammed out and for forward work were not nearly so reliable as the power buzzer - amplifier combination.

YPRES OFFENSIVE 1917.

On September 2nd Wireless Stations were taken over from 2nd Corps and on the 6th the Section was moved to the STONE SIDING near RENINGHELST. The directing station was established at DICKEBUSCH and trench sets erected at YPRES, BIRR CROSS ROAD, and

HALF WAY HOUSE. The 1st Anzac had taken over the line from 2nd Corps and preparations ~~xxxx~~ were being made for a continuation of the offensive in front of YPRES.

Although the Divisions had been brought up to establishment, yet it was found that the number of sets provided would not allow of full use being made of Wireless during the coming operations. Arrangements were made with 2nd Army for a further supply of Amplifiers, trench sets etc, and each Division was supplied with sufficient sets and spares to see them through. It was further realised that in order to keep the Divisions up to working strength it would be necessary to hold a great number of spares in readiness, to replace stores lost, or rendered unserviceable during the operations. A large reserve was kept at the RAMPARTS - YPRES -, with A Sergeant in charge who issued direct, on receipt of demands from Divisional Wireless Officers and arranged means of sending stores forward. Charging stations were established at BIRR CROSS ROADS, HALF WAY HOUSE, YPRES RAMPARTS, STONE SIDING RENINGHELST, and later at SAN SOUCI. No strain was experienced on any of these charging stations in spite of shortage of accumulators and their provision was undoubtedly a great advantage as the batteries were subject to less damage, in transport, than would otherwise have been the case, a smaller carrying party was required and return of batteries to forward stations was much quicker.

Later the Directing station was placed at RAMPARTS - YPRES - and Army Control Station manned by 1st Anzac personnel situated at DICKEBUSCH. During the whole of offensive operations in this area which lead up to the attack on PASCHENDALE RIDGE, the trench sets manned by Divisions were all in communication with the Corps Directing station but several delays in transmission of messages occurred, due, both to the aerals being blown down by shell fire and inexperience on the part of Divisional operators in reading through excessive jamming. This latter was ^a the fault which could be only rectified by continuous experience in the line. Conditions in the back area, where training had been carried out were totally different, as regards jamming, to those reigning in forward areas.

The General scheme during these operations, was to carry out all forward Wireless communications by means of Power Buzzer - Amplifier, and the placing of trench Wireless ~~xxxx~~ stations sufficiently far back to be easily maintained. This necessitated a longer chain of Power Buzzer - Amplifiers but it was undoubtedly safer than pushing the Wireless sets too far forward. It was found to be an easier matter to maintain Power Buzzer bases than Wireless aerals in these positions and in view of fact the distances over which communication was necessary could be easily bridged by Power Buzzer - Amplifier, the scheme proved to be a sound one.

This was the first time the Corps had carried out operations since the new Divisional organisation came into force. There is no doubt that the work of each forward Wireless station, both in operating, expeditious despatch ^{of messages} and overcoming technical difficulties, was far below the standard attained when all stations were under the control of, and manned by, the Corps personnel. This was, no doubt, due to the fact that Divisional Wireless Officers had not had sufficient experience and the Sections had not had sufficient training under line conditions. For the successful working of Wireless during a stunt something more is necessary than actual proficiency in operating and this something is only acquired in the line under "shell fire" conditions which is a vastly different proposition to Wireless during "peace" warfare. On November 10th 1st Anzac was relieved by 2nd Anzac. Corps Wireless stations were withdrawn and Section moved from RENINGHELST to BAILLIEUL. *to take over w/ 5th division from 8th Corps*

HOLDING THE LINE.

On this front, as result of lessons learnt at YPRES it was considered advisable to ^{dispense with} ~~out~~ Corps Directing Station as such, and ^{in its place} place a station at each Divisional H.Q. These stations were manned by Corps Personnel and controlled all forward work in their respective Divisional areas. As the result of this scheme jamming, generally the result of lack of cooperation between stations, was reduced considerably, and working ^{as a whole} generally showed a decided improvement. Listening sets were installed in various positions, primarily for purpose of intercepting German but owing to fact that in this position it was impossible to get proper accommodation far enough forward the posts were eventually used ~~as~~ for Policing our own lines. In this respect quite a lot of useful work was carried out. Here, again, it was found that sufficient care was not exercised when speaking over the telephone. Conversations of an incriminating nature were intercepted and ^{reported} forwarded to A.D.SIGNALS for information.

On February 27th 1918 the Section moved from BAILLIEUL to the GAS SCHOOL on RAVELSGURG ROAD. About this time it was decided to hold a Wireless school at 1st Anzac in order to train Divisional personnel in Wireless in all its branches. Lieut. Harrison Wireless Officer 2nd Divisional Signal Coy and N.C.O's from each 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Divisions were attached to the Corps Section as instructors. The courses of instruction which commenced on March 5th, included training with Wilson, Trench, Loop, and Power Buzzer - Amplifier sets. This school continued until March 28th on which date in view of the state of things existing on the SOMME, where the Germans had forced the British lines back some 30 Kilometers, and was still advancing in the direction of

AMIENS, the Australian Corps was sent to the SOMME to assist in stemming the German advance.

During March the title first Anzac (1st Anzac) was changed to Australian Corps. Australian Signal Sections were formed and took over from " K " Signal Coy. The Wireless Section thus became part of Australian Corps Signal Company and title changed from Wireless Section 1st Anzac to Wireless Section Australian Corps Signal Company.

SOMME 1918.

On the Section moved by road from the old camp and within a few days had established themselves at ALLONVILLE near AMIENS. Directing station was established at Corps H.Q. VELLERS BOGAGE, and a rear station, erected and manned at VIGNACOURT with instructions to come into operation should it become necessary to retire from the forward positions. The charging lorry and the main stores were also left at VIGNACOURT but all spares and instruments necessary for maintenance of Corps and Divisional stations were kept at ALLONVILLE, where workshops had been opened and small charging set installed. Owing to the complete check of the German on-rush in this quarter, and the defeat inflicted on them in the vicinity of CORBIE and VELLERS BRETTONEUX by the Australian troops, it was considered unnecessary to maintain the rear ^{position} station at VIGNACOURT, consequently the station was recalled and all stores, including charging set, were moved to ALLONVILLE. During May the directing station moved to BERTANGLES

which was now Headquarters Australian Corps. On the

April, a very sad incident occurred. Lieut. H. V. Masters, who had been with the Section since February 1917 was accidentally killed as the result of a motor cycle smash. He was buried at ALLONVILLE in the quaint little cemetery where a plain wooden cross, made by members of the Section, was erected to his memory. Lieut. R. L. Mashford was recalled from the Officer Cadet School in England to fill the vacancy thus caused. Throughout the Month of April minor operations, ~~xxx~~ including raids were continually carried out by the Australian Divisions. Right through these operations the whole Wireless system worked excellently and amply justified the confidence which was placed in it by the O's.C. Divisional Signal Coys.

A constant supply of instruments was always forthcoming from 4th Army and every effort made by them to supply the Australian Corps with as much as possible. The Corps Wireless workshop Staff at ALLONVILLE were, during this period, working at top speed and it is safe to say that notwithstanding the enormous strain placed on men and instruments, the Divisions were never really short of stores or replacements.

from this source.

The directing station at Corps Headquarters exercised complete control over all stations operating in the area, and ^{was} were able at the same time to expeditiously handle incoming and outgoing traffic from and to Army, Divisions, and Brigades.

A school was opened at ALLONVILLE, and men from Infantry Battalions trained in the use of Trench, Loop, and Power Buzzer - Amplifier sets. Each course lasted 3 weeks and provided for instruction of about 30 men. The instruction was carried out by N.C.O's of the Corps Wireless Section under the Supervision of Lieut. S.S. Caporn, ^{and included} ~~The instruction included~~ lectures on instruments used, and practical field work. All unnecessary details were dispensed with during this course and in their place special attention concentrated on points, which, as result of previous experience had been found most necessary for successful working. How the men ~~profited~~ profited by this method of instruction is best illustrated by fact, that, in several cases men were chosen from these classes to fill vacancies which occurred in both Corps and Divisional Wireless Sections. C.W. sets were issued to various units, chiefly Artillery Brigades, not according to any defined establishment, but as the sets became available from Army. From the first, these sets proved very useful particularly for forward observation posts owing to facts that much shorter and lower aerials could be used than in the case of Spark sets, and on the other hand greater distances could be covered. During June the older type of C.W. instruments (Mark 1 and Mark 1 *) were replaced by the C.W. mark 3 type, which proved to be ~~the~~ far the best instruments of their type as yet issued. These sets were issued to Corps Heavy Artillery for purposes of communication between C.H.A. Headquarters and Brigades, or Brigades to O.P's. This new scheme of using C.W. for C.H.A. observation posts was first tried out during the attack on HAMEL on the morning of July 4th. One station was erected at an O.P. overlooking HAMEL and the rear station at ALLONVILLE WOOD, a distance of about 14,000 yards. Although at the forward station the aerial was barely above, and in some places below ground level, yet from the time the stunt

Opened until its close, the stations were in constant communication and messages of a most important nature were transmitted in minimum time. During this stunt the Divisions concerned made ample use of Wireless where necessary but owing to fact that lines lasted well it was unnecessary to take full advantage of the scheme which had been prepared. C.W. also proved extremely useful in strengthening ^{the} our communications with the French who were on ^{the} our right. From March until the beginning of August the Australians held the place of honour - the right of the British line - and very often owing to differences in methods employed etc communications between French and Australian Corps were rendered difficult. To assist in overcoming these difficulties, one C.W. station was erected at Australian Corps and another at (Aust.) right Division. Australian personnel were also sent to French for attachment to 31st French Corps and (French) left Divisional, Wireless stations. British procedure was used and during periods when flank communication was necessary the Australian operators manned the sets and took charge of all traffic. The scheme worked well and excellent liaison was effected between the 2 corps. The operators sent to the French from Australian Corps Section were made extremely welcome and were treated with the greatest courtesy, in fact, when liaison passed to Canadian Corps the operators were very sorry to leave.

On the morning of August 8th, the Australian troops, in co-operation with the Canadians on the right, and 3rd British Corps on the left commenced an attack on the whole of their front. This marked the starting point of the ^{ultimate} collapse of the German forces. From August the 8th until the Australian Corps was withdrawn from the line on October 10th the troops were advancing steadily, driving the Germans before them at every step and only stopping for breathing space when the Germans had been driven through the HINDENBURG LINE. During the whole of the period the various Wireless stations were called upon to put forward their greatest efforts.

In the early phases of the attack the Corps directing station remained at BERTANGLES, but as the advance continued owing to the fact that forward stations were moving rapidly it was necessary to send directing station forward, first to GLISSY and later to MERICOURT. Early in August a composite force was made up of Australians, Americans, and part of 17th Imperial Division. This force became operative on the left of the Australian Line. Wireless stations were supplied by the Corps Wireless Section and attached to the Signal Section of the force, under Captain Tinkler (M.C.). On the 20th of August this composite force ceased to function, and operators were returned to Corps Sections after having had a very rough time in the line. The greatest difficulty was experienced in maintaining

stations on account of extremely heavy shell fire but the results were quite good.

On August 21st responsibility for C.W. liaison with the French again passed to Australian Corps. Operators were, therefore, sent to 31st French Corps and C.W. sets with personnel established at Australian Corps Headquarters and 32nd Imperial Division (functioning under Australian Corps). This liaison continued until September 11th on which date positions on the right were taken over by 9th Corps.

Australian operators were consequently withdrawn from French Corps and 32nd Imperial Division and C.W. sets handed over to Lieut. Coxon, - Wireless Officer 9th Corps -. About this time the Section was moved from MERICOURT to a position close to ~~ASSEVILLERS~~ ASSEVILLERS and directing station installed at Corps Headquarters at BELLOY WOOD.

Preparatory to the attack on September 29th by combined Australian and 2nd American Corps, the forward dump was established at ROUSEL where an A.B.C. charging set and spare stores were kept in charge of an N.C.O. from the Australian Corps Section. These stores could be supplied on receipt of demands from Divisional Wireless Officers, and accumulators charged for Divisions or Brigades operating in the vicinity. Previous to the attack ~~the~~ a conference was held at Australian Corps Headquarters presided over by Wireless Officer Australian Corps and attended by Wireless Officers from Australian and American Divisions. A thorough understanding was arrived at and arrangements made to control the working so that ^{each} Division in turn should be given command of the ether during its active participation in the operations. An interchange of operators had been effected between Australian and American Corps in order to facilitate working and 6 operators ~~it~~ had also been sent, 3 to 27th, and 3 to 30th American Divisions to help where necessary during the stunt.

On the morning of September 29th these 2 American Divisions carried out the attack on the Hindenburg line in the neighbourhood of BELLICOURT, closely supported by 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions. All objectives were reached on time.

6 hours later the 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions passed through the 27th and 30th American, and continued the attack. Later the 2nd passed through and took over from the 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions carrying the operations forward to a point where it was possible for the flanking Corps to close in and cut the Australian Divisions out of the line.

The Wireless scheme drawn up before the stunt was adhered to in every detail. Twelve (12) hours before zero, the American Divisions were given a free path and continued to control the ether until zero plus 6 hours at which time 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions took over. The American Divisions at this period minimised

their working and caused little interference to the stunting Divisions. One of the Corps Wireless operators, Sapper J. O'Brien, who was attached to 30th American Division during their part in this operation deserves special mention for the creditable manner in which he carried out his duties. He was sent out with an outpost Signal party, including linemen and Wireless operators to establish communications from the front line. On arrival at the position the party was subjected to ~~heavy fire~~ heavy fire from all sides owing to fact that ground over which advance had been made had not been thoroughly mopped up. The operator in charge of the Wireless instrument was killed and the Sergeant in charge of the party wounded. Sapper O'Brien took charge of the party and was instrumental in a large extent in maintaining the whole of the communications in this part from the front line to the rear, in addition to operating the Wireless station in his charge. He remained in his position until the 3rd Australian Division swept through and carried the attack beyond the American positions. In recognition of the services rendered on this occasion Sapper O'Brien was subsequently decorated with the Belgian CROIX de GUERRE.

On the relief of the Australian Corps by 2nd American Corps, the Wireless Section moved out of the line and established themselves at the village of ST QUENTIN about 3 kilometres from EU. During the following month there was very little to do beyond making the most of the long anticipated rest. A sports Committee was formed in the Section, a Soccer football club started, and almost every day matches were played either within the Section or against teams from neighbouring units.

On November 8th the Section proceeded by road to LE CATEAU to take over 13th Corps area. On the 11th November at 11a.m. the ARMISTICE was signed.

In consequence of orders received to the effect that Australian troops were to participate in the "March to Germany", all surplus stores and stores not absolutely necessary were handed in to 4th Army.

It was later definitely decided that the Australian troops were not going to Germany but were to occupy districts in 4th Army area in BELGIUM. The Wireless Section, moved with the Australian Corps Signal Coy to AVESNES and afterwards to HAM SUR HEURE near CHARLEROI.

Ham - sur - Leure

The necessity for maintaining forward communications by wireless having now ceased, the only work carried out by wireless consisted of taking press and weather ~~press~~ forecasts etc and sending out signals by CW for purpose of checking divisional wave-lengths. Communication with Army was also carried out by CW, but it was unnecessary to take advantage of this means owing to fact that all lines were working normally and under peace time conditions.

Educational & sports committees were formed within the Signal Coy and representatives from each section kept the men in touch with developments.

Full advantage was taken of educational facilities arranged, and recreational training carried out with zeal & enthusiasm.

On Feb 23rd 5th the first batch of men left the section for Australia.

On Feb 1st all technical stores were landed in to Army.

The section consequently ceased to function as such, but still remained a section of the Corps, Sig Coy for purposes of demobilisation.

R Mansford Lieut
Sept 4 D. London.

HONOURS and AWARDS.

Gained by Officers, N.C.O's and men of Australian Corps Wireless Section.

Present rank.	Name.	Rank when awarded.	Award.	Authority.
Lieut.	Wilkinson R,	Lieut.	Military Cross.	9
"	Mashford R.L.	"	Mention in despatches.	A.I.F. list 427 of 1.1.19.
"	Mashford R.L.	Corp'l	Medaille Militaire.	A.I.F. list of 17.7.17.
"	Price W.P.	Sergt	Military medal.	1st Anzac R.O. 48 of 10.5.17.
Sergt	McNamara L.W.	L/Cpl.	Military Medal.	A.I.F. list 168 of 27.4.17.
"	Gain J.	Corp'l	Croix de Guerre.	A.I.F. list of 17.7.17.
"	Titheridge A.D.	Corp'l	Distinguished Conduct Medal.	A.I.F. list 223 of 28.8.17. (Whilst serving with 4th Division detached from 1st Anzac.)
"	Long W.H.	2/Corp'l	Military Medal.	1st Anzac R.O. 48 of 10.5.17.
Corp'l	Long Lenssens F.H.	Corp'l	Military Medal.	A.I.F. list 12.6.17.
"	Guy J.A.	Sapper	Military Medal.	1st Anzac R.O. 48 of 10.5.17.
"	Robinson W.H.	L/Corp'l	Military Medal.	1st Anzac R.O. of 1.5.17,
2/Corp'l	Thornicroft E.W.	"	Mention in Despatches.	A.I.F. list 427 of 1.1.19.
Sapper	Hummerston W,	Sapper	Medaille Militaire.	G.H.Q. M.S./H/8217 of 24.4.18.
"	O'Brien J.W.	"	Croix de Guerre, (Belgian)	Australian Corps R.O. No 7 of 12.1.19.

LIST OF OFFICERS WHO HAVE GAINED COMMISSIONS WHILST SERVING WITH THE
WIRELESS SECTION.

Rank.	Name.	Present unit.
Lieut.	Neal O.M.	1st.Aust.Div.Sig.Coy.
"	Summers W.J.	3rd.Aust.Div.Sig.Coy,
"	Metcher O.F.	5th.Aust.Div.Sig.Coy.
"	Mashford R.L.(F.)	Wireless Section,Aust.Corps.
"	Caporn S.S.	" " " "
"	Price W.P. (M.M.)	4th.Aust.Div.Sig.Coy.
"	Harper R.W.	2nd.Aust.Div.Sig.Coy.
"	Hutchinson G.W.	Indian Army.
Engr/Lieut.	Sinclair R.	Royal Naval Reserve.
Lieut.	Chisholm A.R.	26th. Battalion A.I.F.
"	Battershill E.H.	Aust.Flying Corps.