

AWM4

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

Artillery

Item number: 13/126/26

Title: 15th Australian Light Trench Mortar
Battery

August 1918



AWM4-13/126/26

288

CONFIDENTIAL.

ORIGINAL.
~~DUPLICATE.~~
~~TRIPLICATE.~~

Australian Imperial Force.

WAR DIARY

OF

15TH A. I. T. M. B.

FOR

August

191⁸

Signature of Officer compiling

Signature of Officer Commanding

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.

or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

15th A.L.T.M.B.

(Erase heading not required.)

Volume 7
Sheet 1

Place	Date 1918	Hour	Ref. Sheet	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
			AMIENS		
Field	July 31st August 1st	6 a.m.		At 10 a.m. the Battery embussed at LA HOUSOYE and travelled to billets in HEM arriving at 1 p.m. The remainder of the day was spent in cleaning up and preparing billets. <u>Amusement</u> Divisional Concert Party gave a concert.	<i>Original</i>
	1/2nd	6 a.m.	<u>Weather</u>	Heavy showers fell at intervals throughout the day and night. <u>Work</u> Guns and equipment were cleaned and an inspection held. Complete shortage list was taken. Gun teams were re-organised. Divisional Troupe again entertained the troops. <u>Sports</u> In Brigade Cricket Association tournament 15th A.L.T.M.B. met 60th Battalion and were beaten by 2 wickets 5 runs.	
	2/3rd	6 a.m.	<u>Training</u>	Training as per syllabus was carried out between hours of 8.30 a.m. and 12.30 p.m. All N.C.Os. attended lecture on map reading and Messages given by O.C. <u>Afternoon</u> Through inclement weather sports for the day had to be abandoned. Divisional Troupe again entertained the troops during evening.	
	3/4th	6 a.m.	<u>Training</u>	Training as per syllabus was carried out. Lecture by O.C. to all N.C.O's on Map reading. Rain interfered with sports in the afternoon. <u>Marched in</u> 3144 Dvr. JAMES R.F. att'd 58th Bn. (58186) Pte. CHALKER L.O.) " COWIE S.J.) " TRAVERS P.) From Nucleus. " PETTIT N.H.S.)	

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Volume 7
Page 2

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918		Ref. 62D 1/20,000	
Field	Aug. 4th	6 a.m.	<u>Marched out</u> 1944 Dvr. DUFFY J.M. (58'52) ceased to be attached from 58th Battalion.	
	4/5th	6 a.m.	N.C.O's received lecture by O.C. on Messages and Map reading. Orders were received to the effect that the unit would move to billets in RIVERIE AREA. The Battery moved by route march from HEM to RIVERIE starting at 8 p.m. and arriving about 9.15 p.m. We billeted for the night. Fairly heavy rain fell. During the day of the 5th preparation was made for a move forward. This took place the same evening in heavy rain.	
	5/6th	6 a.m.	On the night of 5th/6th the battery moved from their billets in RIVERIE AREA for front line system, starting at 8.20 p.m. Heavy showers fell. We moved by route march to trench system near VILLERS BRETONNEUX, keeping timetable as per Brigade Order No. 184. Traffic was exceedingly heavy along the roads but good progress was made and unit was all under cover for the night at 3 a.m. on August 6th. Battery H.Q. were at O.23.C.30.20. Enemy shelling was normal in this area. Gas was noticeable.	
	6/7th	6 a.m.	The weather has cleared up. Battery H.Q. still at O.23.C.30.20. The day spent in preparations for coming event. The position was reconnoitred. Enemy shelling was above normal. Gas being used occasionally. Eight men from 57th Battalion and 8 from 58th Battalion were attached to the Battery as carrying party. Troops were rested as much as possible. Casualties - Nil.	
	7/8th	6 a.m.	Preparations were completed. Ammunition was fused and made up into one man loads. Major DIAMOND of "A" Company 2nd Tank Battalion was located and arrangements made. Mortars and	

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Sheet 3

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	1918 7th/8th	6	Ref. Sheet 62D 1/20,000	
		6 a.m.	ammunition were carried to FOUILLOY and loaded on tanks. Personnel were made familiar with tanks to which they were attached. Dispositions were 8 detachments each of 5 Battery men and 2 Infantry Carriers. Detachments carried 16 rounds of Stokes Ammunition each. Extra water bottles and battle rations were issued. Enemy shelling normal considerable damage was caused through the enemy setting fire to supply tanks near BRETONNEUX.	
	8/9th	6 a.m.	At 5.30 a.m. Battery moved forward with second wave of attack following tanks carrying mortar and ammunition. Keeping time with artillery barrage. On the morning of the 8th the battery was in position agreed on to intercept the tanks, everything going well and to time. A heavy mist along with dense smoke from artillery caused a little delay. However lie out position was reached in good time. Tanks were closely followed to P.35.D. and V.5.A. where mortars and ammunition were unloaded. One "A" shaped elevating stand was found to be lost from tanks. Sections were now attached to Battalions in following manner 4 guns and teams to 57th Battalion and 4 to 59th Battalion. At 8.20 these Battalions moved forward in two waves in line of sections in single file. Teams in each case moved with second wave of attacking force. Little resistance was met with, and enemy shelling was scattered. Prisoners dribbled back in small parties. Our artillery was noticed at times to be firing short. With the exception of 9 rounds of ammunition carried by two men who became casualties and 1 "A" shape elevating stand lost in	

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Sheet 4

Place	Date 1918	Hour	Ref. Sheet 62D 1/20,000 Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	August 8/9th	6 a.m.	<p>in action the whole of the Battery equipment was got right forward to final objective. No targets presented themselves until the BLUE LINE (final objective) was reached. Mortars were then distributed along the front in good defensive positions. Ammunition was got forward from dumps established by Supply Tanks and 12 rounds were fired on M.G. to cover advance of 59th Battalion. Battery H.Q. at W.17.C.9-5.</p> <p>Enemy artillery seemed very weak. Apparently only one or two batteries of heavy artillery and no light artillery were in action and firing on HARBONNIERES, which lay to our rear. The weather was exceptionally fine and bright. No counter attack developed.</p> <p>Ammunition expended 12 rounds Casualties - nil.</p>	
	9/10th	6 a.m.	<p>Under excellent weather conditions and under cover of our advanced artillery and Machine Guns the advance was resumed until the 1st Division came up and leapfrogged our division. Prisoners streamed in again. Enemy machine guns were active in places, but were easily silenced, when engaged by the mortars. 38 rounds were well spent in this work. While pushing forward a gun to engage one of these "nests" 3 O.R. of the battery were conspicuous - L/Cpl. A. HARRIS, Ptes. SCOTT and SMITH. Under heavy machine gun and rifle fire, Harris twice rushed forward to assist wounded men. He himself being wounded in the attempt. The remainder of the day was comparatively quiet, except for occasional shots from enemy heavy artillery on HARBONNIERES. Throughout the two days fighting all ranks of the Battery showed great dash and courage and endurance. All</p>	

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15th A.L.T.M.B.

Place	Date	Hour	S.E. Ref. Sheet 62D 1/20,000	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	1918 August	9/10th 6 a.m.		<p>Guns and ammunition were carried right forward to final objective, which alone is proof of the existing spirit.</p> <p>Blue cartridges were again found to be defective. The chief failure being to explode the cap even though correctly struck. Enemy planes were active during the night and bombed the neighbouring towns.</p> <p>Casualties: Killed 1 O.R. Pte. SMITH Wounded 1 O.R. L.Cpl. HARRIS A. Ammunition expended 38 rounds.</p> <p>10/11th 6 a.m. The weather continues to be fine and warm. At 10.30 a.m. the battery moved back to billeting area near DAOURS where we lived under canvas. Unit was under cover by 6.30 p.m. after a long and tiring march. At night enemy planes visited the area and bombed it between hours of 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.</p> <p>Casualties - nil. Promotions - 653 Cpl. HENTON J. to be Sgt. (vice 1031 Sgt. HOFFMAN)</p> <p>11/12th 6 a.m. Weather still fine and warm. Reorganisation and cleaning up was commenced immediately. An inspection parade was held at 10.30 a.m. Clean underclothes were drawn, and a bathing parade held and dirty clothes returned. Troops rested during afternoon.</p> <p>Struck off 217 Pte. BERTHISEL D.W. (7 days hosp.)</p> <p>Evacuated to Field Amb. (influenza) 2808 Pte. BUCKLAND, D.</p>	

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Volume 7
sheet 6

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	1918 August 12/13th	6 a.m.	<p>Ref. Sheet 62D S.E.</p> <p>Still camped at DAOURS area. Guns and equipment were cleaned up. An inspection parade was held at 10 a.m. Enemy planes visited area at night. Troops rested for the day. Preparation made to move forward.</p> <p><u>Promotions</u> 4565 Cpl. PEADY T.A. to be Sgt. (Vice Sgt. BENTON J. marched out) 3065 Cpl. COOK A.L. to be L.Sgt. (Vice 1794 L.Sgt. RYDER M.W.)</p> <p><u>Marched out</u> 653 Sgt. BENTON J. (Transport duty to Aust. and 2 months leave) <u>Evacuated</u> Field. Amb. 1941 Pte. MURPHY J.</p>	
	14/15th	6 a.m.	<p>Battery move out and route marched to new billeting area South of HARBONNIERES at 6.30 a.m. Reached new area at 2.30 p.m. Sheltered in dugouts and in sunken roads at night. Enemy planes visited area at night. One long range enemy gun shelled the vicinity of billets.</p>	
	16/16th	6 a.m.	<p>Still in dugouts South of HARBONNIERES. Teams now attached to Battalions for rations. Battery transport recalled to Battalion and substituted by 16 mules. Our ammunition dump located.</p>	
	15/16th	6 a.m.	<p>Weather still fine and warm. Preparation was made to move to new position near MERIGOURT sur SOMME. Move took place at 6.30 p.m. moving by route march through HARBONNIERES. Enemy shelling fairly active. Enemy planes very active along main roads dropping bombs. Battery in positions at Q.12.C.1.9. 12 midnight.</p> <p><u>Marched out</u> 2956 Pte. SCOTT W.F.) On English Leave 3209 " PETTIT W.H.S.)</p>	
	16/17th		<p>Enemy artillery fairly active throughout the night on roads and gullies. Battery moved forward</p>	

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15th A.L.T.M.B.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	1918 August 6 18/19th	a.m.	<p>Ref. Sheet 62D S.E.</p> <p>Some of Targets engaged LUC WOOD (R.3. Central) TRENCHES (R.9.B) M.G. (R.9.C.9-1) M.G's and Bank (R.9.D.4-1 to 7-3.)</p> <p>Ammunition expended 130 rounds <u>Casualties</u> nil</p> <p>Seconded for duty Lieut. S.E. WOOTTON (from 60th Bn.)</p> <p>Struck Off 2128 L.Cpl. Bush R.H. (Evac C.C.S. Asthma) 2808 Pte. BUCKLAND D. (7 Days Hospital)</p>	
	19/20th	6 a.m.	<p>Enemy artillery was very quiet during the day. Our artillery fairly active, notably from about 1.30 p.m. on our direct front firing on Strong enemy M.G. nest (R.9.C.9+3)</p> <p>During the night enemy Artillery was active in irregular bursts of about two minutes duration. An enemy Aeroplane passed over our lines at about 6.30 p.m. Flying at a low altitude. Enemy machine gun fire below normal during the period.</p> <p>Works "Strafing" positions were prepared and stocked and ammunition was got forward and made ready. <u>Minenwerfer</u> We have got a splendid sample of Minenwerfer and have alternative positions for it. The men are keen and have been given Targets and registrations. A good supply of ammunition (including Gas shells) is available.</p> <p>Targets engaged Strong Points (R.21.B.7-7) and (R.9.B.) LUC WOOD (R.3.B. and C.) Machine Guns (R.21.B.6-8) (R.15.D.7-4) (R.15.B.5-8) (R.9.B.15.60) <u>Our Minenwerfer</u> registered on LUC WOOD.</p> <p>Ammunition expended <u>Stokes</u> 110 <u>Minenwerfer</u> 10.</p> <p>Attached 3049 Dvr. GUY J.M. from 59th Bn., attachment ceased Dvr. DEPPELER returned to 59th Bn.</p>	

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Volume 7
Sheet 9

15th A.L.T.M.B.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Field	1918 August 20/21st		<p>Ref. Sheet 62D S.E.</p> <p>Except for occasional bursts of Artillery and M.G. fire the enemy was very quiet. He continues to shell RPOYART with shells of large Calibre. A fire was caused in rear of our Lines and it burnt throughout the day. Enemy bombing planes passed over our lines at about 2 a.m. and dropped several heavy Bombs. A patrol of Right Coy. Right Battalion reported an enemy working party at R.15. and R.16. a and C these were engaged and dispersed. They re-appeared later and were again fired on and a harrassing fire was kept on the location at intervals during the night. Our artillery was active during the 24 hours.</p> <p><u>Targets engaged</u> Working party (R.15 and R.16.a. and c. (dispersed), enemy posts (R.21.b.8-8 and R.15.D.7-7) suspected M.G. R.9.C.9-1, enemy posts R.21.D., Strong Points - R.3.D.95-00 and R.9.B.</p> <p><u>Targets engaged by our minenwerfer</u> during day enemy position in and around LUC WOOD R.3.A, B & C.</p> <p><u>Ammunition expended</u> Stokes - 120 rounds, Minenwerfer 40 rounds. Casualties nil.</p> <p>Enemy artillery activity very much below normal during the whole period. Enemy machine guns were also less active during the night opening only in rare bursts.</p> <p>Fewer flares were noticed probably owing to bright moonlight. Enemy aeroplane flying low, crossed our lines. During the whole period our artillery kept up harrassing organised shoots Medium Trench Mortars and our Mortars and minenwerfer also fired during period.</p> <p><u>Targets engaged</u> Trench between COPSE at R.15.B.4-2 to ROAD in R.21.B.6-7 area traversed. Trench R.9.C.9-1 and enemy working party was dispersed (Infantry report). Machine guns, R.9.b.15.60 and R.9.B.3-8. Enemy strong point on grid between</p>	
	21/22nd			

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices																								
Field	1918 August 21/22nd	✓	<p>Ref. Sheet 82D S.E.</p> <p>R.3.C. and D. and R.9.A. and B., enemy patrol R.9.B.2-6 dispersed.</p> <p><u>Minenwerfer targets engaged</u> LUC WOOD; WOOD and ROADS R.9.D. and R.10.C. Strong points in R.15.B.</p> <p><u>Ammunition expended</u> Stokes 137 rounds Minenwerfer 35 rounds.</p> <p><u>Casualties</u> - nil</p> <p><u>Marched in</u></p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>2171 Sgt. LOUGHLIN</td> <td>J.E.)</td> <td>From Aust. Corps School</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3364 Cpl. MIERS</td> <td>J.N.)</td> <td>via 5th Div. Nucleus.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>3515 Pte. GALVIN</td> <td>P.J.)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"> </td> </tr> <tr> <td>1978 L.Cpl. RISSMAN</td> <td>G.V.)</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>2273 Pte. FLOOD</td> <td>B.C.)</td> <td>From 4th Army Rest Camp</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5651 " BAXTER</td> <td>G.H.W.)</td> <td>via 5th Div. Nucleus.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>5333 Cpl. BELL</td> <td>C.V.)</td> <td>-Base via 5th Div. Nucleus.</td> </tr> </table> <p><u>Attached</u> - 3437 Pte. MARTIN A.E. from 60th Bn.</p> <p>Day fine. Night clear and mild. Enemy artillery below normal but machine guns alert and at times firing very long bursts. During the night our Mortars opened gun fire at intervals on such machine guns within range and the usual barrage of fire on enemy posts.</p> <p>At 4.45 a.m. our Mortars opened up in conjunction with our artillery to thicken barrage on enemy front line. Preliminary to attack by 1st Division. Firing on known points of enemy activity. Attack by 1st Division was carried out with dash according to plan and the tide of battle rolled on leaving us very soon almost clear of enemy shell fire.</p> <p><u>Ammunition expended</u> Stokes 260 rds <u>Minenwerfer</u> 25 rounds. <u>Casualties</u> nil.</p>	2171 Sgt. LOUGHLIN	J.E.)	From Aust. Corps School	3364 Cpl. MIERS	J.N.)	via 5th Div. Nucleus.	3515 Pte. GALVIN	P.J.)					1978 L.Cpl. RISSMAN	G.V.)		2273 Pte. FLOOD	B.C.)	From 4th Army Rest Camp	5651 " BAXTER	G.H.W.)	via 5th Div. Nucleus.	5333 Cpl. BELL	C.V.)	-Base via 5th Div. Nucleus.	
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Volume 7
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15th A.L.T.M.B.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918		Reference Sheet 620	
Field	August 29/30th		At 9 a.m. the Brigade moved forward. The Battery still being in Reserve and moving with the 60th Battalion. Enemy was shelling in scattered bursts as Brigade approached VILERS CARBONNEL. A considerable number of Gas shells were used in every salvo and lowlying areas to windward were made uncomfortable by sneezing and mustard gas. Towards evening Battery took up position in trenches on high ground in N.29.B. A message was received from Brigade at 6 am 3 a.m. to report to Brigade Headquarters when Orders were received for move.	
	30/31st		At 6 a.m. again in close touch with 60th Battalion Battery moved forward. Brigade moving in a North Easterly direction towards PERONNE keeping BARLEUX on our left. As however the crossing had not been made good by the Brigade in the line. The 15th Brigade moved to reserve position near BARLEUX. Battery H.Q. being established at N.18.C.2-2. near 57th Battalion. Two Mortars were sent to 59th Battalion with orders to take up position in BASTION I.33.D.2-9. and 80 rounds of ammunition were got forward to these guns.	
	Aug. 31/1st Sept.		Battery H.Q. were moved into trench partly occupied by 57th Battalion. H.Q. being given as Left of 57th Battalion H.Q. Day was spent in working up ammunition to Forward dumps and guns. Casualties Wounded 4565 Sgt. PEADY T.A. (since died). Struck off 5167 Cpl. OLSEN W.H. Casualties were caused by shell from 77 m.m. gun which was firing at point blank range from PERONNE and 6 a.m. was one of the last shells fired from this gun.	

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15th A.L.T.M.B.

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Sheet 7

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918		Ref. Sheet 62D S.E.	
Field	August	6 a.m.	and relieve 17th Division (English) Trench Mortar Battery. The night was fairly quiet. Owing to Battalion relief and movement of mortars no shooting was done. (2133 L.Cpl. CLARKE E.A. (1978 " RISSMAN O.VL (3140 " SANDOE <u>Marched out</u> (from Nucleus to Aust. Corps School)	
	17/18th	6 a.m.	Artillery on both sides very active. Enemy M.G.'s very busy. Our front line companies endeavoured to push our line forward by Patrols. Right Coy. of Right Battalion were successful and dug in near enemy wire. Throughout the operation enemy M.G. and rifle fire was heavy. Our Mortars were prepared to co-operate under instructions from Coy. Commanders but were unable to fire as the position of our Patrols was uncertain during the night along the whole front. Forward Dumps were established and ammunition carried forward to new Gun emplacements.	
	18/19th		During the day the Enemy was very quiet. Towards evening his Artillery became very active, firing in bursts of about 10 mins. duration at intervals during the night. Our own artillery firing was above normal also mostly in bursts. At about 2 a.m. gas was used by enemy. His shelling with same lasting about half an hour. Proyart was again shelled by a gun of large Calibre and bombs were dropped on that Town. After 4 a.m. enemy was very quiet. <u>Operations</u> At 12 midnight in liaison with 59th Battalion fire was brought to bear on suspected points of Machine Gun activity. As a result enemy M.G. Fire was much below normal on our sector during period and some direct hits may be assumed.	

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Sheet 11

15th A.L.T.M.B.

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2000

Place	Date	Hour	Ref. Sheet	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918		62D S.E.		
Field	August				
	22/23rd			Owing to the advance of the 1st Division we are now well back. On word being received that we are to move out to VAIRE sous CORBIE for a rest preparations were made and Battery moved by march route along Canal to VAIRE. Battery reported in Billets at 9 p.m. A hot meal was waiting and was appreciated by all.	
	23/24th			A clean change of clothing was obtained from baths for every man in the unit. Shortages were taken and each man's issue was completed. Battery gear was also overhauled and replacements made. Mortars were cleaned.	
	6 a.m.				
	24/25th			Battery was inspected. Marched out 2171 Sgt. LOUGHLIN J.E. to O.T.C. and placed on Supernumerary List.	
	25/26th			Fair weather continues. R.C's attended Church Parade in Village Church. There was also a	
	6 a.m.			Voluntary Parade for Protestants. Promotions - 4485 Cpl. FLEMING A.T. Appointed A/Sgt. 4578 Pte. RICHARDSON H.T. " L.Cpl.	
	26/27th			Training carried out during morning. Afternoon devoted to sport. Battery was inspected and addressed by Gen. Sir. J.J.T. HOBBS at 11 a.m.	
	6 a.m.			Marched out Lieut. R.D. CHALMERS to U.K. Leave.	
	27/28th			Training carried out during morning. Sport in afternoon. Marched out 2867 Pte. H. PARKER and 454 Pte. McBRIDE A.G. on Paris Leave. Marched in 2662 Pte. GRIFFITHS S.G.V. From Hosp. (re-attached from 58th Bn.)	

APPENDIX 2
1918

REPORT BY O.C. 15th A.L.T.M.B. ON USE OF PACK MULESDURING RECENT OPERATIONS.

Experience in recent operations has proved Pack Mules to be of little use. In the allotment of two per Mortar it works out at one mule to carry the Mortar complete and 1 mule to carry 2 rounds of ammunition. In a General Advance this would make it easy for the men up to a certain point, after which Observation and other causes would make it necessary for the men to carry on. If a similar operation was in view again I would advocate for 2 Limbers and 12 Mules (The same number of Mules all told). Limbers could carry about 180 rounds and all the Mortars and the mules would also carry their quota and also be available beyond the point which wheeled traffic is possible. Thus having a large Mobile echelon of Ammunition on hand. Another disadvantage with Mules only is that a large part of their time would necessarily be spent their own forage and water and also their awkwardness in carrying rations for the personnel of the Battery. During recent operations there was not at any time any shortage of ammunition either in front line or rear dumps. As it was a case of being constantly on the move it was necessary for the carriers attached to the Gun Teams to bear all the Mobile Ammunition as a great deal of the moving had to be done through trenches etc. to escape enemy observation and fire. When a team got into a semi-permanent position from which they were likely to fire extra ammunition was at once got up to them from forward dumps by the best means available.

Sgt. H.S. McCOLL, Capt.
O.C. 15th A.L.T.M.B.