

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

Engineers

Item number: 14/11/5

Title: Headquarters 5th Australian
Divisional Engineers

October 1916



AWM4-14/11/5

C.R.E. (5)

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118 90

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

October 1916.

(Erase heading not required.) Headquarters, 5th. Australian Divl. Engineers

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
October	1		Strength of Divisional Engineers = 23 Officers 647 O.R. Winter time, clock put back 1 hour. 8th. Field Coy. with Franks Force at Armentieres. <i>Major Sturdee,</i> O.C., acting as C.R.E. Franks Force. Captain Farquhar acted as O.C. 8th. Fd. Co.	
	12		C.R.E., New Zealand Div. arrived. Orders received that the Div. would move to the Somme by stages.	
	13		New Zealand Div. (C.R.E.) took over. <i>STRANZELLE</i>	
	14		H.Q.D.E. moved to MERRIS, 8th. Field Coy. to STEENWERK, 14th. Fd. Co. to OUTERSTEEN & 15th. Fd. Co. to ESTAIRES. The companies moved with the Brigades to which they were attached.	
	17/18		H.Q.D.E. left Merris 9 p/m 17th. & entrained BAILLEUL West 2.30 a/m 18th.	
	18		About noon detrained at Pont Remy thence proceeded by road to AILLY les HAUTS CLOCHUS.	
	20		By road to ARGOUVES. stopped one night. (On the 18th. the C.R.E. arrived at FRICOURT)	
	21		Proceeded to Bellevue Farm Nr. ALBERT.	
	22		Arrived FRICOURT CHATEAU. Meantime the C.R.E. had taken over from C.R.E. 30th. Div. Weather very cold and wet. 2 Communication trenches to front line each some 7000 yds. long. D.H.Q. at Fricourt Chateau some 15,000 yds. from Front Line. Shelter from waether for troops very scarce. Supplies obtained from BECORDEL 2000 yds. behind DHQ. Corps Engineer Dump from which all material has to be obtained 8000 yds. behind D.H.Q. and therefore some 23,000 yds. from front line. Roads from FRICOURT, MONTAUBAN & BAZENTIN continually blocked with traffic.	
	22		Field Cos. arrived and camped together abt. 3 miles from D.H.Q. between MONTAUBAN & Bazentin le Grand From the 23rd. to 31st. 8th. & 14th. Field Cos. were preparing for the Offensive in addition to road repair etc etc. See special appendix regarding these conditions.	
	31		Strength of Engineers 25 Officers, 631 O.R.	

C. R. E.,
5th AUSTRALIAN
DIVISION.

R. T. Sturdee
Captain R. E.
Adjutant

Headquarters, 5th. Australian Divisional Engineers.

Oct. 22nd. arrived FRICOURT CHATEAU.
Meantime the C.R.E. had taken over from G.R.E. 30th.
Div.

Weather very cold and wet.

Two communication trenches to front line
each some 7000 yds. long.

D.H.Q. at FRICOURT CHATEAU, some 15,000
yds. from front line.

Shelter from weather for troops very
scarce. Supplies obtained from BEGORDEL 2000 yds.
behind D.H.Q.

Corps Engineer Dump from which all material
has to be obtained 8000 yds. behind D.H.Q. and there-
fore some 23,000 yds. from front line.

Roads from FRICOURT, MONTAUBAN & BAZENTIN
continually blocked with traffic.

Roads broken up under heavy traffic
between FRICOURT & LONGUEVAL entailing a large expendi-
ture of material and labour.

Broad-gauge Railway. Construction to
QUARRY Siding and via BAZENTIN to LONGUEVAL at present
only used for a limited quantity of ammunition.
QUARRY Siding branch is 400' curves; now being straight-
ened to 600' curves.

One bad road from QUARRY to LONGUEVAL via
BAZENTIN. A Bad Portion QUARRY to BAZENTIN being
corduroid for single track.

From LONGUEVAL to FLERS a Decauville Rail-
way has been laid; single track for 500 yds. on S.E.
side of road; then double track for 1750 yds. on N.W.
side of road. no junction between these two tracks.
Ground much disturbed by shell holes, in which the
line sinks, therefore only fit for hand power.

Road from LONGUEVAL to FLERS very bad and,
except for the Decauville Track above referred to,
practically all material has to go by Pack Animal from
LONGUEVAL to the front line, a distance of some 6000
yds. This, combined with the traffic difficulties
on the roads behind LONGUEVAL, makes the provision of
Engineer Material in any quantity impracticable.

Lorries run from the Corps Dump to
MAMETZ, on which sector the lorry can generally do 2
trips per day, but from MAMETZ to LONGUEVAL is a one
day trip, sometimes extending well into the night,
although the distance between the two places is only
some 3½ miles.

QUARRY Siding liable to bad flooding and
consequent bad mud conditions for Pack Animals and
Vehicles. This could be cured by a single drainage

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scheme down the CATERPILLER VALLEY.

Progress on the BAZENTIN - LONGUEVAL Broadgauge branch is slow owing to the weather and to difficulties in providing labour from Divisions which have become exhausted by fighting or by weather conditions.

Drainage of Communication and Front Trenches is rendered difficult by the type of mud which is sticky and blocks up any drains.

If the Offensive is to continue during the winter it would appear essential to provide more comfort for the troops in the forward sector so as to ensure that troops waiting for a fine day on which to attack are not exhausted by weather conditions during their days of waiting, nor by a long and difficult march from their bivouac to their front trenches.

To obtain these conditions the following would appear to be essential;-

Satisfaction/completion of railway schemes to QUARRY and LONGUEVAL including drainage of environs of both places.

Provision of Decauville track for each Division, the alignment of the track to be controlled by the Corps.

The construction and operation to be entirely controlled by the Division in whose interest it lies to get supplies forward to their own troops.

The Divisional Decauville to start from the Railway Terminus at which it draws its supply and to be pushed forward as a double line to some 2000 yds. off the front line; after that have two or more single track lines going as far forward as the Huns will allow. Having obtained communications the next requirement is shelter from the weather for the back troops, and from both weather & shell for the forward troops. These latter should be provided for say 1000 men at intervals of from 1000 to 1500 yds. from back to front and should correspond with tactical defensive lines as a precaution against heavy attack by the enemy. This would ensure that only the troops in the actual front line suffered exposure. Troops detailed for our attack would have cover within 1500 yds. of the front line, from which they could march up to their assembly trenches and the enormous expenditure of energy, at present wasted in marching and counter-marching entailed by the necessity of frequent reliefs would be avoided, as also the enormous expenditure in labour of man-carrying stores and supplies. The traffic on the roads would be largely curtailed, which would accelerate movement of every description and the number of transport animals would be reduced by 75% in the forward sector.

After an attack the prolongation of

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