

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

Engineers

Item number: 14/11/6

Title: Headquarters 5th Australian
Divisional Engineers

November 1916



AWM4-14/11/6

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APRS

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.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Headquarters
5th Aus Division

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
FRICOURT	Nov. 1st.		Strength of Divisional Engineers, 25 Officers 629 O.R.	
CARLTON TRENCH.	4th.		Occupied advanced position. Lt. Holmes 8th. Field Co. with 65 Sappers moved to front line and, under cover of dark constructed a 7 bay strongpoint at N19.a.5.9.	
	6th.		Whole of 8th. Field Co. on repairs to Roads. 14th. Field Co. The attack took place at 9.10 a.m. yesterday. Nos. 1, 2 & 4 sections moving forward from Transport Lines and joining No. 3 section at 2 p.m. near the SUNKEN ROAD in M30.a. near Bde. Hqrs. At 5.30 p.m. Nos. 1 & 3 sections moved to the left flank, and Nos. 2 & 4 sections to the right flank to link back our original front line, the centre portion of the objective which was reported to be held by the 7th. Inf. Bde. The situation was not so and the sections on the left retired back to M30.a. while the sections on the right, getting in touch with a small bombing post held by us in the MAZE, partially linked back to our front line by connecting it 100 yds. of shellholes. The sections returned to the Transport Lines at 12 noon to-day. The sector was handed over to the 7th. Field Co.	
	7th.		H.Q.D.E. evacuated CARLTON TRENCH and returned to FRICOURT. H.Q.D.E. removed to RIBEMONT. 15th. Field Co. Construction of LONGUEVAL-QUARRY SIDING Decauville Line. Total length 7,200 feet. Earthworks completed and plates laid minus ballasting. Lt. Oliver handed over to 6th. Field Co. 22/11/16.	
	8th.		H.Q.D.E. at RIBEMONT. 14th. Field Co. moved out of MONTAUBAN at 3 a.m. arriving CARDONETTE at 5 p.m. and went into rest billets.	
	9th.		H.Q.D.E. Orders received to return to FRICOURT.	
	11th.		8th. Field Co. Major Sturdee temporarily detached for duty as C.R.E. Roads "Y" Corps. Capt. Farquhar takes over command of 8th. F.C.	
	12th.		Orders received that Col. Carey would assume duties as C.R.E. Circuit on 13/11/16. Capt. Butler Adj. to C.R.E. ordered to report to H.M.G. section G.H.Q.	
	13th.		H.Q.D.E. left FRICOURT at 2.30 p.m. arrived MONTAUBAN 7.30 p.m. Lt. S.E. Evans 15th. Fd. Co.	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118

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MONTAUBAN	13th.		assumes duties of Adj. to C.R.E.	
	17th.		8th. Field Co. 1. section started work erecting Nissen Huts. Ly . Nangle temporarily detached as C.R.E. Roads "Y" Corps	
	18th.		8th. Field Co. taken off roads.	
	19th.		14th. Field Co. moved from CARDONETTE 6.30 a.m. joining 14th. Bde. Group. Bussed via AMIENS QUERRIEU, LA HAUSSIE and debussed and marched to BUIRE. Transport left CARDONETTE 10 a.m. arrived BUIRE 3 p.m. XOX .	
	20th.		Lts. Fry & Merkel and 4 O.R. left to report to C.R.E. Guards Division BERNAFAY WOOD to take over Field Cos.	
	21st.		8th. Field Co. Lts. Gaddy & Holmes and 4 N.C.S's. take over from 76th. Co. R.E. 8th. Field Co. Moved to 76th. Co. R.E. lines at LONGUEVAL cross roads (sl7 .b.2.2.) accommodation consisting of German deep dugouts and a few shallow shelters.	
			14th. Field Co. Moved from BUIRE arriving one mile west MONTAUBAN at 2 p.m.	
			15th. Field Co. Marched into WATERLOT FARM taking over from 75th. Co. R.E.	
	22nd.		H.Q. D.E. moved to BERNAFAY WOOD.	
	23rd.		14th. Field Co. moved to WATERLOT FARM and relieved 56 Co. R.E.	
	30th.		8th. Field Co. 2 sections on Nissen Hutting in E camp. 8th. Field Co. 21 huts completed. 15th. Field Co. general work in consolidation of front line system. Right Bde. Area N35. a 1.9. to N28 b2.1. Strength of Divisional Engineers 21 officers 620 O.R.	

*Merkel Laddy
to CRE
5th Div. Camp*

Headquarters, 5th. Australian Divisional Engineers.

Oct. 22nd. arrived FRICOURT CHATEAU. Meantime the C.R.E. had taken over from C.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 BECORDEL 2000 yds. behind D.H.Q.

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.

Roads broken up under heavy traffic between FRICOURT & LONGUEVAL entailing a large expenditure 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 straightened 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 Railway 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 GATERFILLER 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;-

Satisfacti^{on}~~on~~ 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~~ 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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of railways and roads, and the provision of another set of shelters as much ahead of the last as the new forward line is ahead of the old line, should at once be put in hand in preparation ~~of~~ for further move.

If it is considered necessary that the Decauville Line should be laid so as to take Engine Traffic it would be desirable to have a special Unit for each Divisional Area, whose duty it would be to continually push forward the track: but if the Offensive is to continue from time to time as weather permits, it should be recognised that the Decauville Track is only a temporary expedient to be followed up by Broad-gauge Railway, the Terminus of which need never be much more than 5 to 6000 yds. behind the front line. Bearing this in mind it should not be necessary to make Decauville Track fit to take heavy steam engines. Even Petrol Motors could be dispensed with in favour of Mule Haulage, which can be made to work over a more quickly laid track and up steeper grades.

Considerable use is being made of Sledges for evacuating casualties. They are also being tried for transport of ammunition, to reduce the amount of pack transport.

It is thought impracticable to use the long lengths of C.T., for relieving troops and that relief should rather take place on the open at dusk, except for perhaps the 1000 yds. nearest the front line. The labour of upkeep of the rear portion of Communication Trenches being diverted to upkeep of overland routes for pack and sledge transport and for marching troops.

Antony

St-Col.,
C.R.E.,

3/11/16.

5th. Australian Division.