

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

Engineers

**Item number:** 14/24/24

**Title:** 5th Field Company, Australian  
Engineers

March 1918



AWM4-14/24/24

**CONFIDENTIAL.**

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

Australian Imperial Force.

**WAR DIARY**

OF

5th FIELD COMPANY  
AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS.

FOR

*March* 191*8*

Signature of Officer compiling

*R. Reid Martin*

Signature of Officer Commanding

*R. Reid Martin*

# WAR DIARY

or

## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

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.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
BAINGHEM	March	1st	<p>The location of 2nd Divisional Engineers was as follows :-</p> <p>Headquarters Divisional Engineers ;;;;..... COLEMBERT.</p> <p>5th Field Company Aust. Engineers ..... BAINGHEM-le-COMTE.</p> <p>6th " " " " ..... LONGUEVILLE.</p> <p>7th " " " " ..... COLEMBERT.</p> <p>The Company transport left Bainghem-le-Comte for Lumbres to join 5th A.I. Brigade group transport column enroute for 3rd Australian Divisional area.</p>	
	March	2nd	Company transport moved with Brigade group to Renescure.	
		3rd	Company transport moved from Renescure to strazeele.	
		4th	<p>Dismounted personnel moved by Motor Lorry, at 5 a.m., for Lumbres, where they entrained under 5th A.I. Brigade arrangements.</p> <p>Train moved out of Lumbres at 9-30 a.m. and arrived at Steenwerck at 2 p.m.</p> <p>Unit detrained and moved to Weka Lines, Romarin (B.4.A.5.2.) and took over from the 11th Field Company Aust. Engineers.</p> <p>Advance party of 7th Field Company A.E. moved to the forward area with this unit and took over the Corps Line Defence Works from 9th Field Company. A.E.</p>	
ROMARIN		5th	The Company Officers and N.C.O's reconnoitred the 5th A.I. Bgde area with party from 11th Field Company A.E.	
		6th	<p>The Company was distributed as follows :-</p> <p>No 1 Section. .... R.E. Dumps, Transporting R.E. Material and Carpenters shops.</p> <p>No 2 " " Trench works - Left Battalion sector.</p> <p>No 3 " " Drainage of Brigade Area.</p> <p>No 4 " " Trench Works- Right Battalion sector</p>	<p><i>Rm</i></p>

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# WAR DIARY

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ROMARIN	March	6th	<p>5th A.I. Brigade detailed a permanent Company, formed of one platoon per Battalion, for Works. This Company was camped at Le BIZET and worked with this Company's 3 forward Sections. In addition, about 300 Infantry were detailed daily by a Reserve Battalion.</p> <p>R.E. Material was forwarded by Light Railway to INGERSOL and ROMARIN Dumps and thence <del>fer</del> by waggons to LEGHEER and MOTOR CAR CORNER Dumps. Personnel were sent forward daily on pontoon waggons.</p>	
	"	11th	<p>Lieut. Carleton (5th Field Company, A.E.) with Captain BAZELY reconnoitred bridges on the River Lys - on the Divisional Right flank. Report attached.</p>	
	"	21st to 22nd	<p>7th A.I. Brigade relieved the 5th A.I. Brigade in the Right Brigade Area.</p>	
		23rd	<p>Lieut. Parkinson and 1 Sergeant was detailed for 18th Course at 2nd Army Central School of Instruction, commencing 21/3/18 and closing 27/4/18.</p>	
		26th	<p>7th Field Company moved out with 5th A.I. Brigade Group which took over from 8th A.I. Brigade.</p> <p>The work on Corps Line, Right Brigade Area, was handed over to 5th Field Company, A.E.</p> <p>Lieut. Parkinson and 1 Sergeant rejoined unit from 2nd Army Central School of Instruction. All Schools cancelled until further notice.</p>	
		27th	<p>Major R.S. Reid reconnoitred Corps Line, with Lt -Col. Travers Acting G.O.C. 7th A.I. Brigade.</p> <p>Lieut. Parkinson and four Sappers detached to C.E. Aust. Corps for work on Army Line.</p>	

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# WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118. <sup>9</sup>/<sub>1</sub>

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ROMARIN	March 28th		Party of 200 Infantry commenced work on Corps Line Defenses.																																																																	
		31st	<p>The Company strength on 1st inst was 233. The departures for the Month to Hospital numbered 17; 10 of which were evacuated through Casualty Clearing Station and 3 rejoined Unit.</p> <p>Total arrivals from Hospital numbered 6 - of these 3 proceeded to Hospital during the month.</p> <table style="margin-left: 20px;"> <tr> <td>Number evacuated wounded</td> <td>.....</td> <td>.....</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" " shell-gas</td> <td>.....</td> <td>.....</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" transferred to other units,</td> <td>Officers</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" " " "</td> <td>O.R's</td> <td></td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" " from " "</td> <td>O.R's</td> <td></td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" proceeded to schools</td> <td>.....</td> <td>O.R's</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" rejoining from "</td> <td>.....</td> <td>Officers</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" " " "</td> <td>...</td> <td>O.R's</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" proceeded to Australia</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>" " " " for discharge</td> <td></td> <td>Officers</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" " " "</td> <td></td> <td>O.R's</td> <td>2</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" joined unit from Base</td> <td></td> <td>O.R's</td> <td>10</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" transferred from other units</td> <td></td> <td>Officers</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td>" detached to other units for duty -</td> <td></td> <td></td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>Officers</td> <td>1</td> </tr> <tr> <td></td> <td></td> <td>O.R's</td> <td>7</td> </tr> </table>	Number evacuated wounded	.....	.....	1	" " shell-gas	.....	.....	4	" transferred to other units,	Officers		1	" " " "	O.R's		2	" " from " "	O.R's		1	" proceeded to schools	.....	O.R's	2	" rejoining from "	.....	Officers	1	" " " "	...	O.R's	4	" proceeded to Australia				" " " " for discharge		Officers	1	" " " "		O.R's	2	" joined unit from Base		O.R's	10	" transferred from other units		Officers	1	" detached to other units for duty -						Officers	1			O.R's	7	
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# WAR DIARY

OF

5th FIELD COMPANY  
AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS.

FOR

*March* 1918

## LIST OF APPENDICES.

- | No. | Subject.   |
|-----|--|
| 1.  | Report on Trench System on taking over from 11th Field Company, Australian Engineers.  |
| 2.  | Report on Bridges along La Lys River- from Lys Farm (36- C.15.D.2.6.) to Pont Neippe (36- B.24.C. 0.8.)<br>Reconnaissance carried out by Lieut. C.R. Carleton. |
| 3.  | Plan of Trench System.   |

5th FIELD COMPANY AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS.

REPORT ON CONDITION OF TRENCH SYSTEM TAKEN OVER FROM THE  
11th FIELD COMPANY AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS.

RIGHT BATTALION SECTOR.

POLICY.

The general policy adopted by the 3rd Division was that the Infantry was responsible for the whole of the work in the Front line and had no Engineer supervision except in cases where the work was too technical for the Infantry to carry out without Engineer assistance; the Field Company was responsible for all support Line work including new work, repairs and maintenance; and the Pioneer Battalion was responsible for all C.T.'s including revetting, drainage, repairs and maintenance. All drainage in trenches was carried out by the unit responsible for that trench and all drains outside trenches were maintained by infantry labour under the supervision of the drainage section of the Field Company. Also two patrols of one Sapper and four Infantry each patrolled all the trenches in the sector. The duties of these patrols were to carry out any necessary repairs that they could, salvage all R.E. materials, including tools and pumps and report on any trenches which they considered required attention. On taking over, this policy was carried out as far as policy.

STATE OF TRENCHES. FRONT LINE.

UNA TRENCH. U.28.D.8.4. to C.4.B.25.15.

This trench was in a bad state, for the greater portion there was neither revetting or duckboarding. No attempt had been made to drain it. The three existing drains were not clear. After a heavy rain this trench would have become absolutely impassable. There was no fire-stepping except in the existing posts. The parapet was, in most cases, very low and during daylight parties moving along the trench would come under direct observation of the enemy.

CEDILLA RESERVE. C.4.D.8.9. TO C. 10. B.8.9.

This trench was in good condition throughout.

CARELESS AVENUE. C.10.B.8.9. TO C.10.B.6.9.

This trench was in bad condition. It had a considerable amount of water and mud in it, though passable in most places. No attempt appeared to have been made to drain it. It had been revetted throughout (old German revetment) and

(2)

CARELESS AVENUE. continued.

in most places had duckboards laid which in most cases were covered with earth or mud.

VIEW LANE. C.10.B.6.9. TO C.10.B.6.9.

This trench is practically a Front Line trench ~~XXXX~~ C.10.B. 6.9. to C.10.B.3.6. and thence is a C.T. The front line portion of it was in a very bad condition, the revetting was in a very condition throughout, only a portion of it had ever been duckboarded and no attempt had been made at drainage. In this trench again, there was a considerable amount of mud and water. The parapet over the major portion was far too low and scarcely bullet-proof. The C.T. part of this trench was in good condition, with the exception that the parapet was too low in most cases, which rendered parties using the trench in daylight liable to direct enemy observation.

BARKENHAM. TRENCH. C.10.B.3.2. to C.10. D. 1. 3.

This trench was also in a bad state. Drainage was fair. Parapets throughout were far too low. Along 85% of the trench there was no parados. Revetting was in a bad state of repair and often did not exist. Duckboards were laid; but only roughly. Practically the whole trench was under direct enemy observation, which rendered movement in daylight very dangerous.

-----  
SUPPORT LINE.

NEW SUPPORT. U.28.C.4.7. TO U.28.C.2.3.

This trench was in good condition, revetted and duckboarded throughout.

SUFFDDK SUPPORT. U.28.C.2.3. TO C.3.B.9.5.

This trench was in good condition. A series of 7 firebays on the island traverse system ( see sketch ) had been newly constructed.





(3)

SUFFOLK SUPPORT. continued.

and revetted. The firestepping remained to be completed and the anchoring of the revetment was also incomplete. The drainage in the trench had been somewhat neglected. It was necessary to clean out a large amount of earth from underneath the duckboards before the drainage was good again.

C.3.B.9.5. TO C.4.C.8.3.

MONMOUTH TRENCH. ~~C.4.C.8.3. TO C.15.A.9.2.~~

In good condition. In places the parapet was scarcely high enough or thick enough for a support trench. The drainage, revetment and duckboards were all in good condition.

LONG AVENUE. C.4.C.8.3. TO C.15.A.9.2.

In good condition. Drainage and duckboarding were good throughout. In a great many places the revetting was in need of repairs and in other places there was no revetment at all. In a few of these places it would be quite advantageous to put in revetment; but in the majority of cases in view of the present shortage of material, I consider it unnecessary. The trench was well firestepped throughout and the parapet generally was good.

COMMUNICATION TRENCHES.

CECIL RESERVE. C.4.B.3.5. to U.28.D.1.3.  
 CECIL LANE. U.28.D.1.3. to U.28.C.1.8.  
 CECIL SUPPORT C.4.B.2.1. to U.28.C.7.2.

These trenches were in good condition. Drainage and duckboarding were good throughout; also revetment. In most cases these trenches are under direct observation. This could be obviated to a great extent in Cecil Lane and Cecil Reserve, by raising the parapet or by screens, and in Cecil Support by either the use of extra overhead traverses or by the addition of screens.

KIWI STREET. C.4.B.2.1. to C.4.D.8.7.

This trench was in fair condition. The duckboarding was good throughout. The drainage had been neglected and of the three drains off this trench, only one was clear. Revetting was fair. Parapets throughout were too low. The trench is under close direct observation throughout and a great deal could have been done to minimise this by the erection of screens.

MILK RUN. C.4.B.2.1. to C.4.C.8.4.

In fair condition. Draining and duckboarding good. Revetting in need of repair in a few places. One stretch of 100 yds had very low parapets and was under direct observation. This could have been reduced by additional screening.

(4)

NAPOO AVENUE. C.10.A.3.6. to C.10.B.1.6.

In very good condition throughout.

HOREKAU AVENUE. C.10.A.1.2. to C.10.C.6.7.

In good condition. Duckboarding and drainage good. A few of the firebays were blown in and others required repairs.

BARKENHAM AVENUE. C.9.D.6.4. to C.10.D.18.

In fair condition. Duckboards good throughout with the exception of two or three broken boards. Drainage in the trench was somewhat neglected but trench was quite dry owing to prevailing dry weather. Revetting required repair in several places.

RAILWAY SWITCH. C.15.A.4.8. to C.15.A.9.2.

In fair condition. A beginning had been made to revet it and attend to drainage. The sides of the trench had fallen in and were continually silting down and blocking the drainage. Duckboarding good throughout.

STATION AVENUE. C.15.A.4.8. to C.9.D.6.2.

SCREEN AVENUE. C.9.D.0.3. to C.9.D.9.9.

SMYTHE AVENUE. C.9.D.8.6. to C.9.B.6.8.

SEVEN TREES AVENUE. C.9.B.6.8. to C.3.C.6.5.

These trenches were all in good condition - revetting, duckboarding and drainage, good throughout except the revetting in Seven Trees Avenue, which might be improved.

NICHOLSON AVENUE. C.2.D.4.1. to C.3.D.4.8.

SUFFOLK AVENUE. C.3.D.4.8. to C.3.B.9.5.

HARNIANS AVENUE. C.3.D.4.8. to C.4.C.4.9.

All in good condition. Duckboarding and drainage good. Revetting was being added to in places. Though comparatively unimportant a lot of improvement could be made by additional revetment.

CHESHIRE AVENUE. C.3.B.8.2. to U.27.D.3.4.

In very good condition.

CONVENT LANE. U.28.C.2.3. to U.28.C.1.8.

In fair condition. Drainage and duckboarding good but revetment in need of repair. The revetment was falling in, in a great many places.

(5)

MISCELLANEOUS.Widow's switch. C.9.D.7.3. to C.9.D.6.1.

This trench was being revetted when handed over. Duckboarding and drainage was complete; about 30 % of revetting was complete and 20 % of parapet had been completed, no parados.

STATION REDOUBT. C.9.D.9.5. to C.9.D.8.8.

In bad condition. The trench was blown in, in a great many places. No duckboarding; no drainage and very little revetment.

LEFT SECTOR.

The trenches were in a very fair condition, excepting UMPIRE RESERVE from U.22.A.7.1. to U.22.B.4.9. - the duckboards of which were under water.

MUCK ALLEY. U.28.A.8.1. to U.28.B.01.20.

In a very bad condition.

DRAINAGE IN LE TOUQUET AND PONT ROUGE SECTORS.

A map and report was handed over showing a number of new drains dug and other old ones reopened. It was found however that a number of these had only been partly worked upon e.g.

1. In area C.15.A.
2. In area U.27.A & C.
3. In area C.4.C.

Regarding the main drainage systems - La Warnave River and River Des Rebeques - both of these were found to be blocked in several places, also silt had been allowed to accumulate, as a result both were flowing very sluggishly.

It appears that the policy had been rather to concentrate on the side drains, many of which were relatively unimportant, rather than on the main ones.

The remainder of those in the sector were in fair running condition.

## - REPORT ON BRIDGES

APPENDIX

2

along La Lys River - from Lys Farm (36,C.15.d.2.6.) to  
Pont Nieppe (36,B.24.c.0.8.)

Reconnaissance carried out 10/ 3/1918

No	Map Location	Type of Bridge	Width of Roadway	Present Max <sup>m</sup> Load	Approx span	Remarks
1.	C.21.b. 10.65.	Wooden Foot bridge, handrail one side only.	4' 6"	Infantry in file.	25'	2 - 8'6" road bearers in rather poor condition. Portion of planking missing, consequently dangerous for night traffic. Could be repaired by 2 men in 1 hour. No demolition provided for approaches. Fair only in dry weather.
2.	C.21.d. (a) 35.95?	Wooden foot bridge, handrail both sides.	10'	Infantry in file or pack mules	20'	<del>xxxxxxcondition</del> 3 - 8'6" road bearers. Fair condition. Spans N. end of Lock. No demolition provided for. Approaches - East side good - West side marshy.
2.(b)	C.21.d. 35.90	Lock	-	-	-	20' x 135'. Walls in good condition. Gates - Sth. end complete Nth end demolished. Water at Nth. end retained by timber dam (removable) to height of 2'6". On island at C.21.b.33.15. there are 6 beams 12" x 12" x 15', squared & in 1st class condition.
3.	C.21.d. 38.90.	Lock Gates Wood & iron	2'6"	Infantry in single file	20'	In good condition. Require opening & reclosing to make water-tight- now held apart-about 6" by debris.
4.	C.21.b. 4.2.	Steel joist bridge, with steel lifting gates forming weir	7' overall. Only 5' available owing to raised footway	Should carry Infantry in fours or Field Art <sup>y</sup> . (Room only for infy in file or Pack Transport)	48' in 3 spans of 16' to stone piers.	Raised footway difficult to remove without destroying weir. Masonry piers 20' x 5'. All in 1st class condition. Weir retaining water to height of 2'6". Approaches-1st class, but only lead to island

No.	Map Location	Type of bridge	Width of Roadway	Present Maxm. load	Approx span	Remarks
4 (continued)						No demolition provided for; would require 180 slabs gun cotton (per pier) distributed in 4 charges, calculated as tamped charge.
5.	C.21.b. 35.45.	Steel lattice girder bridge	8'	-	? (about 50')	Girders cut & completely demolished. Abbutments good; approaches bad.
6.	C.21.b.5.5.	Same as No 5	8'	-	25' to 30'	Same as No 5.
7.	C.21.d.4.5.	Steel lattice bridge with centre portion lifting	10'	Infantry in file	About 60'	One tension member badly cut. Might be made sufficiently strong to carry Infantry in fours or Field Arty., with no great difficulty, by a Field Coy. Engrs in 6 hours. Approaches on N.W. Side 1st class. ditto on S.E. side, but need 20 men for 2 hours to fill shell holes at C.21.d.30.55. Demolition provided for.
8.	C.21.a.8.1.	Brick arch bridge in 3 spans	12'	Any traffic	40'	First Class condition. In 3 spans of 12' to 2 - 14' x 2' brick piers. 14 arches. No parapet or hand rail. Approaches - 2nd class Demolition not provided for.
9.	C.21.d. 38.28.	Two light trestle bridges (wood)	9'	Infantry in fours	20'	First class condition. Approaches only suitable for pack transport and Infantry. No demolition provided for.
10.	C.21.c. 99.10.					This bridge does not exist, as shown on map.
11.	C.21.c. 95.10.	Pontoon bridge.	9'6"	Infantry in fours Field Arty.	85'	5 pontoons & 6 bays complete. Good condition, stored on south side of river. Approaches - S. side 1st class; N. side bad for wheeled transport. No outlet (direct) for traffic over creek to North. Pontoon or trestle bridge is suggested, with fair approach to road, at C.21.a.3.3. <i>Demolition not provided for.</i>

No	Map Location	Type of bridge	Width of road-way	Present Maxm. load	Approx span	Remarks
12.	C.21.c. 15.20	Steel lattice railway bridge	18', but floor-ed only 5' of width	Infantry in file, not suit-able for pack transport	120'	Very badly damaged. Present girder bridge has been moved over to W. side of abutments to make room for future bridge in line of single track railway. Approaches good for Infy., but exposed - along embankment 12' above surrounding G.L. Demolition provided for; demolition stores on South side.
13.	C.21.c. 13.55.	Brick Arch bridge in one span of 18'.	24'	Any traffic.	18'	First class condition. 27" arch. No parapet or hand rail. Approaches along permanent way - 2nd class. Very exposed & similar to No 12
14.	C.26.a. 6.1.	Wood trestle bridge (light)	5'	Infy in file. Pack trans- port	about 90'	First class condition. Built September 1917. Approaches good and covered on S. bank by build- ings. Outlet along tow path on N. bank. Demolition not provided for
15.	C.26.a. 35.40	Steel girder bridge.				Completely demolished.
16.	C.26.a. 32.50.	Pontoon bridge.	9'6"	Infantry in fours Field Arty	75'	4 pontoons & stores for 5 bays complete; good con- dition. Stores on W. bank Approaches - W. bank 1st clas- " -E. bank 2nd " to cinder track.
17.	C.26.a. 16.20.	Swinging Girder bridge steel.	7' one side only	7 ton lorries	about 70'	Badly damaged on W. side - especially planking. Planking on E. side might be strengthened. Approaches - 1st class paved roadway. Demolition provided for. Stores on N. bank.
18.	C.25.d. 3.9.	Steel lattice girder foot bridge	5'	Infantry in file, not suit- able for Pack Trans- port.	About 60'	1st class condition. Approaches 1st class & well concealed. Demolition provided for. Stores on N. bank.

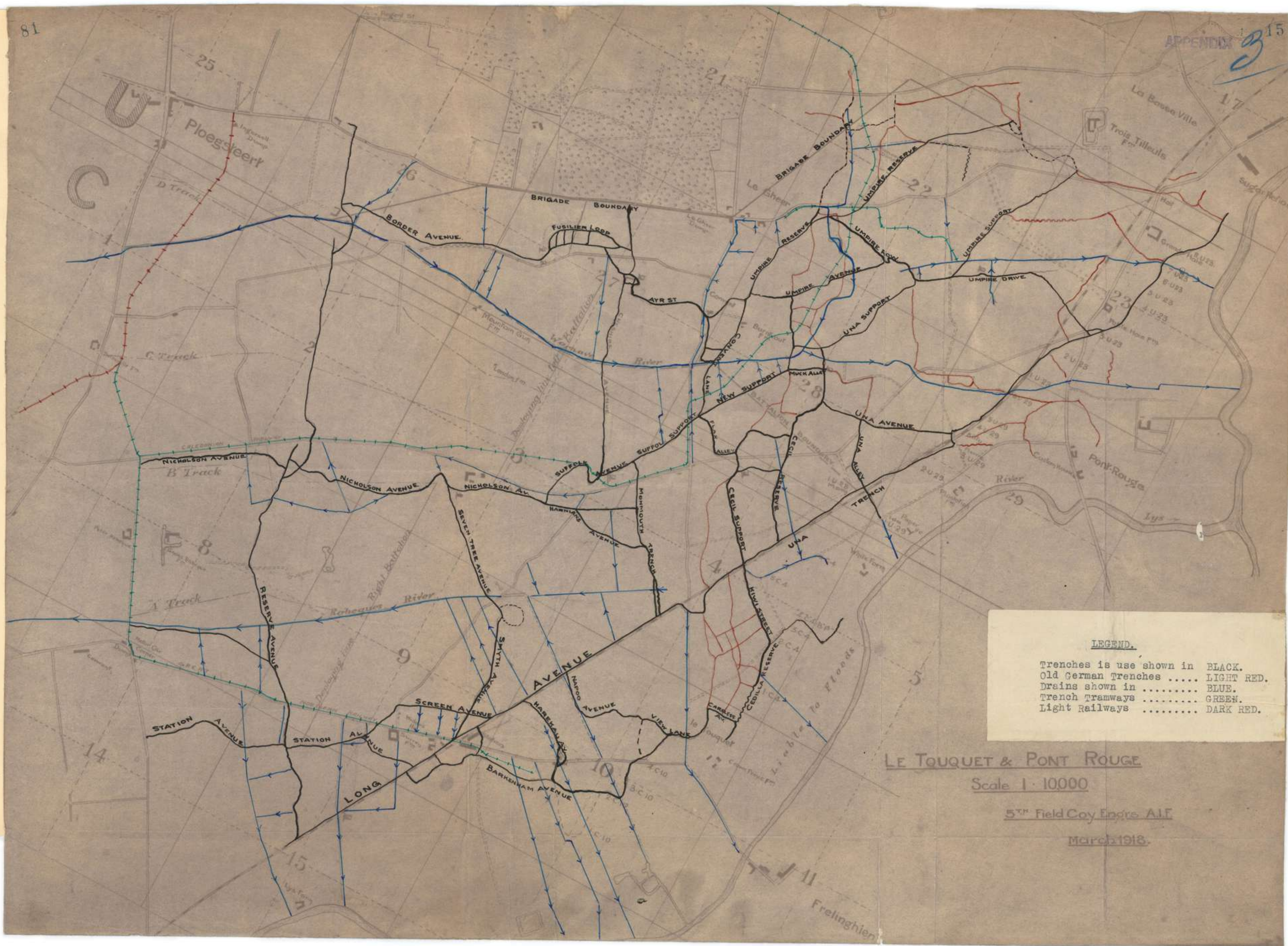
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No	Map Location	Type of bridge	Width of road-way	Present maxm. load	span	Remarks
19.	C.25.a. 90.00.	Steel Joist bridge-on 1 span & 2 spans masonry arches to masonry piers	18'	7 ton lorries	50'	1st class condition. Approaches 1st class paved road. Demolition provided for to leave gap of about 30'. Both piers to be destroyed. Stores on S.W. side
20.	C.25.a. 60.97.	Steel Lifting bridge	7'9"	3 ton lorries	66'	Slightly damaged. Approaches 1st class; paved roadway. Demolition provided for. Stores on <del>bank</del> , West end.
21.	C.19.d. 15.30	"INGLIS" Steel rect-angular heavy bridge	9'	3 ton lorries	70'	First class condition. Approaches 2nd class. Demolition provided for. Stores on N. bank.
22.	C.19.c. 7.4.	Steel Lattice Girder bridge (light)	5'	Infantry in file. Pack transport	60'	Badly damaged bridge; is 10' wide, but ends are blocked to prevent wheeled traffic -which must not cross it. Approaches- 1st class. Demolition provided for. Stores on N. side.
23.	C.19.c. 7.7.	Same as 22	6'	Same as 22.	120' in 3 spans	Slightly damaged. Approaches - good for Infantry & pack transport. Demolition provided for. Stores on E. bank
24.	B.18.d. 1.6.	Barrel Pier Bridge	9'	Infantry in fours? Field Arty.	66'	Moored against S.E. bank. Constructed in 4 piers of 27 -36 gal. casks each. Some of the casks need overhauling. Approaches - Earth track along tow path on S.E. bank; 1st class road on N.W? Bank.
25.	B.18.c. 8.2.	Barrel Pier bridge	9'	Infantry in fours F.Arty.	84'	Constructed in 6 piers. otherwise same as 24.
26.	B.24.c. 0.8.	continued on (5)				

No	Map Location	Type of bridge	Width of road-way	Present maxm. load	Span	Remarks
26.	B.24.c.0.8.	Masonry Arch bridge in 3 spans	36'	Any traffic	About 80'	"Ashlar" masonry in 3 spans to two stone piers 38' x 8'. Semi Arches 7' from springing to W. Line. Demolition provided for - 7 charges laid in each pier. Approaches - 1st class paved roadway.

- (a) In all cases where Demolition has been provided for, the charges have been recently overhauled and renewed.
- (b) Duplicate electric leads or fuze have been put in, in every case.
- (c) Demolition stores are in small weather-proof magazines - under light lock and key in most cases.
- (d) Weight of charges could not be checked, but all positions were found to be correct.
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**LEGEND.**

Trenches in use	shown in	BLACK.
Old German trenches	.....	LIGHT RED.
Drains	shown in	..... BLUE.
Trench tramways	.....	GREEN.
Light railways	.....	DARK RED.

**LE TOUQUET & PONT ROUGE**  
 Scale 1:10000  
 5<sup>th</sup> Field Coy Engrs. AIF  
 March 1918.