

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

Engineers

**Item number:** 14/24/4

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

July 1916



AWM4-14/24/4



# WAR DIARY

or

## INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form C. 2118.

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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.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	VOLUME IX	Remarks and references to Appendices
NEUVE EGLISE	4/7/16	10AM	Ordered by Col Newcombe to commence work on Mulvergem Switch line & D.H.Q. 2 <sup>nd</sup> line		
"	4/7/16	12AM	Inspected line in a bad state whole to be duckboarded and drained.		
"	8/7/16	7:30PM	Received orders to move to Streezele area & report to 5 <sup>th</sup> Brigade H.Q.		
"	9/7/16	12AM	Company moved out by sections at five minute intervals moving through Baillieu, Streezele to Bradelles.		
BRADELLES	9/7/16	5:15PM	Arrived Bradelles message received to move next day at 10AM & proceed to Ebbingham Reservoir area		
"	10/7/16	10AM	moved out through Corvee, Hoffand Les Bing. Rues to Ebbingham arrived at 4:35 PM. Orders received to move to be at Arque at 5PM ready to entrain 11/7/16.		
ARQUES	11/7/16	5PM	Company entraining vehicles & horses, whole completed in 33 minutes.		
LONGUEAU	12/7/16	5:45AM	Detained and moved off in 29 minutes. Instructions to move to YZEUX. Arrived at YZEUX at 4:15 PM. men allotted to Billets.		
YZEUX	13/7/16	7:30AM	Left with 5 <sup>th</sup> Brigade Battalion B.O. to go over the ground over which we will probably work i.e. Bontalmaison. Longueval line N.E. of Albert.		
"	17/7/16	5PM	Orders to move at 9 AM 18th to Argoeuves.		
ARGOEUVES	18/7/16	11:45AM	Arrived 11:45 AM. Billeted men.		
"	19/7/16	11:30AM	Orders to move at 9 AM 20/7/16 for Vadencourt.		
VADENCOURT	20/7/16	5:30PM	Arrived Vadencourt wood billeted in huts.		
"	22/7/16	1:30PM	Orders to move at 6:30 PM 22/7/16 for Albert.		
ALBERT	22/7/16	11:30PM	Arrived Albert parked vehicles turned in 12:45 AM (BIVOUAC)		
"	23/7/16	5PM	Orders to move out Bontalmaison, leaving Albert 8:15 P.M.		
BONTALMAISON	23/7/16	12 PM	1+2 Sections moved straight up to relieve 3rd. 2 <sup>nd</sup> Div. Sections worked on Copse Avenue until 4:30 AM. 24 <sup>th</sup> .		
POZIERES	24/7/16	11:45PM	1+2 Sections on Strong point at X.S. A. 5. 7. Work completed to 4' deep x 2' 6" Sections drawn in at 3:30 AM. 29/7/16. 3 MEN. Killed & 4 wounded.		
"	25/7/16	8 AM	Sections 3 & 4 on communications Copse Avenue. Lt Lang. J. H. Killed		
BONTALMAISON	26/7/16	8 AM	Company on Sunken Road & Pioneer Trench.		
"	27/7/16	8 AM	Company on Sunken road trench. Heavy shelling at 11 AM which lasted about 1 1/2 hours drew company in at 11:45 AM. 20 men hit. 12 evacuated.		
"	27/7/16	7 PM	Company relieved by 7 <sup>th</sup> Field Company. Showed Capt Evans & Col Annand over trenches. Company moved into Albert.		
LA BOISSELLE	30/7/16	8 AM	Company at work on Road La Boisselle to Bontalmaison.		

Sappers Rea. Keep chambers did good work out in no mans land previous to company going out. Whole of ground being reconnoitred by an officer & these three sappers so that no confusion or undecision occurred when company was led out. Very heavy shell fire the whole time also M. G. fire.

W. Henderson Major



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5th. Field Company Australian Engineers.

CONTALMAISON.

23rd. Field Company came under C.R.E., 1st. Aust. Div. for works. Instructions (verbal) from C.R.E., 1st. Aust. Div. to move up and relieve 3rd. Field Company, 1st. Aust. Division. Major HENDERSON and Capt. HARRIS went forward to 3rd. Brigade H.Q. at CONTALMAISON to get in touch and collect information. Whole Company less Transport moved up in Battle Order leaving ALBERT at 20.15. 3rd. Field Company had moved out, 5th. Company occupied temporarily shelter to the south of CONTALMAISON - La BOISELLE Road at X.16.A. Central attached map. Sections 1 & 2 moved up and carried on improvements to EMU AVENUE. Returning to camp at 0430 on 24th.

POZIERES.

24th. Sections 3 & 4 on improvement and cleaning up of WALKERS AVENUE in X.5.c.6.2. Orders received at 17.00 that a strong point had to be dug at road junction X.5.a.5.7. within 200 yards of "O.G" line 1 still held by the enemy. Infantry were to attack and link up on right and left of Sappers. Major HENDERSON, Lieut. BURNELL, Lieut. BASSETT and two Section Sergeants moved up to make reconnaissance. Very heavy shelling. 1 & 2 Sections arrived up at 22.30. Shelling particularly heavy. Attack was to take place at 02.00 on 25th. Decided to dig in before attack as the position was hopeless to attempt after the attack developed. C.O., Sappers CHAMBERS, REA and KEEP made reconnaissance, laid out work and guided Company to job. Whole under cover before attack was launched. Infantry advanced to attack but M.G. fire prevented any attempt to dig in so close to the enemy line. Sections withdrawn at 03.30 on 25th. after M.G. fire had died down. Three men killed, four wounded. Very heavy shell and M.G. fire most of the time.

POZIERES.

25th. Sections 3 & 4 cleaning out and improving COPSE AVENUE. Shelling very heavy. Lieut. LANG killed, 7 others wounded. Orders from C.R.E., 1st. Division to conserve the men. 2nd. Division relieving the 1st. Division. 5th. Brigade to take over Area.

CONTALMAISON.

26th. Put Company on improving Sunken Road and PIONEER TRENCH. Arrangements made to be relieved by 7th. Field Company.

27th. Sections 1 & 2 on Sunken Road Trench and COPSE AVENUE. During morning caught in a heavy barrage about 11 O'Clock and had 20 casualties in the two sections, all wounded. Withdrew men from works at 12 noon.

P.T.O.



- 28th. Relieved by 7th. Field Company. 5th  
Company moved back to Billets in ALBERT.
- 29th. Company Resting.
- 30th. Company working on roads through LA BOISELLE  
VILLAGE. Clearing same for traffic.
- 31st. Company resting. Warned to move up to  
relieve 7th. Field Company on Tuesday 1st.  
August. Five men badly wounded by  
shell in billets.

(Sgd) W.A.HENDERSON. Lieut-Colonel,  
C.R.E., 1st.Australian Division.

(The original of above appears on the same  
sheet as entries for the subsequent month  
and will be found with the diary for that  
month)



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REMARKS.

Points drawn from Operation at POZIERES in which 5th. Field Company took part between the dates 23rd. July to 8th. August, 1916.

- (a) On night 24th./25th. July. The order to dig a Strong Point within 200 yards of the German line during an attack especially as the Enemy line directly opposite the post was not to be captured (the objective being a portion of the enemies trenches on the left flank) looked on the face of the order an impossible task.

The Sappers work was therefore carried out before Zero Hour and the Infantry moved forward to dig in during the attack and had heavy casualties from the occupied portion of trench, and had to retire without digging in, proving that at so close a distance it was impossible to dig in during an attack.

- (b) On night 1st./2nd. August. The congestion in trenches pointed to the fact that narrow ~~xxx~~ deep trenches are a danger both (1) As regards the difficulty of one man passing another. (2) The danger from being buried by a shell burst near the trench and blowing it in. (3) It also brought to notice that a carefully worked out time table must be prepared so that troops moving up will not all collect at the same time. (4) Two communication trenches to each Battalion Sector necessary and traffic regulated one way in and one out.

- (c) On night 2nd./3rd. August. The method of digging a jumping off trench preparatory to an attack is not a satisfactory arrangement. Always leads to heavy casualties, both for the digging party and the Infantry the following night. The tape line is by far the better method as this can be laid down the night the attack is to be made and the enemy do not get any information that an attack is intended.

*W. H. Henderson* Lieut. Colonel,  
C.R.E., 1st. Australian Division.

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