

AWM4

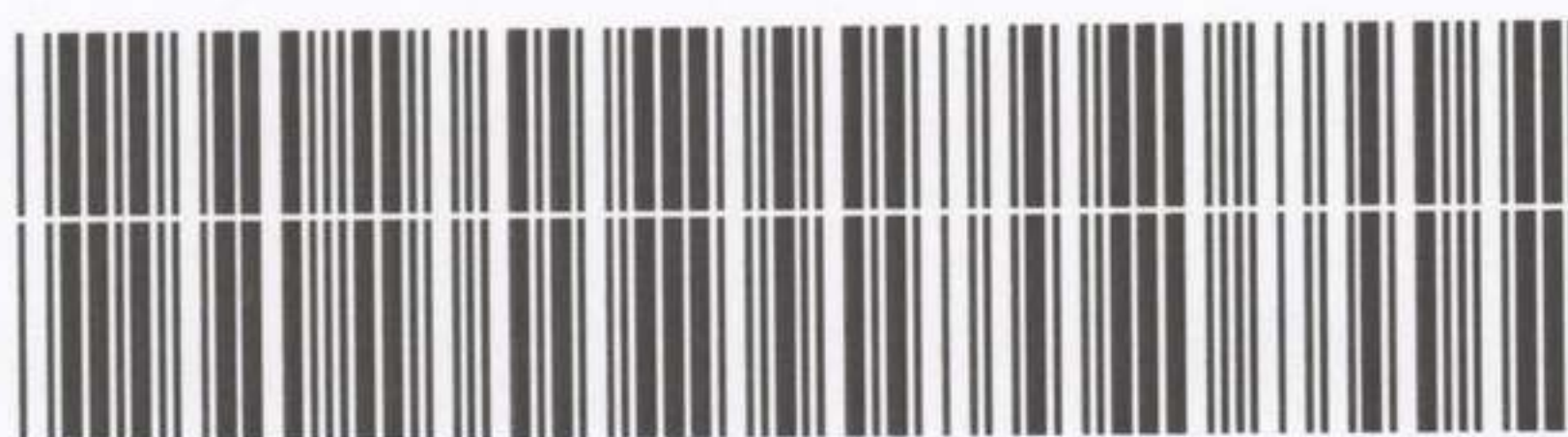
**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War**

Engineers

Item number: 14/13/5

Title: 1st Australian Pioneer Battalion

July 1916



AWM4-14/13/5

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

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203

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
SAILLY	July 1st 1916		<p>G. Bardin left for "Pung Shek" to make survey of Area into which it is proposed the Division will move.</p> <p>Working parties engaged on all communication trenches.</p> <p>Continued construction of Dug-outs for A.M.C. at Sailly and Post a'Alons.</p> <p>Preparing to hand over work to relieving Division.</p>	<p>Michaelson Lt Col</p>

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203

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SALLY	July 2nd to July 6th 1916		<p>Small parties working on all communication trenches & Reserve Line.</p> <p>A Coy withdrawn from Flembais and rejoined Battalion. Small parties sent to Flembais for maintenance work.</p> <p>Small wiring party under Lt Storey laid wire at Sap heads in advanced works.</p> <p>Divisional Headquarters moved from Sally and Battalion placed under 4th Aus Div temporarily for operations.</p>	<p>Richards Lieut</p>

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703

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
SAILLY	July 7th	1916	<p>Small maintenance parties only were sent to trenches in Pettillon sector.</p> <p>C.O. of 5th Pioneer Battalion inspected the trenches in company with Col. Nicholson.</p> <p>C.O. attended conference of 4th Divisional Commander, Brigadiers of 1st. + 13th Brigades & C.R.E. of 4th Div. to discuss the defence of the sector.</p>	<p><i>Nicholson</i> <i>Sec</i></p>
SAILLY	July 8th	1916	<p>Small maintenance parties only engaged in trenches.</p> <p>Divisional Order No. 25 received at 1700 re move from Area. 1st Inf. Brigade Order No. — received, by which we will move under arrangements with the 1st. Brigade and pass — at —</p> <p>Adjutant interviewed Brigade Major, 1st Inf Bde, and arranged that we should leave our billet area, and proceed to MERRIS under our own arrangements at 0500 9/7/16</p>	<p><i>Nicholson</i> <i>Sec</i></p> <p>3</p>

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703

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
July 9th 1916	SAILLY		Battalion left Rue Bruges at 0500, and marching via Doulien and Blen reached Merris at 1000.	
	MERRIS		<p>Quilting area crowded and 'B' Coy bivouaced in open field.</p> <p>At 1900 Divisional Order No. 26 received re move to new area under FOURTH ARMY.</p> <p>Col. Nicholson received following letter from General BIRDWOOD. :-</p> <p style="text-align: right;">1ST ANZAC CORPS 8/7/16</p> <p>My Dear Nicholson,</p> <p>I am so sorry not to have seen anything of you at all lately during my many visits round the trenches, but your present work takes you all over the place so much so that it is very difficult to know where you are. I have however, seen much of your men, and as we are now leaving this section of the line I want to write and tell you how very pleased I am at the very excellent work which your Pioneer Bty. has done for us, and how grateful I am for this. I can assure you that your work has been very much appreciated by the whole of the 1st Div. who fully realize the value of this Pioneer Bty. We can none of us quite foresee what is still before us, but I know that you and your Pioneers will always be to the fore and doing real good work. I again thank you so much and with all good wishes</p> <p style="text-align: right;">Yours very sincerely W. R. BIRDWOOD</p>	

1875 Wt. W593/826 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.

W. R. Birdwood
Genl

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706

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
MERRIS	July 10th	1916	Battalion resting in billets. One Coy and 4 G.L. Waggon to entrain at CODWAERS VELDE at 0733 on 11th. Remainder of Battalion to entrain at 0733 at BAILLEUL WEST on 11th. At 1800 'A' Coy & 4 G.L. Waggon left for CODWAERS VELDE	Sturges Lt Col
MERRIS	July 11th	1916	'D' Coy. and all transport minus 4 G.L. Waggon which had gone with 'A' Coy. left MERRIS at 0230 for BAILLEUL WEST. Remainder of Battalion left MERRIS at 0430, arriving BAILLEUL WEST at 0700.	
BAILLEUL WEST.			All entrained without delay ('D' Coy having entrained transport). Train left at 0733, destination unknown.	
DOULLEN			Arrived DOULLEN DOULLEN at 1220. Disentrained, and ordered by Div. Officer (Lt. Gault) to proceed to CANAPLES (about 12 miles)	
CANAPLES			Arrived at CANAPLES at 1900 and billeted. Very comfortable quarters. Received orders from D.H.Q. to proceed to MONTON MILLERS next morning.	Sturges Lt Col

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703



Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
July 12th 1916	CANAPLES		Battalion left at 1000 for MONTON VILLERS.	
	MONTON-VILLERS.		Arrived at MONTON VILLERS at 1245 and billeted. Very small village. All officers billeted in Chateau.	Artillerie Lt Col
MONTON VILLERS	July 13th 1916		Remained billeted in MONTON-VILLERS. Training carried on by Battalion during morning and under Coy. arrangements during afternoon. Sick Parade large, mostly feet troubles. C.O. attended conference of Divisional Commanders, Brigadier, C.R.A., + C.R.E. C.O. called meeting of officers of the Battalion at 8pm. and spoke on subjects of interest in connection with the forthcoming operations.	Artillerie Lt Col

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208

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
MONTONVILLERS	July 14th		Route march in morning. Parade under bay. arrangements in afternoon. At 4.30 pm. General BIRDWOOD called upon the C.O. at Battalion Headquarters.	<i>Attache 2nd Col</i>
MONTONVILLERS	July 15th		Battalion Parade and inspection by the C.O. in morning. At 11 am. Col. Blamey called to take C.O. out to trenches. In afternoon sports held in Battalion Biller Area	<i>Attache 2nd Col</i>
MONTONVILLERS	July 16th		Left MONTONVILLERS at 0900 for HARBONVILLE. Arrived HARBONVILLE at about 1430 and billeted	<i>Attache 2nd Col</i>

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HARPONVILLE	July 17th 1916		Remain billets at HARPONVILLE. Fire occurred in farmhouse occupied by a platoon of B Coy. Fire caused by accident at Coy. Cookhouse. Preliminary Inquiry held by C.O.	Amaluk Red
HARPONVILLE	July 18th 1916		Still billets at HARPONVILLE awaiting orders. C.O. attended conference at GENLIS.	Amaluk Red
HARPONVILLE	July 19th 1916	MORNING. AFTERNOON.	C.O. attended Conference at ALBERT. Battalion left HARPONVILLE by motor buses. 2 Platoons from each A & B Coys. bivouacked at LA BOISELLE, and commenced work near POZIERES. Remainder of Battalion billets at ALBERT. CASUALTIES:- LIEUT. E.E. JENKINS, severely wounded. One Other Rank wounded.	Amaluk Red
ALBERT.				

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703

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
ALBERT	JULY 20th		Battalion remained billeted in ALBERT. At night party ran advanced assembling trench in sector held by 3rd Inf Brigade just south east of POZIERES (S. X S ² corner) casualties 2 Other Ranks Killed 17 do Wounded 1 do Wounded but still at duty	<i>Amichuk</i> L.C.I.
ALBERT	JULY 21st		Battalion remained billeted in ALBERT. At night continued and connected up with right flank the Kick Off Trenches commenced on 19th. Completed the extension of the SUNKEN ROAD trench to O.G. (750 yds) and three communication trenches connecting it with it.	<i>Amichuk</i> L.C.I.
ALBERT CONTAL-MAISON	JULY 22nd		In evening moved to rendezvous near CONTALMAISON During day party had completed the system of forward trenches between BLACK WATCH ALLEY and the German EYEW trench (POZIERES TRENCH).	<i>Amichuk</i> L.C.I.
CONTAL-MAISON POZIERES	JULY 23rd		Early morning, after intense bombardment, infantry attack launched against enemy positions. This battalion followed up attack, and consolidated certain positions won. In cases where infantry had not gained objectives, Pioneer parties supporting in these sectors were not able to carry out the consolidating work allotted to them, and engaged in developing and improving communication trenches and other work. CAPT. H.F. HUBBE, (Adjutant) was killed after doing excellent work.	<i>Amichuk</i> L.C.I.

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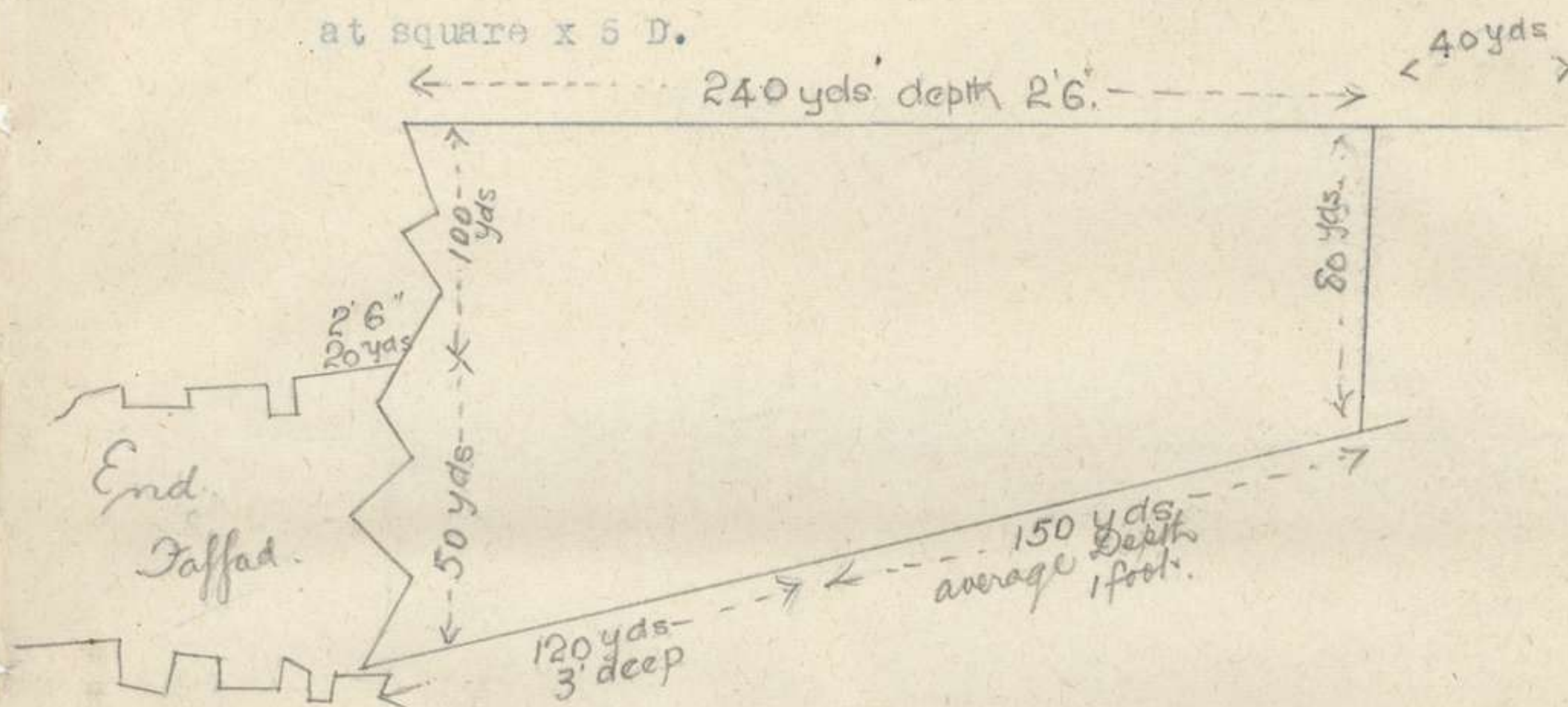
Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
ALBERT	1916 July 28th		Left Billebois and bivouaced at Rest Area near ALBERT STATION.	
HARPON-VILLE			Left ALBERT at 2pm. for HARPONVILLE arriving there at 7pm.	
			60 Reinforcements taken on strength.	
HARPON-VILLE	July 29th		Left HARPONVILLE at 0430 for LA VICOQUE.	
LA VICOQUE			Arrived LA VICOQUE at about 1230 and bivouaced at FARM du ROSEL.	
LA VICOQUE	July 30th		Left LAVICOQUE for BONNEVILLE at 9am.	
BONNEVILLE			Arrived BONNEVILLE + billeted 12 midday	
BONNEVILLE	July 31st		Battalion resting.	

703

1st PIONEER BATTALIONWeekly Report on Operations for Week ending19/7/1916

Battalion occupied billets in Albert on 19/7/1916.

On night of 20/7/1916 party run advanced works, as per sketch, at square x 5 D.



Casualties for Week -

1	Officer (Lieut. E.E. Jenkins)	Killed
3	Other Ranks	Killed
17	Other Ranks	Wounded
1	Other Rank	Wounded but still at duty.

Lt-Col.

C.O. 1st Pioneer Battalion.

1st PIONEER BATTALION.Usual weekly report on operations.

For week ending 6 p.m, 28/7/16.

- 22nd. During day of 22nd, party completed the system of forward trenches between BLACK WATCH ALLEY and the German E & W trench (POZIERES TRENCH). These trenches to be used as Kick-Off trenches for Divisional operations. On evening of 22nd Battalion took up position near CONTALMAISON.
- 23rd. On early morning of 23rd, after intense bombardment, infantry attack launched against enemy positions. This Battalion followed up attack, and consolidated certain positions won. In cases where infantry had not gained objectives, Pioneer parties supporting in these sectors were not able to carry out the consolidating work allotted to them, and engaged in developing and improving communication trenches, and in any other work which presented itself.
- 24th. On morning of 24th, party proceeded to CEMETERY (POZIERES) to form strong point. Other parties engaged in POZIERES VILLAGE constructing strong points and improving communications, and others further back in BLACK WATCH ALLEY and on POZIERES TRENCH. At night, further infantry actions against enemy positions and Pioneer parties supported attacks.
- 25th. On morning of 25th, enemy fire was very heavy and Pioneers were compelled to assist in manning trenches at A3. Lieut. TITFORD, Lieut MARTYN, Lieut FOULSUM and some N.C.Os doing particularly excellent fighting. Both Lieut TITFORD and Lieut FOULSUM were wounded. Party continued consolidating positions won at CEMETERY and in POZIERES.
- 26th. Continued consolidating work in hand on 26th, reliefs being successfully effected on all jobs.
- 27th. On 27th Battalion was withdrawn vide Divisional instructions and work taken over by 2nd Pioneer Battalion.
- 28th. Battalion left Rest Area at ALBERT for HARPONVILLE.

Casualties during the operations were as follows:-

OFFICERS	Killed.	Captain.	H.F.HUBBE.
MISSING	Missing.	2/Lieut.	H. CLAYTON.
	Wounded.	2/Lieut.	FOULSUM. W.
			TITFORD. R.
		Lieut.	E.B.WATTERS.
			R.C.STOREY
			T.R.MILLER.
OTHER RANKS.	Killed.	(estimated)	22.
	Wounded		160.
	Missing		12.

Lieut-Col.

C.O. 1st PIONEER BATTALION.

Narrative of Operations at Pozieres

by

1st Pioneer Battalion, 1st Australian Division.

Headquarters,

1st Australian Division.

The operations are divisible into three sections -

1. Preparatory.
2. Consolidation.
3. Maintenance.

PREPARATORY. Except for the commencement of a trench in SUNKEN ROAD Valley by the Staffordshire Pioneer Battalion, no trenches existed from which an attack could be launched POZIERES trench nearer than BLACKWATCH VALLEY, 650 yds.

The Pioneer Battalion in the 19th, 20th and 21st extended SUNKEN ROAD trench to OG1 750 yards, ran forward three communication trenches about 100 yards, and excavated KICKOFF trench 500 yards long. This work was not easy owing to enemy fire, while darkness made direction difficult to obtain. The mean distance from POZIERES trench is 200 yards. Capt Townsend laid out KICKOFF trench very correctly.

CONSOLIDATION. The strong points to be constructed were laid down in S.S. orders, and these were divided between the 1st Pioneer Battalion and the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Field Companies Engineers.

Three Companies of Pioneers were allotted tasks and followed the attacking parties at what was judged sufficient time to permit the Infantry to have secured sufficient ground in front of the proposed strong points to permit of comparatively uninterrupted work -generally one hour after the launching of the attack being right, a forward preparatory position having been occupied.

Strong points A.2. & B.3. were promptly made. A.3. was commenced later and considerable work done near CEMETERY.

The principal consolidation work and much the more difficult was

203

the reconstruction of O b 1, and the old German trench running through X 4 A from South to North. These trenches had been completely destroyed by our fire, and as the Infantry bombed the enemy back, the Pioneers erected barricades across O G 1 from which the Infantry could hold the position gained and behind which the Pioneers remade the trench.

No less than 400 yards of this arduous work in O b 1 was done and special mention is made of Lieutenants Tidford and MARTYN.

The X 4 A trench was not interfered with by bombers, but artillery fire was very severe and Lieutenant SPECKMAN was very successful, mainly reconstructing fully 500 yards and practically joining with the Warwickshire Regiment in the trench running from R34C to X3B. It will be understood that every Infantry enterprise after the main attack was accompanied by a platoon or more of Pioneers and where it was seen that the objective was not obtainable, these Pioneers were switched off to other work.

MAINTENANCE The communication trenches were entirely inadequate - BLACKWATCH ALLEY gave inferior cover, was filthy with mud and dead Germans, and too narrow. A party was constantly maintained improving and repairing, and a new trench was cut from it to near 3rd Infantry Brigade Headquarters.

WALKER AVENUE, GORSE AVENUE, SUNKEN ROAD trenches were constantly used and acquired much work, while POZIERES trench had to be re-formed.

GENERAL. The Battalion was used to its fullest extent, and I could have usefully employed twice the number of men. It was worked entirely independently once the instructions were received from G.R.E. - reports being sent to D.H.Q. and constant touch maintained with Brigade Headquarters.

The losses, though severe, were exceptionally small, a result obtained by carefully obtaining by carefully allotting only a proper number of men to each task. I submit that the method of working proved entirely successful, and any change will be distinctly inadvisable.

The only point to which attention is drawn is that in one occasion

a definite number of men was requested for a task by a Brigade, instead of the task being given and allotment left to the O.C. The result was a large party was unnecessarily detached, and besides being idle for that shift were subject to unnecessary exposure. Work was maintained throughout the 24 hours on all points by means of shifts of from 4 hours to 8 hours duration, according to circumstances.

The work of officers and men was better than I had expected, and equal to my hopes.

Attention is drawn to the trench plan submitted by Lieutenant Bardin and comparison should be made with plan in which work was started to appreciate the work done by Pioneers and Field Companies of Engineers.

Lieut-Col.

O.C. 1st PIONEER BATTALION.

29th July, 1916.