

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

Engineers

Item number: 14/15/13

Title: 3rd Australian Pioneer Battalion

November 1917



AWM4-14/15/13

Confidential Original

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

159

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
WAVRANS.	1917 NOVEMBER 1st to 11th.		From 1st to 11th, the Battalion was still billeted in the Village of WAVRANS, resting and training. Infantry Training; Bridge Building; and Route Marches were carried out. Classes were formed for N.C.O's, Signallers, Runners, Stretcher Bearers, and Lewis Gunners. At the latter, special instruction was given in Anti-aircraft Defence, per medium of the Lewis Gun. Lewis Gun Officers from the Infantry Battalions of the Division attended our classes for instruction in this branch of Lewis Gunnery. The inoculation of the Battalion by the R.M.O. was still in progress.	Lb
STEENNECQUE.	12th.		The Battalion moved by Route March from WAVRANS, starting at 8-30 A.M. Strength, 23 Officers 846 O.R., 98 Animals, 25 vehicles, arriving at STEENNECQUE at 5-30 p.m., where the Battalion billeted for the night. A distance of 22 miles was covered. Five Officers moved off from the Battalion from WAVRANS at 7-30 A.M., to proceed forward and take over from the Pioneers of the 8th Division, who were at that time located at NIEPPE. The orders for this Battalion, were to take over all work being carried out by the Pioneers, 8th Division.	Lb
STEENJE.	13th.		The Battalion moved from STEENNECQUE at 8-30 A.M., - strength on march, 20 Officers, 821 O.R., 98 animals, 25 vehicles, arriving at STEENJE at 4-30 p.m., billeting there for the night. A distance of 17 miles was covered on this date. In the evening, six Lewis Gun Teams were sent forward to relieve six Anti-aircraft Lewis Gun posts at Battery positions on Divisional Front, taking over from the Pioneers of the 8th Division.	Lb
NIEPPE.	14th.		The Battalion left STEENJE with 20 Officers 800 O.R., 98 animals and 25 vehicles, and arrived at NIEPPE, our destination, at 12-30 p.m. Billets were then allotted and occupied. On this date 7 miles were covered, making a total of 46 miles for the three days 12th-14th. Fighting Order with Greatcoats was carried by the men. Packs and blankets were carried forward by motor bus.	Lb

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NIEPPE. WARNETON - ERLENNEN SECTOR.	1917 NOVEMBER 15th.		<p>The Officers who went forward on the 12th, were now in a position to explain in detail, all the work to be taken over. All Officers and N.C.O's of the Battalion marched out at 7-30 a.m. to reconnoitre the work allotted them, such work to be started on the morning of the 16th.</p> <p>"A" COMPANY was allotted the Left Sector (10th Inf. Bde. Front), and were responsible for the repair of all Communication Trenches, and the drainage of same. Much work on the trenches was required to put them in good order.</p> <p>"B" COMPANY, was appointed Btln. Duty Company.</p> <p>"C" COMPANY was allotted to the Right Sector, and was responsible for the repair and maintenance; also the drainage of all Communication Trenches in that Sector.</p> <p>"D" COMPANY was allotted to Trench Trams, and was responsible for the construction and maintenance; and general repair of the whole trench tramway system on the Divisional Front.</p>	<p>lb</p>
	16th.		<p>Arrangements were made with the Corps Light Railway Officer, for trains to convey the men to and from their work, and all ranks were able to proceed to the Forward Area in this way. By this arrangement, splendid work was obtained from the men, and much time saved in the journey to and from their tasks.</p> <p>It was found advisable to carry out work in the early portion of the mornings, while the mist and fog lay over the ground, and at night time, in order to save casualties. A large tower at WARNETON, gave the enemy good observation of our Forward Areas, and it was therefore found necessary for working parties to take advantage of the poor visibility prevailing during the above periods. BA TIALION HEADQUARTERS was located at the Red Chateau, NIEPPE.</p>	<p>lb</p>
	17th.		<p>"A" COMPANY commenced work on USEFUL TRENCH, draining same and carrying out necessary repairs to duckboards, etc. EGMONT AVENUE, revetting and draining. ULTIMO AVENUE, revetting, deepening and draining; also reasing breastworks on WARNETON side of trench.</p> <p>"B" COMPANY - Battln. Duty Coy. This Coy. was employed in and around the Billets occupied by the Battln., and numerous repairs were effected, including the construction of latrines, and beds, so that every man in the Unit was able to take advantage of a bunk.</p> <p>"C" COMPANY, commenced work on CARTER AV., STATION AV., BARKENHAM AV., CONVENT LANE, UMPIRE AV., LONG AV., UNA SUPPORT, NAPOO AND UMPIRE DRIVE, SUFFOLK TR., CHESTER AV., NICHOLSONS AV. Much repair work was necessary on the trenches concerned.</p> <p>"D" COMPANY., commenced the formation of Corps Line; maintenance and repair of existing trench tramlines; salving and placing in Dumps of tramway material, (continued).</p>	<p>lb</p>

SHEET NO. 3.
WAR DIARY

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NIEPPE. WARNETON - Frelenhien Sector.	1917. NOVEMBER. 17th (Contd.)		<p>"D" COMPANY (Continued). GUNNERS FARM LINE repaired and made trafficable to DESPISE FARM. FORT BOYD LINE repaired and made trafficable. PROUSE POINT LINE - general repairs. Two small workshops were established by this Company. One in the Right and one in the Left Sector, for the repairs of trucks on the lines. The Pioneers were responsible for the construction and maintenance of the trench tramways, but not control of the Rolling Stock.</p> <p>CASUALTIES:- 2 O.R. Killed, 2 Wounded.</p>	
	18th - 21st.		<p>The same work was continued as for 16th and 17th, and in addition, four Electricians moved to the CATACOMBS to improve and repair the existing Electric Light System, and plant, and to carry out extensions to same.</p>	
	22nd - 23rd.		<p>Work continued as above. On 22nd, a set of portable baths, designed and constructed at the Workshops of this Unit, was placed at the disposal of the ARTILLERY for bathing the personnel of that Unit, and was erected by the Pioneers.</p> <p>Regimental baths were constructed by this Unit, and placed at the disposal of the 11th Inf. Bde., Army Service Corps, Trench Mortar personnel, Pierrots, etc., for bathing.</p>	
	24th - 25th.		<p>Progress being made on all works taken in hand. 5 O.R. Wounded, on 24th.</p>	
	26th.		<p>Good progress being made on all work. Owing to urgent work in the Forward Areas, "F" Coy., was allotted for road construction, and was responsible for the repair and maintenance of all roads in Forward Areas. Much work was necessary in order that the roads be made and kept trafficable.</p>	
	27th - 30th.		<p>From the 27th, the following work was carried out by this Unit, which placed the trench tramways in a much more serviceable condition, and made the Communication Trenches much more habitable:-</p> <p>"A" COMPANY, ULTIMO LANE about 220 yards of breastworks completed. 90 yards of that Avenue graded, deepened, revetted and duckboarded. Much repair work, drainage and revetment was carried out in USEFUL LANE and EGMONT AVENUE.</p>	

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NIEPPE. WARNETON - FRELENNHIEN SECTOR.	1917. NOVEMBER. 27th- 30th (Contd.)		<p><u>"B" COMPANY.</u> Completed construction of 100 bunks. Transport standings repaired and bricked. Completed the manufacture of an experimental portable Pontoon Bridge. Improvements carried out at the 3rd Divisional Laundry, including the laying of a light tramway. Improvements carried out at the 2nd A.G.C.S. Work commenced on ASH AVENUE, and LE BIZET-MOTOR CAR CORNER ROAD.</p> <p><u>"C" COMPANY.</u> Carried out work on the following Communication trenches;-repairing many crumps, revetment, drainagem etc.:- LONG AV., HARNIANS AV., SUFFOLK AV., CHESTER AV., FLAX ALLEY, AYR ST., UMPIRE DRIVE, UMPIRE ROW, SMYTH AV., UNA TR., SEVEN TREES AV., HORE KOU, UMPIRE AV., CONVENT LANE, KIWI TR., UNA SUPPORT, CECIL AV., BARKENHAM AV., MONMOUTH, ETC.</p> <p><u>"D" COMPANY.</u> Completed formation of the Corps Line, and commenced a Siding on same. Formation of a spur line, 750 yards completed and ready for traffic. GREAT NORTHERN LINE - much repair work and maintenance was carried out by the Company on this Line. WIDOWS HOUSE TRACK - General repair work. GUNNERS FARM LINE - relaid 40 yards of rail. Ballasted 44 yards. Constructed spur line to RESERVE FARM for ballast, 5 chains. WARNETON TRACK - repairs and maintenance. Many breaks in this line were repaired. Cut six chains of drains and constructed spur line, XXXXXX to Old House (LEVAL COT). 4 chains ballast laid. 1,200 yards duckboard, 210 yards ballast. Spur line laid for ballast. VANCOUVER TRACK - general repairs and maintenance. 800 yards duckboard laid. Constructed spur line for ballast. GUNNERS FARM EXTENSION. Repairs and general maintenance. REPAIRS TO ROLLING STOCK:- The Workshops in Right and Left Sectors repaired 11 trucks.</p> <p><u>WORKSHOP PARTY:-</u> Repairs to six limbers and kitchens completed. Constructed under supervision of Lieut. VARLEY, 300 Smoke Bombs. 6 cooker superstructures made and painted. Work being carried out all over the Divisional Area, by the orders of D.H.Q.</p> <p>In many instances, it was very difficult to get timber, which delayed the work to a great extent</p> <p><u>HONORS & AWARDS FOR THE MONTH:-</u> Word was received from D.H.Q. on 3/11/1917, to the effect that the following had been awarded decorations for conduct while in action at YPRES on 4/10/1917:-</p> <p><u>MILITARY MEDAL:-</u></p> <table><tr><td>227 Sgt. JONES W.J.</td><td>884 Sgt. PROCTOR J.C.</td><td>796 Sgt. HERITAGE T.W.</td></tr><tr><td>930 Sgt. WILLIAMS G.S.</td><td>470 Sgt. LEE R.W.J.</td><td>1084 Pte. FULLWOOD W.H.</td></tr><tr><td>1544 Pte. DOWNIE J.</td><td>540 Pte. SMITH T.</td><td>1147 Pte. GIBBS H.E.</td></tr></table> <p><u>MILITARY MEDAL:-</u> (Conduct while in action at YPRES ON 12/10/1917).</p> <table><tr><td>66 Sgt. ASTBURY E.B.</td><td>93 Sgt. MITCHELL B.F.</td><td>A3467 T/Sgt. SALTHOUSE G.L.</td><td>1117 Sgt. CAMERON G.N.</td></tr><tr><td>1550 " HANNAFORD H.</td><td>756 Cpl. CARR L.R.</td><td>565 L/C. WADE W.E.J.</td><td>304 Pte. RUSSELL J.R.</td></tr><tr><td>176 Pte. D'ALTON J.R.</td><td>798 Pte. HETHORN C.N.</td><td>1075 Sgt. DEVINE J.</td><td>577 Pte. COLLINS S.</td></tr></table>	227 Sgt. JONES W.J.	884 Sgt. PROCTOR J.C.	796 Sgt. HERITAGE T.W.	930 Sgt. WILLIAMS G.S.	470 Sgt. LEE R.W.J.	1084 Pte. FULLWOOD W.H.	1544 Pte. DOWNIE J.	540 Pte. SMITH T.	1147 Pte. GIBBS H.E.	66 Sgt. ASTBURY E.B.	93 Sgt. MITCHELL B.F.	A3467 T/Sgt. SALTHOUSE G.L.	1117 Sgt. CAMERON G.N.	1550 " HANNAFORD H.	756 Cpl. CARR L.R.	565 L/C. WADE W.E.J.	304 Pte. RUSSELL J.R.	176 Pte. D'ALTON J.R.	798 Pte. HETHORN C.N.	1075 Sgt. DEVINE J.	577 Pte. COLLINS S.	
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NIEPPE. NOVEMBER WARNETON - FRELENHIEU SECTOR.	1917.		<p><u>HONORS & AWARDS FOR THE MONTH.</u>(Continued):-</p> <p>On 28/11/1917, telegrams were received from Divisional Headquarters, to the effect that <u>No. 114, L/Corpl. Walter PEELER</u> of this Unit, had been awarded the VICTORIA CROSS, for the following:-</p> <p>"On 4th OCTOBER 1917, East of YPRES, this N.C.O. was No. 1 of a Lewis Gun Team attached to the 37th Infantry Battalion, A.I.F. At zero hour he moved forward with the first wave of the assault and after covering about 100 yards, encountered an enemy party in a shell-hole who were sniping at the advancing troops. He immediately rushed the position and accounted for nine enemy troops and cleared the way for the advance. This happened on three separate occasions and each time he accounted for a number of the enemy.</p> <p>During operations he was directed to a position from which an enemy machine-gun was being fired on our troops. He located and killed the gunner and the remainder of the enemy party ran into a dug-out close by. From this shelter they were dislodged by a bomb, and the enemy ran out. These were disposed of by Lance-Corporal PEELER.</p> <p>On the morning of 4th OCTOBER 1917, this N.C.O. actually accounted for over thirty enemy. He displayed an absolute fearlessness in making his way ahead of the first wave of the assault and the fine example which he set ensured the success of the attack against most determined opposition".</p> <p>In addition to the above, the MILITARY CROSS was awarded to the undermentioned Officers for conduct while in action at YPRES during the previous month:-</p> <p>Major H.P. PHILLIPS. Captain A.G. STEPHENSON. Captain W.J. ROSE.</p> <p>DISTINGUISHED CONDUCT MEDALS were awarded to the following O.R., for conduct at YPRES while in action:- No. 433, Sgt. W. GILBERT. No. 1273, Pte. W.A. WAUGH (Stretcher Bearer).</p> <p><i>[Signature]</i> C.O. 3rd Aust. Pioneer Bn. A.I.F.</p>	<p>LB</p> <p>LB</p> <p>LB</p>