

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

Engineers

Item number: 14/34/33

Title: 15th Field Company, Australian
Engineers

December 1918



AWM4-14/34/33

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ORIGINAL.

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253

Australian Imperial Force.

WAR DIARY

OF

15th FIELD COMPANY. AUST ENGRS.

FOR

DECEMBER 1918

Signature of Officer compiling

Alfred H. Oliver Lt

Signature of Officer Commanding

Alfred H. Oliver Lt

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

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OR INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices	
MAR. REF. BELGIUM. VALENCIENNES <u>100000</u> RESET-de- BEAULIEUX	1 st	0130	Dismounted personnel arrived at RESET-DE-BEAULIEUX and were billeted at LA-LAURETTE farm in tents, plenty straw being available, things were very comfortable.		
		0215	Transport arrived and horse lines were established		
		0910	Lt SECOMBE proceeded to PETIT-BEART to arrange billets for Coy.		
		1255	Transport " " " " " " " "		
		1230	Dismounted personnel proceeded to PETIT-BEART by mail route.		
		1630	Coy arrived and were billeted in Bams.		
		2000	Weather fine but very cold		
		2 nd	1415	Coy Parade. Inspection by O.C.	
				Coy employed in fixing up billets, cutting corkham etc.	
			1410	O.C. visited Coy HQ.	
1510	O.C. makes 15 th BDE HQ. at FAURIL				
2000	Report on move from BOUILLANCOURT to FAURIL Area Weather fine		app 1		
3 rd	1600	Sections Parade independently and carried on with the salvaging of material in the area.			
	1400	O.C. visited CRE at FAURIL			
	2000	Weather stormy			
4 th	1000	Pay parade			
	1100	Salvaging of mail continued			

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices	
MAP. REF BELGIUM VALENCIENNES. 1/100 000 PETIT-BEART	4 th	1100	OC. visited 15 th BDE HQ at TAVRIL.		
		2000	Weather showery		
		5 th	1000	Coy Parade. Inspection by OC. Salvaging of men continued.	
		1400	Haines inspection by Lt. MARNIE.		
	6 th	0930	1600	Weather Showery	
			1000	Lt MARNIE + GILBERT. reconnoitred the roads between PETIT-BEART + DOURLERS	
		1200	1400	Coy PARADE. Inspection by OC. Salvaging of men cont.	
			1400	15 th AVST. INF. BDE ORDER N2213 received	
		7 th	1315	CRE visited Coy HQs.	
			2000	Weather Showery.	
	1 st	0815	Coy Paraded in full marching order and proceeded by march route to DOURLERS preceding via CARTIGNIES, DOMPIERRE, where halt of 1/4 hour was made for lunch.		
		1315	March continued and DOURLERS reached at 1415. Sections billeted - barracks all very comfortable. Stabling very good, all horses under cover	App. 2.	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices	
MAP. REF. BELGIUM. VALENCIENNES TOURNAI DOUAIERS.	4 th	2000	Weather fine		
	8 th	1000	Coy Parade. Sappers employed clearing billets and making themselves comfortable transport carrying coal from AULNOYE, from a large GERMAN Dump where had tank set alight.		
			1400	Adj CRE visited Coy HQ.	
			1430	O.C. visited 15 th BDE HQ in DOUAIERS.	
			2000	weather fine	
	9 th		0810	Sappers employed carrying coal from AULNOYE.	
			0930	Lt. MIDELTON proceeded to 59 th BN at SEMOUSIES to see what work is required re bunking of Buns etc.	
			1000	SECTIONS paraded independently.	
			1030	BATHING Parade.	
			1400	" " for Dinner.	
	10 th		0800	No 1 section employed on accommodation etc for 58 th and 59 th BN'S No 2 section working in 57 th BN, 15 th Ho Amb, and L.T.M. Battery Areas No 3 section on work for A.S.C. dump and odd jobs No 4 " " on accommodation etc for Company.	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
MAP REP	11 th	0800	Sections working as yesterday.	
BELGIUM VALENCIENNES 1/100000			Started fixing up large barn for educational and recreational purposes. Weather showers.	
DOORLERS	12 th	0900	Company education scheme started. Lt. GILBERT is organising classes in Carpentry, Blacksmithing, Bricklaying, Arithmetic and Bookkeeping. Proposed to allot vacancies to the Bde in the technical classes and they will reciprocate in affording the Company opportunity of attending their classes in other subjects. Object of technical classes to be not to teach tradesmen but to give men who intend going on the land a opportunity to pick up enough to do small jobs for themselves. 1100 Address by Lt Gen MONASH on demobilisation and repatriation read and explained to the company.	EKD

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2023

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
MAP REF	12 th	1500	Memo reference shortage of Mo's forwarded to CPE	app. 3
BELGIUM			Weather showers.	
VALENCIENNES				
1/100000	13 th	0900	Sections working as on 10 th	
		1000	Circular reference promotions received	app. 4
DOURLERS		1100	Adjutant CPE visited company. He said it was very hard to get any RE material on a/c of shortage of motor transport.	
		1400	Parade of drivers and inspection of transport and harness by OC.	
			Lt EV CLARKE reported from Corps Hdqrs to act as Div Engrs. Education officer.	
	14 th	1000	CPE visited Coy and took Lieut. Gilbert with him to AVESNES to report on necessary repairs to town water supply.	
			Company took over RE Dump at AVESNES	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918 <u>Dec.</u>		Original	
DOURLERS	15 th	10.00	Inspection of billets stables etc by O.C.	
Ref. Map.			Sappers employed improving and repairing accommodation for personnel in 15 th Bde Group	
BELGIUM.		15.00	Soccer match played against 50 th British Division in CHATEAU grounds at	
Valenciennes			DOURLERS. 50 th Div. team won by 5 goals to 3.	
1/100,000.			Message N 592 received from C.R.E. to take over Timber Dump on road between	App. 5
			SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU and HESTRUD on morning of 17 th , Dump to be handed over to 8 th F. Coy	
			on their arrival in area.	
			Syllabus of Training for period 16 th to 28 th Dec.	App. 6
			Weather - Fine	
	16 th		Work commenced on repairs to water supply at AVESNES by No 4 section.	
			About 60ft of 3" main had been damaged by demolition of road bridge	
			by enemy prior to retirement.	
			An attempt to repair the main had been made by a British P.E. Coy	
			but owing to faulty joints it would not stand the service pressure.	
			Arrangements now made to complete repairs & insulate against frost.	

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Place	Date	Hour	Original	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DOURLERS Ref. Map. BELGIUM Valenciennes 1/100,000	1918 <u>Dec.</u> 16 th	contd.	<p>Training syllabus carried out and supervision and execution of work improving and repairing billets etc for 15th Bde. Group proceeded with classes in connection with Education Scheme commenced as under.</p> <p>Arithmetic - Instructor Spr. SILVER, class commenced with 10 members. class to be held daily for 1 hour and instruction given in elementary arithmetic</p> <p>Bricklaying - Instructor Spr. COOKE, - instruction to be given daily and useful work to be carried out in process such as construction of fireplaces, repair work etc.</p> <p>Blacksmithing - Instructor Spr. BARRETT - commencement made getting tools and material together ready for starting instruction.</p> <p>CARPENTRY - Instructor Cpl. DOBB - Preparation of workshop and arrangements for material gone on with.</p> <p>Lt. W. K. MARNIE left for U.K. on special leave.</p> <p>Weather - Wet.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">15th Field Coy. A.E.</p>	
	17 th		<p>Training syllabus proceeded with and work on billets in 15th Bde. area continued.</p> <p>Education scheme continued and preparation of workshop for carpentry</p>		<p style="text-align: right;">S.H.B.</p>

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Place	Date 1918	Hour	Original Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	<u>Dec</u>			<u>15th Field Coy. A.E.</u>
DOURLERS	17 th	Contd.	<p>classes continued. Work on AVESNES water supply gone on with C.R.E. visited company H.Qrs. to confer with O.C. ref. promotions, detailing of personnel to attend Army Workshops, Armistice Honour List etc.</p> <p>LT C.K. OLIVER M.C. rejoined unit from Engr. Trng. Depot, Brightonsea.</p> <p>O.C. & LT OLIVER visited C.O. 59th Bn ref. work on billets etc.</p> <p>Weather - Showery.</p> <p>Timber Dump on road between SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU & HESTRUD taken over from 1st Aus. Div by No 3 Sec</p>	
Ref. Map.				
BELGIUM				
Valenciennes				
1/100,000				
	18 th		<p>Continuation of training and work for Bde Group.</p> <p>Education Scherrie classes proceeding satisfactorily</p> <p>Work continued by No 4 Section on AVESNES water supply.</p> <p>LT. HARDINGE making arrangements for obtaining Christmas fare for company</p> <p>Weather - Showery & cold with strong wind.</p>	
	19 th		<p>Further work on billets and continuation of training and repairs to AVESNES water supply.</p> <p>Education classes gone on with.</p>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918 <u>Dec</u>		original	
DOURLERS	19 th	contd.	2/Lt. E.G. LINDSAY reported back to Coy. from R.E. SCHOOL, ROUEN	15 th Field Coy. A.E.
Ref. Map.			Weather - Showery & cold.	
BELGIUM			Lt. E.V. CLARKE transf'd. to 5 th Div. Engrs. as Education Officer & struck off strength.	
Valenciennes	20 th		Timber Dump on road between SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU & NESTRUD handed over to 8 th F. Coy	
1/100,000.			Work continued on billets, AVESNES water supply, & training.	
			Education Scheme continued with	
			H.R.H. The Prince of Wales visited DOURLERS	
			Weather - fine but dull.	
	21 st		Lt SECOMBE and No 2 Section proceeded by motor lorry to SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU to erect hut for educational purposes. They will be billeted there & remain there until work is completed.	
			Work on billets &c in Bde area continued with. Training practically at a standstill owing to large amount of work on hand.	
			Further work carried out in connection with repairs to AVESNES water supply. Educational classes carried on as usual but some were	

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Place	Date 1918	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	<u>Dec</u>		Original	
DOURLERS	21 st	contd.	considerably disorganized by sudden detachment of No 2 Section.	
Ref. MAP.			O.C. visited C.R.E at SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU.	
BELGIUM			LT HARDINGE went with G.S. wagon to CHARLEROI to purchase poultry &c for company's Christmas dinner.	
Valenciennes			Commencement made in compilation of demobilization forms for personnel of company	
1/100,000			Weather fine but dull.	
	22 nd		Work in Bde area continued. Satisfactory progress being maintained on repairs to AVESNES water supply. Educational classes continued as usual.	
			LT. LINDSAY commenced reconnaissance of bridges in area, full particulars of condition, safe loads, dimensions &c being reported on.	APP. 7
			Present system of returning men to Australia without replacing them is causing considerable difficulty in carrying out normal routine.	
			This is particularly noticeable in mounted branch where the number of horses remains constant whilst the number of drivers is continually decreasing making it very hard to give the horses the minimum	

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Place	Date 1918	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	Decr.		ORIGINAL	
DOURLERS	22 nd	contd.	amount of attention that is essential.	
Ref. MAP.			Message No W 909 sent to C.P.E drawing attention to this also to fact that C.Q.M.S	APP 8
BELGIUM			Ferrier Sgt and Mounted Sgt. will be amongst the next to go and that these	
Valenciennes			men cannot be adequately replaced from amongst present personnel of	
1/100,000			the company.	
		10:00	O.C.'s inspection of company billets stables etc.	
			Weather - showery.	
	23 rd		Work on billets etc in Brigade area continued. Progress made on repairs	
			to AVESNES water supply. Reconnaissance of bridges in area continued	
			and progress report thereon forwarded to C.P.E.	APP. 9
			LT. HARDINGE returned from CHARLEROI with poultry etc for company's	
			Christmas dinner.	
			O.C. visited G.O.C. 15 th Aust. Inf. Bde to discuss arrangements for annual	
			reunion of all officers of the Bde and arranged details for the installation of	
			Electric Lighting plant for Bde H.Q.s.	

15th Field Coy. A.E.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918		ORIGINAL	
	Decr.			
DOURLERS	23 rd	contd.	Education Scheme proceeded with. 8 men from battalions of 15 th Inf. Bde now being given instruction in carpentry and blacksmithing.	
Ref. M&P.				
BELGIUM.			Weather - wet. 2 horses evacuated, 1 light draught & 1 ride.	
Valenciennes			First fall of snow for the winter at night.	
1/100,000	24 th		Further work on billets in brigade area. Repairs to AVESNES. water supply completed but further repairs were rendered necessary by main bursting elsewhere when pressure was turned on. Reconnaissance of bridges in area gone on with. H&S Educational classes proceeding satisfactorily. Efforts being made to commence classes in sheet metal working and bookkeeping. Recommendations for Armistice Honours List sent in. Weather - fine.	
	25 th		General Holiday. Officers had Christmas dinner at midday, each section and headquarters having independent dinners in the evening at which each officer was with his section. Poultry and beer were provided.	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918 Decr.		ORIGINAL	
DOURLERS	25 th	contd.	from company funds and Australian comforts fund provided a parcel for each man.	
Ref. Map.				
BELGIUM			No 2 progress report on bridge reconnaissance forwarded to C.R.E.	App 10
Valenciennes			O.C. + 2 nd in command visited G.O.C. 15 th Aust. Inf. Bde to wish him the compliments of the season.	
1/100,000.			R.M.O. dined with company a photographic record being obtained of the assembled group.	
			Weather - fine with bright sun during portion of the day.	
	26 th		General Holiday.	
			O.C. visited C.R.E. to discuss supply of material etc.	
			Lieut. T.B. MIDELTON M.C. proceeded on leave to PARIS.	
	27 th		Work on billets etc. in Brigade area resumed. Reconnaissance of bridges in area continued and 3 rd instalment of report on same forwarded to C.R.E.	App 11

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	1918			
	Decr			
DOURLERS	27 th (contd.)		Education classes continued a commencement being made with a new class in MECHANICAL DRAWING. Arrangements made to commence a class in *BOOKEEPING on Monday next. Repairs to AVESNES water supply continued	
Ref. Map.				
BELGIUM				
Valenciennes			Weather - wet, rain falling almost incessantly throughout the day	
1/100,000				
No 2 Section	28 th		Capt. J. P. CADDY proceeded on leave to U.K. - Lt C. K. OLIVER temporarily in charge	
st.				
SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU.	1145		H. R. H. THE PRINCE OF WALES visited DOURLERS to present decorations to N.C.O's and men of 15 th Bde. Presentation took place at 15 th Aus. Inf. Bde. H.Q., DOURLERS.	
			Cpl. J. HARPER D.C.M. & bar was the only recipient from 15 th Field Coy.	
			Lts. C. K. OLIVER & L. R. HARDINGE attended the presentation and were presented to the PRINCE. His Royal Highness was accompanied by CORPS and DIVISION commanders and members of their Staffs, the presentation taking place indoors on account of the wetness of the weather.	
			Work on billets etc in the area carried on as usual and repairing of damaged main in AVESNES water supply continued.	
			Educational classes proceeding satisfactorily	

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Place	Date 1918	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	<u>Decr</u>		ORIGINAL	
DOURLERS	28 th	(Contd.)	1 N.C.O. and 2 sprs running R.E. DUMP at AVESNES	
Ref. Map.			Weather - wet.	
BELGIUM.			transport employed carting timber from SOLRE-LE-CHATEAU to DOURLERS etc.	
Valenciennes				
1/100,000	29 th		Work continued in Bde area and on repairs to AVESNES water supply	
			1 N.C.O. and 2 sprs running R.E. DUMP at AVESNES.	
No 2. Section			Reconnaissance of bridges in area continued	
at SOLRE-			Educational classes not held it being decided that Sunday should be	
LE-CHATEAU			observed as a holiday except for urgent works so that men may	
			have the opportunity of attending church services.	
			Weather - showery.	
		10.00	Inspection of billets, stables, etc.	
	30 th		Lt BULLEN M.C. arrived back from leave.	
			C.R.E. visited by H.Q.s.	
			2 mile cross country run held by 15 th Bde Sports group the winning team	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
		1918	ORIGINAL	
	Decr 1			
DOURLERS	30 th	(Contd.)	being from "C" Coy 59 th Bn. owing to No 2 Section being detached 15 th F. Coy. was unable to compete in this event	
Ref. Map.				
BELGIUM			Work on billets &c in 15 th Bde area proceeded with and repairs to damaged main in AVESNES water supply continued. Further reconnaissance of bridges in area. I.N.C.O and 1 spr. running AVESNES R.E. DUMP. Wells stated to be damaged in STREMY and ST AUBIN inspected and reported on and arrangements made to commence repair work.	
Valenciennes				
1/100,000				
No 2 Section				
St SOLRE-			Classes under Educational Scheme proceeding satisfactorily.	
LE-CHATEAU			Weather - fine for greater portion of day becoming showery in evening	
	31 st		Work on billets & tables &c for Educational classes carried on as usual. Repairs to AVESNES water supply completed. Reconnaissance of bridges in area continued and 1 st instalment of report forwarded to C.R.E.	App 12
			Special inspection made of bridge at AVESNELLES and report rendered on the subject to C.R.E. It was found that one of the prestles had become undermined	

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Place	Date 1918	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	<u>Dec</u>		<u>ORIGINAL</u>	
DOURLERS	31 st	(contd)	causing a partial collapse of the superstructure.	
Ref. Map.			Court-of-Enquiry held to enquire into circumstances attending the loss of two bicycles from company's billets on night of 26 th /27 th Dec. The finding of the court was that the bicycles were removed by some unauthorised person or persons and that blame was not attachable to anyone.	
BELGIUM			Educational classes held as usual.	
Valenciennes			Inspection made of Electric lighting set at SAINS for C.R.A.	
1/100,000			Weather - showery.	
No 2 Section				
at SOLRE-				
LE-CHATEAU				

15th Field Coy. A.E.

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LIST OF APPENDICES

- No.1 Report on Move from BOUILLANCOURT to FAVRIL Area.
- " 2. 15th A.I. Brigade Order No 213.
- " 3. Memo reference N.C.Os
- " 4. Circular reference Promotions
- " 5. Message N 592 from C.R.E.
- " 6. Syllabus of training
- " 7. Reconnaissance of Bridges in Area
- " 8. Message W 909 sent to C.R.E.
- " 9. Progress Report sent to C.R.E. *re bridges*
- " 10 2nd Instalment of Bridges sent to C.R.E.
- " 11.3rd " " " " "
- " 12.4th " " " " "
- " 13. Transport Notes
- " 14. C.Q.M.S. Notes
- " 15. Education Report
- " 16. Summary of operations for December
- " 17. Graph shewing strength of Company

on 28th
about 1000 28th with wire
was received that trains
were delayed a further
7 hours
An officer was then sent
to HUPPY to arrange for
billets for the night.
Coy moved from BOUILLANCOURT
at 1430 arrived HUPPY ^(8 miles) at
1700 had a meal &
were fixed up in comfortable
billets.

An officer was then sent
to PONT REMY to try and
get definite information
as to time of departure
so that Coy could move
from HUPPY and entrain
without any further delay.
After several alterations
it was ascertained about
2400 that our train
would leave about 1500
on 29th

Rations for 29th were
then sent to HUPPY and
issued.
Coy had a good night's

REPORT ON MOVE ORIGINAL
BOUILLANCOURT to FAVRIL ²³

Orders were received on
24/11/18 to entrain at PONT
REMY on N°19 train leaving
at 1255 on 28/11/18. Staging
to VISMES on VAL on 27th
Rations for 29th + 30th
were drawn at PONT REMY
on 28th and left on the
station.

On 25/11/18 wire received
that trains were delayed
12 hours making over
time of departure 0055
on 29/11/18.

As staging to VISMES on VAL
meant a saving of less
than 4 miles with the
chance of uncomfortable
billets & irregular meals
it was decided to
march direct to PONT
REMY having a spell
& tea at HUPPY.

Arrangements were made
in company to leave
BOUILLANCOURT at 1430

Rations for 30th were issued on the train and tea was made several times during the day with hot water obtained from the engine. Accommodation on the train was ~~good~~ ample & the men had a fairly comfortable trip.

On arrival at BERTRY we were met by our billeting officers who informed us that on account of the disorganization of the ~~previous~~ ^{present} arrangements.

We were to march to billis near MASSINGHAM a distance of 11 miles.

Hot coffee was provided by the YMCA at the station & Sappers moved off at 2020 transport at 2100

Rations for 1st unit were drawn at BERTRY and brought along with the Company.

We arrived at our

rest & decent breakfast leaving HUPPY at 10.30. Transport arrived at PONT PEMY ^{8 miles} at 12.30 about 10 minutes before the train pulled in and dismounted personnel at 18.30.

Sea was ready on the station when they arrived the transport was loaded without any difficulty & train ready to start at 1500.

Train pulled out of siding at 1600 but did not leave PONT PEMY till

1930.

After many delays we finally arrived at BERTRY at 1930 on 30th.

The last delay was caused by the engine driver ~~to~~ taking the engine away at CAUDRY to get water for the return ~~to~~ trip.

This caused a wait of 2 hours when we were within 10 minutes run of the detraining station.

billet at ~~1330~~⁰⁴ 1st inst.
moved from here at
1300^{the} some day arriving
at PETIT BEART a distance
of 11 miles at 1530.
The cooks were sent ahead
& had a meal ready
soon after arrival.
Rations for 2nd were
drawn from FAURIL
on 1st inst. and
issued the same day.

2/12/18

Jpt Capt.
of 15th Regt.

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