

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

Artillery

Item number: 13/29/29

Title: Headquarters, 1st Australian Field
Artillery Brigade

April 1917



AWM4-13/29/29

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Behencourt	April 1-5		Training in Battery Drill &c was continued.	
	5th		Major G. J. Horgan D.S.O. went to hospital with measles, and Major G. M. Loughlin M.C. arrived from England and took over temporary command of 1st A & A Brigade.	
	6th	9.30 am	The Brigade marched from BEHENCOURT, via FRANKVILLERS and ALBERT to SPRING GARDENS camp (X.29 A and B) arriving there at 3.30 pm.	
	7th	10. am	The Brigade marched from SPRING GARDENS camp via POZIERES and BAPAUME to H.22, establishing wagon line about 1500 yards North East of BAPAUME. The Brigade came under the orders of 4th Aust. Div. Arty. and was placed in 'M' Group with 2nd Aust. F.A. Bde, Lieut. Col. G. J. Stephens Stevenson assuming command of the Group.	arriving 2. pm and
	8th	7 pm	Brigade moved up and batteries took up positions as follows:- 1st Bty. at C.22.B.5.2; 2nd at C.22.B.2.2, 3rd at C.22.8.2 (all near VAUX-LAGNICOURT Road) 101st Howitzer at C.16.A.1.9 (NOREUIL). A.H.Q. was established at C.22.D.3.7, on NOREUIL MORCHES Road. All wagons and gun limbers were brought up full, and dumped at guns. Also 1st and 2nd Sections D.H.C. supplied 12 vehicles per battery to dump ammunition at guns. Second trips were not made as ordered, as train did not arrive at Railhead in time. All positions were occupied & supplied with ammunition by midnight 8th.	Reference Map. 5. Army Area (B) 1/40000, dated publication 21/3/17
	9th		Zero lines established & registration series fired. By 5. pm. all batteries had been reported correctly registered. Our task was to thicken barrage allotted to 'M' Group - U.30 A.4.4 to C.6.B.6.4 (between QUEANT and BELLECOURT) from and including the night of 9/10th. 101st Battery to be prepared to concentrate on any	

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			concentrate many point in, or distribute fire over, the Brigade front. Left Section 1st Amzac Artillery Instructions No. 2 was received, also Addenda, and at the same time M. Group order No. 4, in connection with impending operation against Hindenburg Line between Queant and Buttecourt. Group order directed us to be prepared to put P.O.P from U. 30. D. 55.85 to U 24 C 50.30 in the event of Hindenburg Line being occupied by our troops. Further we were to be ready to put a barrage on right flank - East of Reincourt - this in the case of Tanks being successful in pushing beyond Hindenburg Line. In the event of final objective being gained we were to be ready to put an S.O.S barrage from U 24. D. 00 to 70 to U 18 D 70.70 (about 500 yards East of Reincourt). Further, in the event of the Hindenburg Line being holding up our troops and the Tanks having to force it we were to be prepared to put down a flank barrage from U 30. B. 20.80 to U 30 D 60.20 (across Hindenburg Line about 1000 yds North East of Queant). 10th The attack was timed for 4.30 am. At 4.30 am. a message was received advising that operation was to be was postponed 24 hours. Later Left Section 1st Amzac Art Order No. 4 was received together with Group Order No. 5, and in accordance with them Brigade Order No. 4 was issued to Batteries. 11th At 4.45 am. barrage commenced and was continued as laid down in orders. As soon as flank P.P. reported position of Infantry flank protective barrage previously laid on was put down, which Infantry Commander afterwards reported enabled his Brigade to return to their own lines without loss. At 1.10 pm. enemy counter-attacked and our infantry were forced back eventually	

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			to the positions they had left in the morning.	
		4:50pm	Message received giving S.O.S. lines for night '12 from C.B.B. 70.10 to U29 central, 101 st Battery to cover whole zone and thicker barrage. In addition Batteries were instructed to be ready to switch on to any portion of Div. Front. Lieut L.C. Dyke, 101 st Battery wounded by shellfire and evacuated.	
12 th		4:20pm	101 st Battery was ordered to put fire 200 rounds on enemy wire in front of Buttecourt, and to do same again between 8 am and 11 am on 13 th , also to fire 500 rds	
13 th			at deliberate rate on enemy wire from U30 A.5.3 to U30 B.05.25 (midway between Queort and Buttecourt) 18 par. Batteries were placed upon a roster to fire each night on enemy wire and trenches to prevent repairs being carried out - 50 rounds per hour in bursts of gunfire at irregular intervals.	
14 th	8 am to 11 am		101 st Battery ordered to fire 300 rounds on enemy wire fringing the East of Buttecourt. Carried out. Considerable movement of men noticed during day on roadways East and West of CHATEAU WOOD, and 101 st Bty fired several short series into these parties.	
15 th	4 am		Heavy bombardment by enemy near Hagricourt, gas shell being used as well.	
	4:30 am		Rifle shots heard through noise of bombardment - not able to obtain any information from Group as to any development.	
	4:35 am		Major Byrne, 1 st Battery reported by telephone that our infantry were falling back past his gun position, and had reported that Germans were close	

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	-----		----- behind them.	
	4.37a.m.		All Batteries ordered to stand to.	
	4.38a.m.		Advised Col Stevenson of this action , and received his instruction to be prepared to evacuate.	
	4.40a.m.		Ordered 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Batteries to set fuzes at short range and to swing guns round in direction enemy were coming from (right rear).	
	4.50a.m.		Brigade Commander personally saw Group Commander, Lt-Colonel Stevenson; whose Headquarters are close by and closer to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Batteries. The only information available as to what was happening and nothing could be ascertained by telephone as Infantry higher formations had no knowledge of anything unusual on the front, was that the enemy in strong force had driven in our outposts and were holding LAGNICOURT and had reached the 2nd Brigade Batteries on the left front of that village. Near the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Batteries infantry from the sunken road on the right front reported Germans were holding that road and had captured our machine gun. The front and right front of these Batteries is dead ground after about 200 yards. The position was already under rifle fire from the right rear (LAGNICOURT) and some of the 2nd Brigade personnel were still coming away from their camps near the gun positions there. There were no infantry supports known of nearer than VAULX nor escort near by and our positions open to direct rifle and machine gun fire from the rising ground in their rear. B.H.Q. Staff were all unarmed and the last man to leave was sniped at and shot in the leg. (Bdr Gerard)	
			Lt-Colonel Stevenson ordered the guns of 1st, 2nd and 3rd Batteries to be temporarily disabled and personnel to fall back to VAULX taking dial sights and breech blocks. Batteries were instructed accordingly.	
	7.30a.m.		20th Battalion (H.Q. at VAULX) pushed out two counter attacks one down LAGNICOURT VALLEY (Where they joined the 12th) and one down road VAULX-LAGNICOURT and forced the Germans to retire leaving dead wounded and prisoners. On instruction from Lt-Col. Stevenson all Brigade personnel were collected at Brigade Wagon Lines, and a muster roll call was taken, and the men directed to return to the guns, as the infantry had driven the Germans back to their original line.	
	9.10a.m.		Communication with Group Headquarters restored.	
			By 12.30 all Batteries were in action again. No damage was found to have been done by the enemy but 2nd Battery position had been shelled by 4.2 How. evidently with direct observation as two guns were hit and several lots of ammunition exploded. 101st How. Battery at NOREUIL had not been out of action throughout the morning, although the enemy had reached as near as 400 yards from its position. The Battery Commander, Major Selmes, applied and for and received, half a company of Infantry to guard his guns.	

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	15 th April	1.30pm	Information received that enemy was digging in in D2 Dand B and all Batteries engaged them at a steady rate of fire on Group order.	
		2.30pm	Further information received that large numbers of the enemy were in Queant. Ordered to fire on to and in rear of Queant - stopped firing 3.10pm.	
		10.30pm	Received 4 th Aust D.A. Secret Memorandum (C 3/12) detailing P.O.S. barrages, and tasks in defence and offence.	
	16 th		One gun of 101 st Hvy. Battery put out of action by 5.9 inch shell. Major W.F. Knigsmill D.S.O. reported for duty from hospital, and took over command of 3 rd Battery from Capt. A.J. Glendinning.	
		8.30pm	Group Order received for Brigade to expend 1200 rounds (80% 17 20 4x) between 9.30pm and 3.30am. in bursts of gunfire at irregular intervals on enemy trenches and wire running West and North West of Queant. Order carried out.	
	17 th		101 st Bty fired ¹⁰²³ 350 rounds on enemy wire in front of Hindenburg Line midway between Queant and Bellecourt, with good effect. Infantry Patrol Officer reported later several lanes cut in wire and wire hanging to stakes in clusters.	
	18 th		Owing to low visibility 101 st Bty expended 81 rounds only on wire cutting. During night 18/19 1 st 2 nd & 3 rd Btys. expended 350, 350, and 500 rounds respectively, between 10pm and midnight on enemy wire and trenches, and from midnight to 3.30am. in searching and sweeping country in rear.	

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	19th April.	11 am to 1.30 pm.	Wire cutting continued, with good effect.	
	20th		During night 19/20 100 rounds expended on hostile batteries about 1000 yards East of Reincourt. From midnight to 2 am (night of 19/20) enemy bombarded Horeuil-Morchies Road with gas shell of 77 mm and 10.5 cm calibre. At dusk 1st and 101st Btys. withdrew to wagon lines near Fremicourt. 2nd and 3rd Btys. fired 1200 rounds, according to usual night program, on wire & trenches and into town of Reincourt.	
	21st		From 12.25 am to 2 am. enemy again bombarded with gas shell. At noon command of Left Sector 1st Army Artillery was taken over by B.A.A. 2nd Aust. Div. Artillery. 2nd Battery fired 600 rounds between 10 pm and 3.30 pm am. (normal night task).	
	22nd	11 am to 10 pm to 3.30 am.	Enemy shelling increased considerably at 11 am., and at 1.5 pm. an intense barrage was put down by him immediately South of Avescourt. This was replied to with a barrage on Brigade S.O.S. line. No further developments occurred. 2nd and 3rd Batteries engaged in the usual night task, expending 800 rounds.	
	23rd		The night was very quiet until about 2 am. when a heavy bombardment commenced on the Division's left front (S. of Bullecourt). Enemy planes active, flying low. 3rd Bty fired 400 rounds on to enemy wire and trenches, and 200 on to Reincourt, ^{detaching} employing a section for the latter purpose. Fire was delivered in	

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		16.50	bursts of gunfire at irregular intervals. Enemy aeroplane flew over battery positions, and directed fire on to 3 rd Battery - at first slow ranging rounds, and then in salvos at a rapid rate. As the guns were not in action, at the time the position was temporarily evacuated. Approximately 100 rounds of 4.2 inch were fired, and 2 guns were damaged. One man was seriously wounded. Shelling ceased at 5.15 pm. One gun of 2 nd Battery was also slightly damaged.	
		6.45 pm	Two of the damaged guns (1 2 nd Bty and 1 3 rd Bty) again ready for action. Two 1 st Battery guns which had been brought up from wagon line to replace damaged ones were run into 1 st Bty's original pits, as teams were shelled off 3 rd Battery position, 20 rounds of 4.2 inch falling.	
	25 th		During night 24/25th. between 10 pm and 3.30 am. 2 nd Battery fired the nightly task of 600 rounds. On the night of 25/26th. 3 rd Battery with its ^{withdrew} guns to wagon line, taking also the two 1 st Bty guns brought up previous night. 2 nd 1 st Battery personnel relieved that of 2 nd Battery, taking over the latter's guns the latter handing over their guns and returning to wagon line - less personnel of 2 detachments who remained to man 2 guns for 1 st Bty. 101 st Battery move in from wagon line and relieved 102 nd Battery in the latter's position near crossroads about 1000 yards north of Maricourt Wood, and covering this Battery's zone.	

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	25/26 April	7 pm	During the night 1st Battery fired the nightly task of 600 rounds. Vicinity of 101st Battery, and of 3rd, shelled - 1 casualty in latter unit.	
	26th	10.40 am to 12.30 am	101st Battery position again shelled with 5.9 inch shells . Lieut J.A. Jacobs was wounded, also 1 other rank wounded, and 1 killed.	
		2 pm to 5.30 pm	Same locality shelled with 5.9 inch. at a steady rate of one round every 2 or 3 minutes. Enemy shelling in 6.22 D and C 79 A. (Norvil-Morchie Road) has considerably increased during last 5 or 6 days.	
	27th	4.30 pm	Regularly throughout the day enemy shelled NORVIL valley and Longotte. A dense column of smoke seen in direction of Longotte, which later reports showed to be from a S.A.A. Dump hit by a shell. During the afternoon 101st Battery fired 327 rounds into wire fronting Hindenburg line between Avesant and Bullecourt. From forward O.P. there were seen to burst well in the wire, but good observation could not be obtained owing to haze. 1st Battery carried out nightly task of 600 rounds.	
	28th	10.15 am	About 30 77 mm. rounds fell around 1st Battery position, more attention is being paid to crossroads and battery positions in this vicinity, fire coming in intermittent bursts of 2 or 3 salvos.	
		3 pm	101st Bty fired 370 rounds on same wire-cutting task as on previous. Mean Point of Impact was well in the wire, and 97% rounds gave excellent detonations.	
		5.30 pm	700. reported enemy working party of 30 or 40 men busy on wire about 1000 yards North East of Avesant. 1st Battery fired 44 rounds shrapnel in same direction	

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	29 th		and dispersed the party, with casualties. 1st Battery fired 600 rounds between 10pm and 3.30am (20/24th) as on previous nights. Until midday, I.O.O.s. reports showed Divisional front to be quiet. 3 Enemy planes crossed the line, flying very high, and were kept off by our P.A. gun fire. 10th 1st Battery fired 306 rounds to cut wire in same locality as on two previous days. From Forward and O.P. results were observed to be good. 4.10pm. A plane (presumably an enemy one) came down in flames about 1000 yards North East of Quenot. Party of about 50 Germans gathered round. As no Battery in this Brigade could engage them, information passed to Group. 10pm to 3.30am. 1st Battery expended 450 rounds shrapnel and 150 high explosive on wire to prevent repairs. 16 Reinforcement Gunners were sent to Brigade through ^{1st and} D.R.C.	

W. H. East Lieut
 of Lieutenant 1st F. A. Bgde. A. I. P.



Dalton House,
115 Pitt Street,
SYDNEY,

9th October, 1919.

Dear Sir,

I have had the opportunity of perusing the War Diary of the 1st F.A. Brigade of the A.I.F., with which Brigade I was associated from its inception in Sydney, practically until the Armistice was declared last year.

Well, I do not desire for one minute to call for invidious distinction between Brigades, but I think it is only my duty to point out that the entry on April 15th, 1917 is not strictly correct. The copy that I have, reads as follows :-

"Enemy advanced on Lagnicourt and guns temporarily abandoned after counter attack, enemy was repulsed and guns got into action again."

As a matter of fact, ^{the fact} in connection with the enemy attack on that morning was, that both the 1st and 2nd Brigades were compelled to abandon their guns, but the 101st How. Battery remained in action throughout the whole of the advance, causing considerable losses to the enemy, and when finally checked by the Infantry, the enemy was from 150 to 200 yards only from the gun position. Captain Bean knows of this incident and Major General Rosenthal also can vouch to the accuracy of the statement, as the 101st How. Battery was on the occasion referred to, commanded by myself. The opportunity was given to the 101st How. Battery to show their metal, and they did so, and I would ask, if the copy of the War Diary which I have quoted to you is an exact copy of the record filed, that the entry for April 15th be amended to show that the 101st How. Battery, which was part of the 1st Brigade, was in action throughout the whole of the advance.

Yours faithfully,

M. J. Dalrymple
Major
Lat. Co. 1st Dal.

The Officer-in-Charge,
War Records,
MELBOURNE, VIC.

OCT 17 1919

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