

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

Artillery

Item number: 13/72/4 Part 1

Title: 26th Battery, Australian Field Artillery

October 1917



AWM4-13/72/4PART1

Original

October 1917

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

494

PLACE

TIME

SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION

30. 9. 17

Immediately the horse lines were arranged, the men set to work digging in. By dark the camp was fairly settled. All night enemy planes were over dropping bombs, and anti-aircraft and machine guns were very busy. Some bombs fell very close to the lines but no casualties resulted.

The Battery position which was on the side of a road in line with six other Batteries, the whole 36 guns being at an average interval of 15 yards, was rather heavily shelled in the evening, and during the night. The communications were cut, but were restored again after good work by Corporal A. J. Shields and telephonists No. 18634 Begg A., 18711 Noakes P. E., and 18739 Shand C. under trying conditions. Gunners Begg and Shand were wounded, the former being removed to hospital and the latter remaining on duty. No. Bombardier Goswell also was wounded but remained on duty.

The gun-pits were built up with sandbags forming a dwarf wall, and these were camouflaged when the guns were not firing. The gunners slept in "very" light proof shelters about 5 yards in rear of the guns. The Officer's mess was in a "Pill-box" which had originally been inside a ruined farmhouse, the telephonists and cookhouse being inside a "Pill-box" and a few men having cover inside a derelict tank.

I. 10. 17

S.O.S. Signals were answered at 5am.

The position was ideal as far as the guns were concerned, they being at 15 yard intervals and in correct alignment. On our right were the 27th. Battery and the 25th. were in position on our left. Running immediately in rear of our guns was a good road, and in front a gentle slope for about 800 yards to the top of the ridge.

Practice Barrages were carried out at 9.30 am and 8.15 pm. This day was known as "P" day.

The O.P. was in an old German trench very much battered by shell-fire on the top of the ridge (D25c.40) Immediately in front of the Battery, the Zero Point being a house on the railway cutting YPRES-ROULERS Railway, just below the Cemetery with PASSCHENDAELE further up on the ridge.

2. 10. 17

Practice Barrages were carried out at 6.15 am. and 5 pm.

Conditions at the Waggon Lines are anything but comfortable, the area allotted to the Brigade being very insufficient. Enemy balloons were up all day, and anxious eyes were cast on our long lines of grey horses, which looked very conspicuous in the sunlight. In the afternoon it was decided that some of the Batteries would move to other Waggon Lines.

D.V.S.E.40

1

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	2. 10. 17	<p>The 26th. made all preparations for the march, but orders came through postponing the movement till the following morning. At night hostile bombing raids were very frequent. One 'plane dropped its entire load within a few hundred yards of the lines. One 25th. man was wounded and two of the bombs fell in the horse lines adjacent to the 26th., killing two horses.</p> <p>The following men have been gassed and evacuated to hospital--</p> <p style="padding-left: 40px;">No. 18739 Gunner Shand C. No. 18711 " Faddy T. No. 18677 " Hills E.B. No. 19277 " Noakes P.E.</p> <p>These men were cleaning out a German dugout which had been previously struck by a mustard gas shell. They were in a bad condition, and when leaving for hospital were quite blind</p>
	3. 10. 17	<p>Practice Barrages were carried out at 7.15 am and 1.30 pm. During the night the usual programme of harrassing fire was carried out.</p> <p>An early start was made to shift the Waggon Lines. A heavy mist hung about till 9am., then the air cleared and the day became fine.</p> <p>Just as the Batteries were hooking up, the enemy began to shell with one of his high velocity guns. The first few fell considerably short, and gave the men time to get some of the teams away. Then the shells crept nearer, until one burst a few yards away. By this time the ground was clear, but not a moment too soon. A few minutes after we had gone, a shell fell in the lines. Many casualties would have resulted if the moving out had not been done expeditiously. This shelling brought to mind the sad happening a few days before when we were at DICKEBUSCH.</p> <p>The 26th. passed thro' the village of VLAERTINGHE and settled again in an open paddock bounded by the railway line and the main road to POPERINGHE. This place had not a vestige of cover, and it meant a hard day's work before we were under shelter. The ground was very muddy, and in a few hours the horse lines were in a bad state. Again the digging in had to be done, and this time in mud and clay. Canvas covers and tents were erected over the excavated ground, and sandbag walls built. These places soon proved very unhealthy owing to the dampness.</p> <p>Whilst the barrage was in progress this morning No 18745 Sergeant Shiels J.S.</p>

PLACE

TIME

SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION

continued 3. 10. 17

received a shrapnel wound in the hand and evacuated to hospital.

4. 10. 17

"S" Day for the attack. At 6am. the attack for portion of PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE commenced, and proved one of the most successful yet attempted. All objectives gained by the 3rd. Australian Division, whilst more than 3000 prisoners passed thro' the cages up to 6pm. quite apart from the very great success obtained in the battle, it was of great importance, and a reason of pride to we Australians, because the whole centre of the attack was made by Australians, three Divisions taking part, 1st. 2nd. and 3rd. in that order from right to left, with that fine Division on our left, the New Zealand Division. Each objective was taken by the Infantry in their stride, including BROODSEINDE, with just that same dash which is generally exhibited by our Infantry in attack, ~~which makes one additionally proud of being an Australian.~~ A great number of the enemy were slaughtered. As he had massed to attack near ZONNEBEKE and our zero hour being earlier than his, the barrage caught him splendidly, and our Infantry did the rest. Concentrations had been prepared before hand, on to areas likely to be selected by the enemy to mass for counter-attack, and proved most effective.

During the previous night a programme of harrassing fire was carried out as usual. The Artillery Barrage covering the Infantry attack was reported as being excellent. After the attack the guns were kept very busy, firing in response to S.O.S. calls which were sent up at noon, 3.10 and 3.20 pm. No counter attacks succeeded however.

On several occasions the enemy were observed massing at various points, but these formations were quickly broken up by concentrated fire from our guns.

During the afternoon harrassing fire was kept up on the Enemy's roads, chiefly, PASSCHENDAELE-BROODSEINDE RD. AND ALSO on the YPRES-ROUlers Railway, and Billets and hutments. Our aeroplanes did most effective work, flying low, and keeping back hostile 'planes.

The enemy opened a heavy barrage on our front line system with guns of all calibres, HILL40 being particularly heavily shelled.

During the day the whole of the newly captured ground was intermittenly shelled, High Velocity guns paying attention to the MENIN and POTIJZE ROADS. Our Batteries were shelled with 15cm and 10cm, and at 5.20 a heavy barrage was put down on ZONNEBEKE.

At 7pm. S.O.S. Signals went up all along the line and a heavy counter attack attempted. This was completely broken up by Artillery and Machine gun fire. For about 15 minutes prior to this counter movement, the enemy opened a barrage on our front line and forward areas to cover the attack he proposed delivering. Our heavy and sudden barrage forestalled his intentions, throwing his troops into utter confusion, and inflicting exceedingly heavy casualties.

See Army
Barrage Map
marked
1st. & 2nd.
ANZAC
4/10/17

164

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	4.10.17	<p>During the morning of the PASSCHENDAELE attack word came through that the F.O.O. had been wounded, so Lieut Frazerr accompanied by Corporal Sanders and Telephonist Sparks went out to take his place. They proceeded to HILL 40, but failing to obtain satisfactory information, moved forward again. The party were caught in the heavy barrage and Lieut Frazer was wounded in the leg. In spite of this he and Corporal Sanders proceeded to the front line hoping to obtain some information as to how the attack was progressing. Here was found a wounded Hun Officer, and on searching him 2 British maps of latest edition were found, in addition to letters etc. giving information about the intended attack. Lieut. Frazer and Corporal Sanders carried this Hun to a First Aid Post, and then proceeded on their way. On entering a German "Pill-Box" they found nearly thirty dead and dying Germans lying inside. Owing to his wound becoming worse, Lieut Frazer was assisted back to the Battery by Corporal Sanders. Here he was dressed and sent through to hospital.</p> <p>Whilst the attack was in progress, the Battery Commander accompanied by Corporal A. J. Shiels went forward to make a reconnaissance. A new position for the Battery to advance to was selected. The country was low-lying and had been repeatedly churned up by shell-fire during the bombardment. Eventually a position was selected and the gunpits marked immediately in front of BORRY FARM (which by the way had been converted into a German concrete "Pill-Box". About 500 yards to the left ran the YPRES-ZONNEBEKE ROAD.</p> <p>Capt. Moriarty with a working party set out to dig the pits in readiness for the guns which were to be moved in early the following morning. Drivers were also hard at work bringing up ammunition to the new position on packhorses. All the time the enemy was shelling but the men carried out their difficult tasks admirably. The gunners were badly in need of a spell, the past 24 hours had indeed been strenuous for all.</p>
	5.10.17	<p>At 5.15 am. the Left Section pulled out and went into action in the new position at BORRY FARM (D.25.b.75.80), followed by the Centre Section at 9am, and the Right Section at 10am.</p>
		<p><u>BATTLE OF YPRES 4th. STAGE</u></p>
		<p>The guns were situated in rear of the German old support lines, the gun-pits being sandbagged to a height of 3 feet and camouflaged. No. 6 gun had to be sent to Ordnance, being worn out.</p>
		<p>As soon as the guns were in position, heavy firing commenced. Two practice barrages were fired each day, and it must be said that everybody worked admirably under most trying conditions.</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Splendidly</i></p>

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	5. 10. 12	<p>The O.P. was a "Pill-box" built inside a farmhouse which long ago had ceased to exist, on HILL 40 (D.2I a.73) and yesterday in the hands of the enemy. From here could be obtained a splendid uninterrupted view of the enemy country as far North as PASSCHENDAELE, and South to POLYGONNE WOOD. PASSCHENDAELE from the O.P. looked quite a pretty town, the buildings appearing very intact, considering its proximity to the firing line. South of the town lay the Cemetery at the extreme summit of the ridge which ran in a Southerly direction, and at this time appeared well grassed and green. To the right was the ZONNEBEKE RIDGE, with the little village of ZONNEBEKE a mere heap of ruins, the only building standing being the church. The Zero Point was PASSCHENDAELE CHURCH (D6D 38 42) which could be seen from the Battery and was laid upon by Dial Sight direct. For the first time the layers were able to use direct laying and see the effect of their shoot. It had been raining during two days, and great difficulty was experienced in shooting in, as the guns sunk lower into the mud with each shot. But planks of wood, timber and sandbags were secured from all round the district, and eventually fairly good platforms were obtained. We were under direct observation from PASSCHENDAELE as will be seen, but as the attack would take place within the next few days, the most urgent requirement was speed and further forward down hill about 150 yards our other 4 Batteries had to get in. In front of them the country was an absolute quagmire and impossible to occupy. The 25th. were on our immediate left, The 31st. on immediate right, and the 27th. on their right just across the road, the whole 8 Batteries as close to ZONNEBEKE ROAD as possible in the hope of getting ammunition up, for it was possible to travel horses along the road when it was not being barraged by the Bosche, but quite impossible to move across country at any time. As it was many horses on the short stretch from the road to the Battery, 80 yards of ground, sank down out of sight, the driver just keeping the head up until assistance arrived. One horse bogged so badly had to be shot.</p> <p>The Officers quarters were in BORRY FARM "Pill-box", the gunners in a line of concrete gun-pits, once occupied by a Bosch Battery, and on our arrival found to be filled with dead Bosch gunners. In one pit 12 bodies had to be removed by our gunners and a Trench Mortar working party assisting us with the help of a drag rope and gas masks. All were pulled out into a large shell hole and buried, the pit then being swept out and disinfected. The side that was to be our front, and was once the Bosch rear as in the case of all captured "Pill-boxes", was absolutely exposed having a large opening. This had to be sandbagged up, and it was with a very mixed feeling indeed that the gunners obeyed orders and occupied it. One detachment requested and received permission to sleep out in a trench prepared by themselves, but only for a short time as was fully expected we were in for an unenviable time, and that night a shell smashed their trench in, fortunately not injuring any of them. Then all were in the concrete pit, the rocket guard being put outside. The telephonists occupied portion of BORRY FARM. The guns could</p>

1497

5

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

1917

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	5. 10. 17	<p>be reached in a matter of seconds. Subsequently from intelligence obtained from prisoners it was learned that BORRY FARM was marked on the Bosch Intelligence Gunnery Map as a Brigade Headquarters, which explains somewhat the strafing we came in for, which was above normal, even during the quietest days.</p> <p>O.P. & The surrounding shell-holes were filled with German dead from yesterday's attack and wounded Germans were still being brought in, they having been found to-day down in water in shell-holes.</p> <p>It may be worthy of note, that since coming into action in France and Belgium the 26th. Battery had only twice occupied concrete gun-pits, these being at Armentieres and Plug Street (Ploegsteert) and in many cases were not fortunate enough to have sand bagged cupolas, which would keep out the weather if nothing else. A camouflaged shell-hole or similar excavation, with a dwarf wall of sandbags was the usual "gun-pit".</p> <p>During the preparation for this coming attack, the weather had been passably fine, and the visibility good.</p> <p>In spite of an abundance of hostile observation balloons looking down on us, our side of the ridge was a scene of the greatest activity. All day ammunition waggons, pack horses, rations carts etc., were moving along the roads and corduroy tracks, and the main YPRES-ZONNEBEKE ROAD was a queue of vehicles day and night, and which would be blocked for hours when the enemy commenced shelling the road, but the shelling would stop and immediately the Pioneers would arrive and repairs would be effected in record time. This one single Road was going to seriously worry us in the next attack, and cause no end of casualties during the preliminary stages.</p> <p>Now the weather began to get worse, becoming colder and dull and with a continuous drizzle.</p> <p>Hostile bombers were not quite so frequent at night, the moon being obscured by cloud-banks.</p>
	6. 10. 17	<p>The 66th. Divisional Infantry relieved the 3rd. Divisional Infantry in the line on the night of 5th/6th.</p> <p>The weather was now becoming worse and conditions at the Battery were anything but pleasant. The weather was now too bad to allow any elaborate work to be carried out on the position so we had to make the best of things.</p>

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

1917

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	6. IO. I7	<p>The Officer's dugout and Control Station, and in fact all dug-outs and gun platforms were soon flooded, and constant pumping and bailing was necessary.</p> <p>At the Waggon Lines the conditions were also very trying. The horses were standing knee deep in mud, with no overhead shelter. The camp was a morass, the canvas-covered dugouts flooded every night and for many nights the men slept in wet blankets on the mud floor, or at the best on sodden straw.</p> <p>This existence soon had its effect. Influenza and Dysentery cases were numerous, and daily the sick reports grew. Owing to many evacuating to hospital, the battery had to work very short-handed, and this did not make life any the easier, for up to now we had endeavoured, by keeping a minimum of N.C.Os and gunners up at the Battery to work reliefs as often as possible; but it became impossible to work complete reliefs at any rate.</p> <p>The Telephonists who had suffered severely were now reduced to 4 only-Sergeant shields A. J., Gunners Neal J., Pearce A.C. and Anderson B.H., and two men had to be borrowed from Brigade Headquarters. These 6 men could not be relieved.</p> <p>Whilst packing ammunition to the guns to-day, 18628 Driver Andrew was injured by his horse. A shell burst in close proximity, causing the horse to rear and fall on the driver. Sergeant Fountain, Bombardiers Goswell and Silverton and Gunner Luck started out to carry Andrew to the dressing station. En route the three latter were wounded by a shell bursting near them, and it is believed that Driver Andrew also received wounds. Driver Andrew and Gunner Luck subsequently died of wounds.</p>
	7. IO. I7	<p>Weather conditions were now extremely bad, the shell-holed country was a sea of mud feet deep in places, and the roads were little better.</p> <p>The continual traffic on the YPRES-ZONNEBEKE ROAD, which runs past our right flank, and the large working parties which were in full view of the enemy balloons soon told a tale.</p> <p>Hostile shelling increased, and the work of bringing ammunition and rations was most tedious and dangerous.</p> <p>In some cases it took 17 hours to make the journey from Waggon Lines to Battery position. The only road fit to carry much heavy traffic was the YPRES-ZONNEBEKE ROAD, and in consequence the congestion was very great. In normal times this trip could have been done comfortably in an hour. It became a common sight to see horses and men hopelessly bogged in the quagmire of mud. Very often the men were dragged out minus their boots and breeches.</p> <p>Two barrages were carried out one at 6. IOam and the other at 4pm.</p>

7

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

1627
1917

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	8. 10. 17	<p>Harrassing fire and practice barrages were still going on, and the date for the next attempt to drive the Huns off the high ground, was not far distant. Barrages were carried out at 6.15 am and 11.30 am.</p> <p>A large amount of ammunition had been conveyed per pack-horse from the dumps to the Battery daily.</p> <p>26472 Gunner Croft received wounds to-day and was evacuated to Hospital.</p>
	9. 10. 17	<p>Battle of Ypres 4th. Stage attack day, "X" Day. Zero hour 5.30 am. The 66th. English Division were on our front, on our right the 3rd. Australian Division, and on our left the 49th. English Division (the 197th. Brigade, 66th. Division, being the actual Brigade attacking on our Group front).</p> <p>Conditions were of the worst. Rain had fallen, the ground was wet and boggy, and this naturally would have its effect on the barrage, for the detonation of shells was not so good as on hard ground, and this effect of their burst was more local and less effective, and in addition no dust would be caused to increase the screening effect generally expected in dry ground by the dust and smoke, so that altogether the job was not a nice one.</p> <p>The barrage opened at Zero hour and went on to the end of the protective barrage for the last objective.</p> <p>At the Battery all seemed O.K. and it came as a bit of a surprise, when later we heard the reports sent back by our Group F.O.O., Lieut C. King, now a subaltern in the 8th. Brigade, but formerly a Gunner and later a Bombardier in this Battery until he received his commission.</p> <p>It would be advisable here to explain the normal procedure during the night preceding the zero hour of the attack. The line is generally held by troops not participating in the attack, until a short time before zero hour, when the attacking unit is marched up under cover of darkness to the jumping off line. Directly these troops are in place on the jumping off line, ready to follow the creeping barrage at zero hour, the holding troops are withdrawn, their work being finished for the time being. The F.O.O. detailed from the covering Artillery, generally accompanys the attacking Infantry at a distance decided upon by himself, from which he can gather all available information and forward it back to Group Headquarters, he having the required number of Battery Telephonists and Signallers to either signal or act as runners in the transmission of</p>

See
Army
barrage
map
marked
66th Div.
attack
9/10/17

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	9. 10. 17	<p>these messages, apart from the few pigeons which he carries with him. In addition to our F.O.O., the Artillery also provides a Senior Liason Officer, generally a Lieut. Colonel or Major to accompany the Infantry Brigade Commander, and a Captain or Subaltern to accompany the Battalion Commander. In this case Lieut. Rutledge H.F. from our 107th. Battery, acted as Liason Officer with Battalion Commander. Lieut King and Lieut Rutledge were actually on the jumping off line, previous to Zero hour, remembering that zero hour was 5.30 am. and the creeping barrage commenced at that moment.</p> <p>Now a few extracts from the reports of the Group F.O.O. will explain our surprise.</p> <p>7.30 am, F.O.O. reported--</p> <p>"197 Brigade never came to relieve MANCHESTER Regiment here. M----- left without being relieved and our front was deserted. Flank Brigades have now closed in and thinly cover front. 197 Brigade is coming up now. Will report when position is normal".</p> <p>Another message received at this time read--</p> <p>"Now at DI6b 9.6, No Infantry have as yet gone over the top, on this Brigade front".</p> <p>Both these messages were timed 6.10am.</p> <p>8.18am. F.O.O reported--</p> <p>"Lieut. Rutledge killed. Send relief"</p> <p>Timed 6.30 am.</p> <p>Another message timed 6.30 am. read--</p> <p>"Infantry for this Brigade Sector arrived at 6.23am. We will follow when they advance".</p> <p>Another message--</p> <p>"On right and left of our zone everything going O.K. No Infantry on our Zone yet at 6.40 am".</p> <p>Another message--</p> <p>"7.29am. Flank Brigades closed in, position good all round".</p> <p>9.25am. F.O.O. reported--</p> <p>"8.23am. Not quite to Blue Line. Thicken Barrage. 197 Brigade still coming up".</p> <p>9.45am. F.O.O. reported--</p> <p>"9.35am. Infantry reinforcements are all up now. As far as I can tell from observation all objectives gained".</p>

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	9. 10. 17	<p>9.47am.F.O.O.reported-. "Our front very quiet.Infantry undisturbed in their work.Cannot observe reason for trouble further North." IO.15am.F.O.O. reported-. "Enemy 200 to 300 strong massing along line,D6c 50.00 and DI2a 50.60." On receipt of the last message from the F.O.O.,Group ordered Batteries to fire 20 rounds per gun on this line. We replied to another S.O.S at 2.45pm.,the enemy having been reported to be advancing in skirmishing order. At 5.15 pm.S.O.S. was again answered. At 6.20 pm.S.O.S. was again answered,our Infantry reported to be falling back.But this was apparently not verified,as our barrage was not ordered to come back,but from conversations with wounded Infantry men coming back,it seemed highly probable that they were not out in the final objective. The ZONNEBEKE ROAD was intermittently shelled with 5.9 and 4.2 shells,during the day and night,and a fair number were thrown in the vicinity of the Battery. The gunners carried out a most heavy and trying day's work under the worst conditions with determination and cheerfulness which has characterised them throughout and our numbers are dwindling down fast,the few remaining old hands have to bear the whole brunt of the tremendous work of serving and firing the guns,on mud platforms, keeping ammunition clean and keeping guns in action.In quite a few cases gunners a few days ago are now Corporals and even Sergeants. The drivers did excellent work in their heavy task of bringing up the ammunition and supplies.To have to control a pair of horses laden with ammunition,on a road under constant shell-fire,and pitted with huge shell-holes which could not be discerned owing to the depth of mud on the road was a formidable task.Exploding dumps added to the dangers which all had to face. Among the batches of prisoners which marched in,were some very big men,well over 6feet in height,but there was a fair sprinkling of youths in their ranks.All were smeared in mud,and looked very dejected.A constant stream of motor lorries took the Hun wounded who had been captured,and our Red Cross cars were laden with our own wounded.The stretcher-bearers did wonderfully well in rescuing the wounded,and the captured Germans were set to this work as well</p>

WAR DIARY

797

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	IO.IO.I7	<p>The waether still continues very wet and cold. Hostile air-raids at night are less ferquent owing to unfavourable weather conditions.</p> <p>At 4.20am an S.O.S. was reported whilst we were firing a destructive barrage. We answered the S.O.S. for 15 minutes, and then were ordered to go on with the Barrage.</p> <p>It is pretty certain that the 197th. Brigade have fallen back.</p> <p>At 11.18am. we received orders to bring S.O.S. barrage line back to Red protective barrage line a distance of 800 yards approximately.</p> <p>At 7.10pm S.O.S. was answered.</p> <p>This apparently has been a failure, and one would imagine that with the staff work of the Infantry, it should not be possible for the attacking troops to arrive late to the jumping off line. Undoubtedly the weather and general conditions were of the worst, but an early and lengthy reconnaissance would have learned the cure for that.</p> <p>We were getting up as much ammunition as possible immediately, as it was hoped to get it up so that the horses would not have to come up for a while, as the few days we expected to remain under direct observation, were now going to grow to many more, and things had already commenced to fly about slightly.</p> <p>The 11th. Australian Infantry Brigade occupied the line during the night.</p>
	II.IO.I7	<p>The usual harrassing fire on all enemy roads was still carried out, and 2 barrages were fired to-day, creeping back from his supposed front line to his further back country.</p> <p>Hostile shelling in the vicinity of the Battery has been fairly active all day.</p> <p>Owing to the large number of casualties, we were having greater difficulty every day to have a sufficient number of trained men on each gun. the work fell very heavily on the remaining older men of the Battery. 17 Trench Mortar men were lent to us as reinforcements. These men were workers and keen to do their best, but naturally knew little or nothing about laying, and had to be divided up amongst the guns, to assist in handling the ammunition, and they proved of great assistance indeed, as owing to the muddy and wet condition of the pits, every round had to be carried a little way and cleaned before loading. Guns were even then constantly going out of action, owing to grit and dirt. Fitter sergeant Brindley, Fitter Bombardier Durning and Bombardier Cullen were kept hard at it these days to keep the guns in action.</p>

See map
marked
S.O.S.
lines
II/IO/I7

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	11.10.17	<p>Our aircraft were more active even than usual, but in spite of this the enemy kept a fairly heavy harrassing fire going along the ZONNEBEKE ROAD, and in the vicinity of the Battery.</p>
		<p>BATTLE OF YPRES 5th. STAGE</p>
	12.10.17	<p>"A" Day. Zero hour 5.25am. The 3rd. Australian Division attacked on our front, with a very formidable task to conquer, their objectives being laid down, the final one including the Village of PASSCHENDAELE, a distance of nearly 3000 yards up hill all the way, over ground pitted with shell-holes full of water, the whole place being a sea of mud, when one false step meant bogging to the waist, and then assistance would be necessary, for once down it was impossible to extricate one's self.</p> <p>On our left the New Zealand Division were in, and on our right the 4th. Australian Division.</p> <p>During the whole night the enemy kept up a harrassing fire of Gas and H.E. shells on approaches, but in spite of all this, the Infantry carried out the approach march and arrived at the jumping off line with time to spare.</p> <p>Lieut. Klug of the 8th. Brigade, and Lieut. Hamilton A.E. of this Battery acted as F.O.O.s with Gunner Pearce A.C. as Telephonist. The barrage opened at Zero hour and the advance commenced, but the Division on our left struck trouble immediately in the shape of "pill-boxes" strongly fortified with Machine guns, and surrounded with barbed wire, enfilading them so badly they were able to make no progress. Our Division made progress, the F.O.O. Lieut. Klug reporting at 7.0am. that Red Line (1st. Objective) had been reached, and at 11.35am. he reported by pigeon service a "Enemy still in possession of several Machine Gun Strong Points on Ridge and through D4b and D5c, SNIPE HALL and BELLEVUE enfilading our Infantry badly in falling through D10 and D11. From our own Infantry observation, second objective Blue Line taken SNIPE HALL and BELLEVUE being two of the strong points on the New Zealand front which apparently having effectually stopped the New Zealanders, were now turning their attention on to our flank now badly exposed.</p> <p>At 11.55am. Liason Officer reported "New Zealanders held up by heavy fire on our left flank, therefore unable to advance at present. Map location not known".</p> <p>At 2.0 pm. orders are received to place barrage on Blue 2nd. objective Protective Barrage Line.</p>

see
Army
Barrage
Map
marked
3rd. Div
attack
12/10/17

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

797

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	12.10.17	<p>At 3.40 pm. Group received the following order from Divisional Artillery Headquarters and ordered the S.O.S. Barrage accordingly--.</p> <p>"Final decision re S.O.S. Line. Left Infantry Brigade 200 yards beyond Red Protective barrage line, but not coming closer than 200 yards to the inter-Brigade Boundary, that is, to a point about DI2a IO.60, thence running in a direct line towards PASSCHENDAELE CHURCH, keeping 200 yards from inter-Brigade Boundary, until it meets Blue Protective Barrage Line."</p> <p>This Battery was then ordered "S.O.S. lines on Blue Protective Barrage Line". Evidently our left Infantry ^{Brigade} had to more or less conform to the New Zealand Division on our left, who had been unable to press further forward. The 4th Australian Division on our right it is believed were further forward still.</p> <p>At 5.10pm. S.O.S. signals were answered. At 6.5pm. S.O.S. signals were again answered and stop was given at 6.20pm. ("A" Day)</p> <p>At 8pm. S.O.S. line was ordered back to I2-I6 line, on Army Barrage Map A.D.A.V., this only being about 150 yards in advance of the first barrage line for the attack.</p> <p>Thus it will be seen that our Divisional Infantry had met their first defeat, and had had to fall back, owing to the failure of that gallant little Division the New Zealand Division who had got it hot and strong and who were badly cut up, our left Brigade the 11th. Infantry getting the effects, that they too, were badly smashed. There is no doubt that one of the causes was that BELLEVUE and SNIPE HALL had not received sufficient preliminary bombardment, this being largely due to the fact, that after the last attack it was so doubtful just where our Infantry front line actually was, that the heavy Artillery must have been somewhat chary about firing round about there, for it was quite probable that the detached parties of the attacking Infantry were still out in front. The ground was bad undoubtedly and the Infantry reported that the Barrage was too fast for them notwithstanding the pace was 100 yards per 4 minutes.</p> <p>Wounded were being carried back through the Battery all day, the stretcher bearers having a most terrible time, 4 men carrying each stretcher at a small pace, with spare men to assist the bearers out of the mud when bogged. Casualties were very numerous.</p> <p>The O.P. was surrounded by wounded men being cleared as quickly as possible. All were terribly disappointed and as one New Zealand wounded private said "It is bad enough for ourselves, but the blanking" Aussies will think we let 'em down," but one of the "Blankey Aussies" standing by and also wounded joined in with "No chance digger if the "Blankey N.Z.s" could'nt do it well no other "Blanky Blanks" could "Blank" 'em"</p>

13

WAR DIARY

26th Battery 7th Field Artillery Brigade

SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION

497

PLACE
continued

TIME
12. 10. 17

During these days we were having a great deal of trouble with our ammunition supply the drivers were putting up a great battle to get it up to us, and the gunners were putting up a bigger fight to keep it in an effective condition when they got it. No. 18646 Gunner Corbett T. was sent to hospital suffering from gas poisoning.

13. 10. 17

"B" Day. A Practice Barrage was fired at 5.15 am.

Notes in general

The main YPRES-ZONNEBEKE ROAD, the sole route by which ammunition and supplies were conveyed to the Artillery Groups, and the Infantry in the Trenches, passed through the City of YPRES, or rather, what remained of it.

YPRES was now nothing but a scattered heap of bricks and timber. Most of the houses had long ago been razed to the ground by the guns of the enemy.

The Town Square, was torn up by shell-holes, the roads leading in and out were covered with broken tiles and debris, and the whole scene was one of great destruction and desolation.

The famous Cathedral and Cloth Hall were practically unrecognisable. Portion of the Eastern Facade and Tower with a few splintered columns were all that remained to show that Belgium's finest piece of Architecture had been erected here.

In some of the better preserved cellars, were dressing stations, equipment stores and Divisional Canteens.

Hostile High Velocity guns were constantly firing into the ruins, and on the traffic-laden roads. The main road was under observation from enemy balloons, and consequently received much attention from the German Batteries.

The congestion on this road was abnormal, and it was necessary to close it daily for several hours for the passage of ration and water-carts. The Infantry were taken up towards the line in motor lorries along this road also.

It was a common sight to see a queue of vehicles extending from FRIEZENBERG RIDGE through YPRES as far back as POPERINGHE, a distance of several miles.

The Artillery activity was less to-day as far as the Infantry were concerned, the enemy confining his efforts to our Batteries, we doing the same to his Batteries, as it is understood that both sides were endeavouring to move their wounded back, an almost

14

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

797

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	13.10.17	impossible task even without being fired at whilst doing it, but nevertheless a great number of men have been brought in.
	14.10.17	<p>"C" Day. Enemy artillery activity increased. What were probably destructive shoots were carried out on the Battery position, 26th, getting their full share of missiles.</p> <p>As the whole enclosed Group were enclosed in a small area, a fine target was presented to the enemy. There had not been much opportunity to conceal the guns, and rarely were all six guns in action at the one time.</p> <p>The weather still continued wet and cold and the mud became deeper.</p> <p>At 10am. the enemy's barrage fell, and all that day and throughout the night the shelling continued.</p> <p>8inch and 5.9 Batteries kept up a rapid fire from 12.30pm to 4.40pm. Almost every yard of ground was torn up by shells, and many times the dugouts sheltering the Officers and guncrews had narrow escapes. When a shoot had to be carried out, the guns were manned and the necessary number of rounds fired, then under cover again.</p> <p>The whole area front was subjected to rapid rate fire from 8inch and 5.9s, mingled with 77mm and gas shells, in the evening and till 9pm.</p> <p>Intermittently throughout the night, heavy fire of 5.9 H.E., and 77mm mustard gas occurred.</p> <p><i>Clear</i> Water became very scarce and the gunners had to carry it up in petrol tins from the water tanks which were situated nearly two miles away. This tramp through the mud under shell fire was a trying ordeal to say the least of it.</p> <p>For days the men slept and worked in saturated clothing and boots. The hard life, bad weather conditions, together with casualties, reduced the Battery strength alarmingly. Changes from Battery to Waggon Lines were frequent whenever possible, but still the Battery dwindled. Drivers were sent to the guns, and with the aid of Trench Mortar men the guns were kept going.</p> <p>D Sub.gun received a direct hit which badly smashed it. Road material was indented for with the hope of removing it to Ordnance. Until this arrives the gun cannot even be pulled out of the pit.</p>

15

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

797

PLACE

TIME

SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION

continued 15.10.17

"D" Day. Enemy artillery was very active again, and for the greater part of the day the vicinity of the Batteries was constantly shelled with 8 inch, 5.9 and 4.2 shells. Approximately 2500 rounds fell in the area in which our Batteries were situated. Apparently the Bosch having located all our Batteries in this area, had switched numerous Batteries on to an area shoot, as many different sized shells were coming swishing over together, with gas, H.E. and shrapnel mixed.

These concrete structures and the fact that our shooting programme was not a continuous one, was saving us no end of casualties, as we were able to have everyone reasonably safe, whilst the Battery was not shooting at any rate.

16.10.17

"E" Day. Enemy's artillery activity was decidedly heavy all day. The Battery positions were shelled incessantly with 5.9, 4.2 and a few 8 inch. About 4000 shells fell in the Battery areas. The more forward areas were reported to be much quieter. At night hostile bombing raids again occurred.

17.10.17

Orders were received to increase our harassing fire from to-day. An extensive artillery programme was apparently going to be carried out from now. Our Batteries were detailed to special tasks, our task being with the 108th Howitzer Battery to strafe PASSCHENDAELE at irregular intervals during day and night, the remaining batteries of our Group to bring fire to bear within their own zones, searching back 1000 yards beyond S.O.S. Lines, special Heavy Batteries being detailed for BELLEVUE.

Hostile artillery activity has shown a continuation of the two previous days operations, and throughout the day an almost incessant bombardment was kept up on the Battery positions. 5.9 and 4.2 Batteries showed the greatest activity, and these were evidently concealed behind PASSCHENDAELE. During the night we were subjected to bursts of firing, the shells used being chiefly gas and H.E. Intermittently there had been shelling over the whole of our rear areas, particularly the roads. The more forward areas were again reported quiet.

During this period there had been no enemy work or abnormal movement observed.

The day had been fine and clear, and aircraft on both sides were extremely active. One large enemy 'plane was brought down by machine gun fire from one of our machines. One of the occupants was seen to fall out as the 'plane was hit. It crashed to earth not far from our

16

WAR DIARY

797

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	17.10.17	Waggon Lines.
	18.10.17	<p>"H" Day. During the night 18/19th October, the 9th. Australian Infantry Brigade, which had been holding the line on the front of the 3rd. Australian Divisional Artillery was relieved by the 148th. Brigade of the 9th. English Division.</p> <p>Rain fell heavily and stormy conditions prevailed.</p> <p>D Sub.gun was again hit by a shell.</p> <p>Practice Barrage was carried out at 5am.</p> <p>Gunner Baker C.E. No.28429 was wounded to-day and evacuated to hospital. No. 18754 Gunner Uther F., whilst returning to Waggon Lines from Battery during a change over, was hit by a piece of bomb dropped by a hostile 'plane, and later died of his wounds. No. Gunner Bewsher E. and Sapper Cruikshanks W. were wounded and evacuated to hospital.</p>
	19.10.17	<p>" " Day. From 5pm. to 3.30am. areas about ZONNEBEKE, ABRAHAM HEIGHTS, and BOETHOEK were continuously shelled by 15 and 10.5 cm. Howitzers, and 77mm guns, including a considerable number of gas shells, direction of fire being East of PASSCHENDAELE. There was also intermittent intense shelling of our Battery position areas, fire being chiefly 8inch and 15cm. More than 3000 rounds came over during these shoots, a proportion of which were directed against the ZONNEBEKE ROAD. Observation was apparently carried out by balloon, one of which remained high up all day. WIELTJE ROAD West of KANSAS CROSS ROADS was shelled at intervals by 15cm Howitzers. Fire on our trench system and forward areas was normal.</p> <p>Captain Neylan M.C., Battery Captain proceeded to Battery and relieved the Battery Commander who returned to the Waggon Lines.</p>
	20.10.17	<p>Command of the Field Artillery on the front of the 3rd. Australian Division passed to C.R.A., 4th. Canadian Division.</p> <p>Hostile 'planes flew at an extremely low altitude over our lines this morning. Our</p>

17

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

797

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
continued	20, 10. 17	<p>anti-aircraft gunfire was ineffective. At night Hun 'planes flew over in force, and bombed our back areas, dropping a great number of bombs.</p> <p>During the afternoon another exceedingly heavy area shoot was directed against our Battery positions.</p>
	21. 10. 17	<p>The weather had now improved, it being a fine bright day. At night a bombing raid on an extensive scale was carried out by the enemy. Bombs fell within 200 yards of the horselines, the objective probably being the railway line which was adjacent.</p> <p>Instructions were received that the 7th. Field Artillery Brigade would be relieved by the 26th. Army, R.F.A.</p>
	22. 10. 17	<p>The 26th. Battery were relieved in the line to-day by the 26th. Army Brigade, R.F.A. under orders from the 4th. Canadian Divisional Artillery, and withdrew to the Waggon Lines.</p> <p>Everyone was thankful when the relief came. The Battery had been through a severe test of endurance and our numbers were dwindling daily.</p> <p>The Officers and men were to have no rest however as orders came thro' that the Battery was to move on the morrow to new Waggon Lines.</p>

18

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

1997

PLACE	TIME	SUMMARY OF EVENTS AND INFORMATION
<p>Whole Battery at Waggon Lines RAVELSBURG</p>	23.10.17	<p>Reveille sounded at an early hour this morning. About 8am the column moved out and proceeded via DICKEBUSCH, KEMMEL HILL and NEUVE EGLISE to RAVELSBURG. The day was cold and it rained incessantly. The roads leading through DICKEBUSCH were in a bad state, and deep in mud and water. We pulled into the Waggon Lines which we had occupied in July last, when the Battery was in action on NESSINES RIDGE. The camp had been much improved, there now being several Nissen Huts in addition to the large barn and other small shelters. The road leading into the camp had also been re-made By 7pm the men had settled down for the night.</p>
	24.10.17	<p>The day was devoted to squaring up the camp and getting everything in working order. No. 18727 Corporal Quigley G.M., left the Battery for England, to go through a course at St. Johns Wood.</p>
	25.10.17	<p>The usual camp routine was carried out, and nothing worthy of note occurred, and every effort was being made to train layers and telephonists to fill the vacancies caused by casualties.</p>
	26.10.17	
	27.10.17	
	28.10.17	
	29.10.17	<p>The moon was now at the full and enemy 'planes flew over during the night dropping bombs on BAILLEUL</p>
	30.10.17	<p>5 per cent leave was granted to allow the men to visit BAILLEUL. The enemy shelled the Town all day with a high velocity gun. It was market day and the town was full of civilians. A number of casualties occurred. This shelling did not deter the troops from enjoying their half holiday.</p>

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.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	31.10.17.		The ordinary camp routine was carried out and there was nothing to report.	
			(The original of above appears on the same sheet as entries for subsequent month and will be found with the diary for that month).	

WAR DIARY

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

797

From 29th. September 1917, to 24th. October 1917, the following ammunition was expended by No. 2 Group *No. 2 Group*

"A" Shrapnel	67,539 rounds
"AX" High Explosive	51,891 rounds
	<u>119,430 rounds, 18 pounder</u>

"BX" 26,835 rounds, 4.5 Howitzer

Taking the approximate proportion expended by this Battery-for-

25 days	19,905 rounds for 6 guns
per day	796 " "

APPENDIX

21

26th Battery, 7th Field Artillery Brigade

The following men did exceptionally good work in the offensive from ~~29th~~^{11th} September 1917 to 24th October 1917.-

<u>Battery Position</u>			<u>Battery Position</u>			<u>Drivers</u>		
No. 18946	Sergeant	Trevannion D.E.	18750	Gunner	Thomas N.S.	18679	Bombdr.	Henson W.
No. 18660	"	Fountain G.A.	18754	"	Uther F.	18845	"	Cambridge T.J.
No. 18874	"	Hogarth W.W.B.	26477	"	Hogan W.J.	18880	Driver	Irvin R.G.
No. 18675	"	Harrison C.E.	18634	"	Begg A.	18628	"	Andrew H.G.
No. 18745	"	Shiels J.S.	18739	"	Shand C.M.	22841	"	Tyrell J.
No. 18746	"	Shiels A.J.	18721	"	Pearce A.C.	18415	"	Whiting R.
No. 18723	"	Peach S.	18713	"	Neal J.	19654	"	Seehusen J.
No. 18871	"	Grose J.	18654	"	Duckworth B.C.	3958	"	Burton H.
			26472	"	Croft F.J.	22786	"	Bates H.
No. 18624	Corporal	Ainsworth G.M.	18717	"	Neilson P.F.	30207	"	Hogan C.G.
No. 18724	"	Pountney E.R.	18718	"	O'Neill T.F.	22801	"	Gambley J.B.
No. 22798	"	Fowler G.E.				26519	"	Carter F.W.
No. 887	"	Sanders C. M.M.				26518	"	Carter K.C.
						18934	"	Shearman W.
						5006	"	Holman P.H.
						18630	"	Aspinwall T.
No. 18878	Bombdr.	Hunter J.						
18879	"	Hunter W.K.						
No. 18912	"	O'Connor J.						
No. 31112	"	Crane F.L.						
No. 31123	"	Deane F.G.						
No. 22819	"	Kelynack A.D.						
No. 26478	"	Moore P.H.						
No. 27188	Gunner	Boone L.J.						
No. 18947	"	Trevannion H.C.						
No. 55	"	Berecye B.						

The above list was made out on 20/1/18, and possibly a few other names deserving of inclusion have been missed

APPENDIX.