

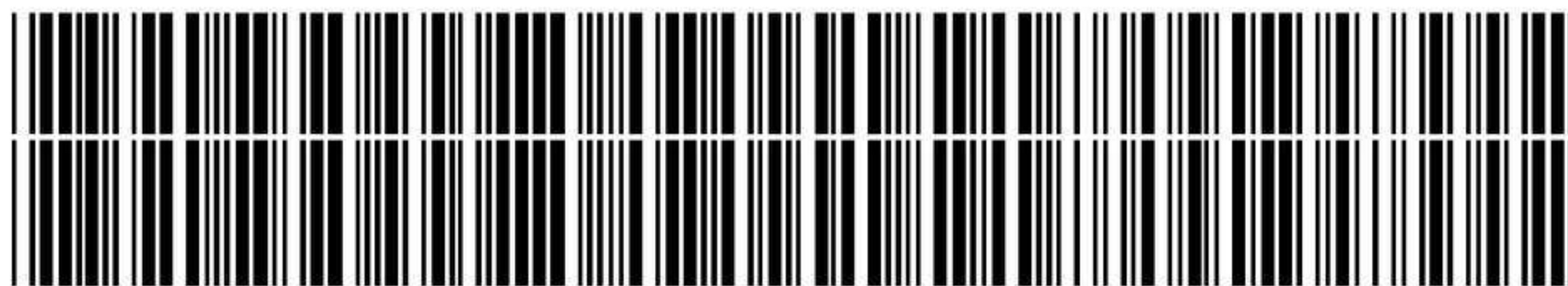
AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/241/1

Title: Notebook, 1918

Includes references to the 57th and 58th
Battalions, Villers-Bretonneux, Peronne and
Flamicourt.



AWM38-3DRL606/241/1

241

57 Bn V/B.

57 Bn Peronne

58 Bn Ham

Wt 2205
Copper

Original

DIARY NO. 241.

AWM38

3DRL 606 ITEM 241 [1]

DIARIES AND NOTES OF C. E. W. BEAN
CONCERNING THE WAR OF 1914-1918

THE use of these diaries and notes is subject to conditions laid down in the terms of gift to the Australian War Memorial. But, apart from those terms, I wish the following circumstances and considerations to be brought to the notice of every reader and writer who may use them.

These writings represent only what at the moment of making them I believed to be true. The diaries were jotted down almost daily with the object of recording what was then in the writer's mind. Often he wrote them when very tired and half asleep; also, not infrequently, what he believed to be true was not so—but it does not follow that he always discovered this, or remembered to correct the mistakes when discovered. Indeed, he could not always remember that he had written them.

These records should, therefore, be used with great caution, as relating only what their author, at the time of writing, believed. Further, he cannot, of course, vouch for the accuracy of statements made to him by others and here recorded. But he did try to ensure such accuracy by consulting, as far as possible, those who had seen or otherwise taken part in the events. The constant falsity of second-hand evidence (on which a large proportion of war stories are founded) was impressed upon him by the second or third day of the Gallipoli campaign, notwithstanding that those who passed on such stories usually themselves believed them to be true. All second-hand evidence herein should be read with this in mind.

16 Sept., 1946.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL
ACCESS STATUS

C. E. W. BEAN.

OPEN

(17735) Wt. 2205—SK550. 100000. 1/18. Sir J. C. & S.

60.
150 X

96

1st 500 ft + 100 N 1/2 S 1/2

57 Bn ^{Villers} ^{retonnement} V/B: Capt Peacock
57 Bn.

At 9.15 pm. got orders for the attack. Bn till then was in its original position in the Aubigny line on the flats. The bomb was mostly on Bois l'Abbe.

The officers were told that 1 German were holding a line round the W. side of village. They had not been seen during day.

At 9.30 Bn left Aubigny line to move up to T.O. line.

57 Bn was to be on at of 15 Bde.

At Bn H.Q. at 9.15

The Coy Commanders were told that they had to

sweep round the N edge of the village not entering village

150 60/ 59/
57/ →

itself, after passing 1 village, place their left flank on 1 warfussu Abancet Rd & rt flank on 1 rly. They had to go to the X Rd which joins the main Rd by the Hangars.

The Bn moved off in 1 dark. Part of 1/B was burning. No barrage. From 1 start shots had been coming from 1 hill on the rt. This was probably counter sniping to 1/Bde.

Germans were first met in 1 orchards W of 1/B. & at 1 Crucifer on Fouilly Rd. There seemed to be no front line at all where 57 went.

Thro Enc. on left where there were a few Tommies. The ~~people~~^{Serms} in the trench on left (N) of 1 wood (wh they had dug it day) didnt see us till we were hopping into 1 & half of them were just waking up then. The attacking wave just saw 1 & 2. — a yell went up along 1 line & they jumped straight into it.

They went straight on & kept meeting small ptis till they got to 1 hangars.

In these hangars themselves was a big qty of Serms. They were just waking from sleep as our people got there.

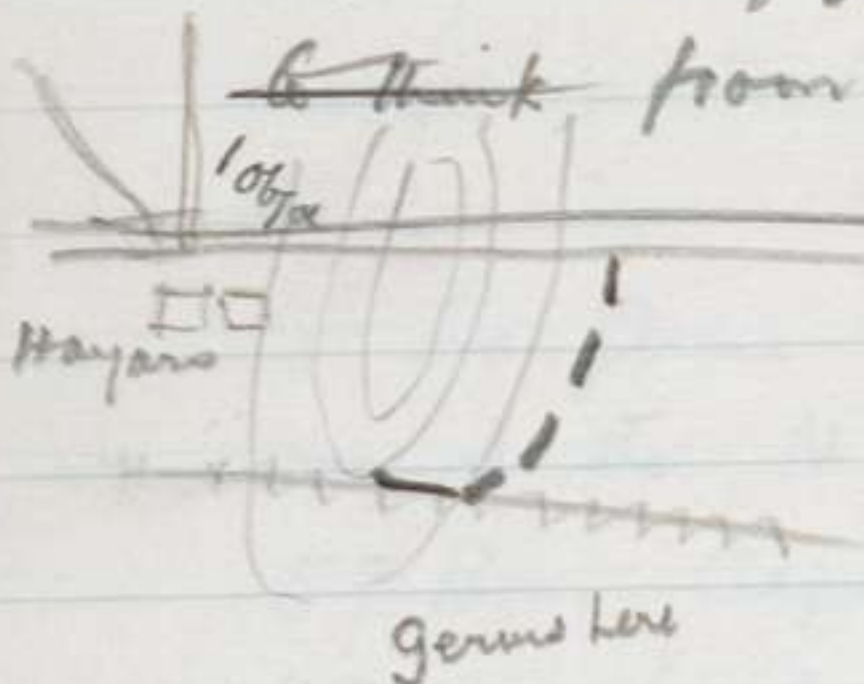
2 batches of 40 prisoners were

sent back from there &
 S-7 Bn went on over / crest
 of hill abt 700 yds from
 the forked Rd.

The S-7 Bn had begun
 a 2nd objct - the road
 wh ran just beyond the
 top of this rise (Col. Layh
 was then CO.) They reached
 this - meeting a few scattered
 Germans all clearing back as
 hard as they cd go. They seemed
 to think we were French for all cd "Merci M'sieur". We
 got past 1 haystack on the
 rd of rd - the only 2
 were round the hangars &
 huts.

For abt an hr the S-7 Bn
 stayed there but no one
 came up on either flank.

The Bns position was on
 1 fore slope of this rise all
 round 1 ridge, (The Germans seemed
 to think from 1 rd to 1 rly.



There were
 Germans S.
 of 1 rly.

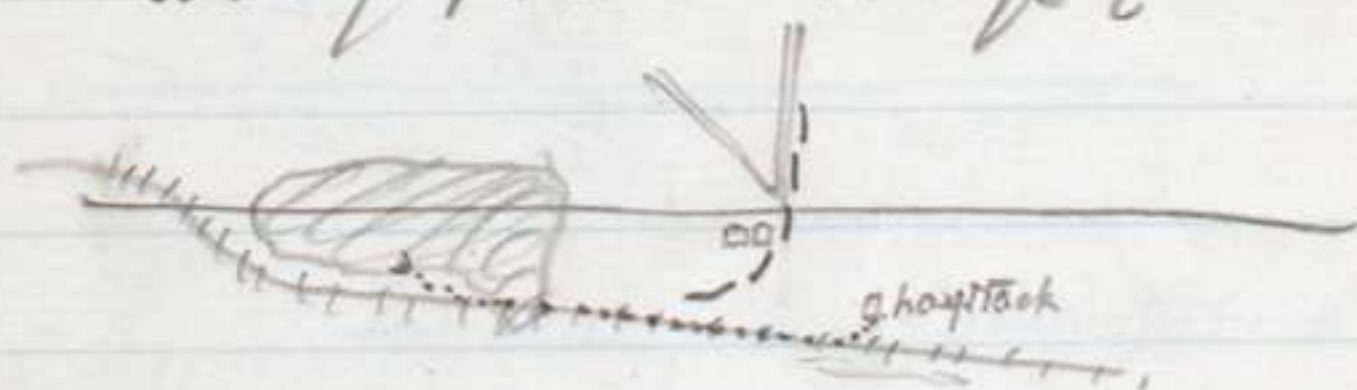
Only place

where 13 Bde could be seen was
 where 1 village touched 1 rly.
 Just E of 1 village ~~on 1 rly~~ is a
 bridge over 1 rly. When 57 Bn
 came round in front of 1
 village B Coy (rt) pushed
 down round 1 outskirts, &
 on this bridge they had a scrap
 w some Germans. While they were
 fighting there they noticed

fighting going on not far away but the two Bdes never actually were in touch.

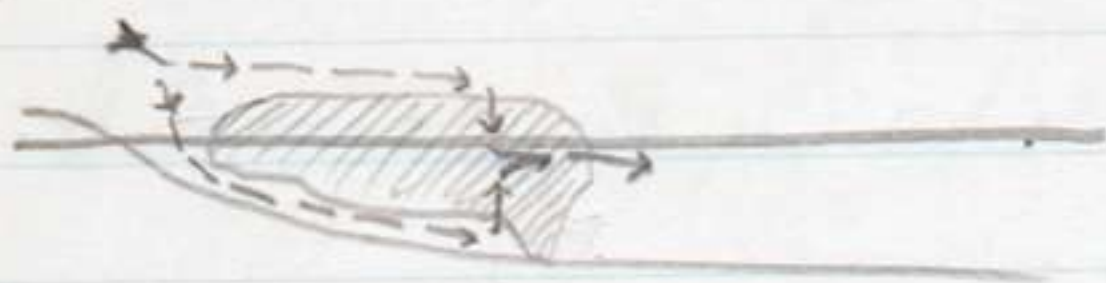
The Germans began to get round the N & S flanks of 57 Bn. Capt Peacock had gone back to find where 59 Bn was & try to get them up on the flank of 57 Bn. He found them N. of the Hanyars at the X Rd. They sd they were on their objective & it then turned out that the order for the 2nd Objective had not reached them. Peacock had just arranged w Capt Smith (now Maj) to go forward (^{Smith} ~~he~~ was in there) when they

noticed ~~figures~~ ^{figures} coming
back - These were the
57 Bn. who had found
1 German behind their left
flank. The Bn dug in just
forward of the hangars, &
stayed there. The rt flank
was a little N. of rly.
There 1 line stayed all day
& sniped at Germans getting
away from 1 village (as shown



by dotted line) along rly & then
dashing out to 1 haystack
across 1 ridge.

As soon as 5-7 Bn
swept round 1 village,
B Coy, who were behind
& detailed for 1 purpose,
divided & moved round the
N & S edges of 1 village & then
turned into 1 village from 1
far end & worked towards
each other, & then out at
forward end of 1 village.



In doing this they got a
number of prisoners 1 majority
of whom were handed over to
Tommys. These were Tommys
who came into 1 village from the
west end.

Touch with 13 Bde was
obtained next day.

Officers lost

Lt Faulkner k. by a shell (abt 60th reg
in 17 next morning.)

Lt Muter k. with Capt Morgan by
a shell in 17 next day.

Griffiths badly wd by a shell in 1
head - near 1 crucifix, 2nd
day.

Capt Morgan k. with Muter, & buried
close to the forked rds.

Lt Meara wd just before 1 start.

Sniping was heavy on 1 right
next day - the Germans being on
1 ridge overlooking our position.
Shelling was heavy.

The position round the hangars
was maintained & handed over. ③

57 Bn Peronne.

On 29 Aug Bde went forward.

On Aug 30 they were in posts just E of 1 rd which runs alongside 1 canal - 57 Bn at La Chapelle by the old bandstand & hospital.

In the early morning of Aug 30 the posts were pushed to 1 Canal. There were no regular Canal Xings in this sector - 57 made a couple of small duckboard crossings - the duckboards had floats attached to them & were dropped out onto 1 water. The ferries were 1 other side of 1

Somme & on little bits of hard ground in and abt 1 Somme to wh they had ducked tracks.

They cd not see us working on 1 canal being hidden by 1 rushes - the work on 1 canal was uninterrupted.

Orders were to find (or make) a Xing. For this patrols were sent out into 1 marsh to find any tracks it might exist or where old bridges might have been. First patrol was an offr, N.C.O. & 12 men (Capt Peacock). They crossed 1 canal abt 11 am & ^{after looking about for a good while} worked out into 1 swamp along fairly hard ground for abt 40 yds. There was a track there wh had bn used - & patches of water wh had to be waded thro

+ most of this firing wd go over. They used small folding canvas boats in the work.

All went well till abt 40 yds from 1 other side. This was reached abt 1 second day (the work was continuous exc. for intervals when all knocked off together). A post was on 1 track & whenever the ply came in this post used to go to 1 bridge head & lie down there. If the work wd be knocked off for 2 or 3 hrs - sometimes waiting for material). The bridge was entirely on floats, abt 4 ft wide across (water betw islands & tied up to 1 bank by wire. You cd run across it standing up before they got onto you. This bridge

The plan was to push the reeds & as soon as located gun to rush it - the rear ply (13 men) then to push the & cover further work.

was ~~by~~ abt 3 B 9.9. by "Ecluse".

They had got abt 200 yds onto a bit of hard ground. They had knocked off on reaching this in morning & went back at 1.30 pm. on Sept 15th. The patrol passed the post & pushed along the narrow track thro 1 reeds. The track was just a parting in 1 reeds - not worn - probly used by 1 German to cross 1 Somme before. The patrol crept ahead parting 1 reeds. They got near 1 end of strip of dry land (prob 20 yds) when 1 reeds finished. There was a strip of ~~little~~ water abt 10 yds wide there. The first man - Pte Bisset was just parting 1 reeds when ~~two~~ mips. opened

fire straight away. Besset was hit at once & his first burst shot off 6 men. Other mops on land, awakened by racket, opened fire also. The whole pty lay flat but fire was so low that every one in 1st pty (Exc. Peacock who was following Besset) was put out of action - most k. There were 11 in the party, 6 officers & 5 men working pty on 1. Budd were pretty safe. Peacock lay some time till 1 ferns were only firing bursts & then plunged into water which was a narrow strip & got back.

They went off out again at this later & were driven off again by intense fire.

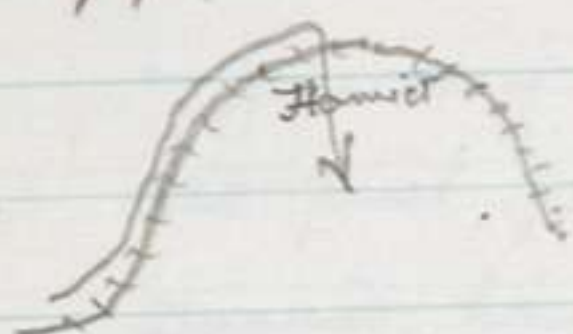
The next day 5th Bn had ^{the} succeeded in pushing round Peronne

& so no more attempts
 were made to cross direct.
58 Bn. Flamincourt.
57 Bn went in again abt
 3rd Sept. At this time 58 Bn
 held ramparts on NE side
 of town & round the edge of
 river (the causeway).

~~Peacocks (D) Coy was with~~
 When Ferris (58 Bn) was
 wd Peacock was sent for to
 take over 58 Bn. 58 Bn
 moved back at night into
 trenches near Orme de
 Barleux. They were put
 in again 7 Sept 5. They were
 to go in along the rly & then
 attack S. to the Aulnais
 wood N of Le Mesnil gradually
 swinging so as to come out to

on the Athies Rd, North
of Le Mesnil, facing east.

There was v. little
opposition. The Bn moved



as ordered,
reached
objec.

In doing this C.O. noticed
to rt some Germans moving on
l rt bank of Somme opp.
La Chapelle. They were
running away. It struck him
th this must be 1 post wh had
held his party up at 1
bridgehead. Bn Hqs attacked
at once & wiped this post
out. They found a post dug in
in abt 40 yds ^{out} from l bank. - I
They were just getting away. In front

of it were 1 man who had
 be left there dead - all exc.
 Bisset. Some months later a
 letter was recd from Bisset
 in Germany - the first bullet
 had just grazed his skull &
 stunned him - & he had be taken
 by 1 German.

As the 58 Bn was moving
 S. it noticed abt 2 coys of
 men moving in dashes in
 lines towards the E. They
 took these for Australians but
 presently realised th they were
 Germans. They were crossing the
 Athies Rd towards Cartigny.
 58 Bn halted on the Athies
 Rd. & were held at night by
 57 Bn.

Appendix A.

pp. 12 - 13

pp. 1 - 11

p. 14.

App. 5. pp. 16 - 20

Here insert ^{typing} Statement of A.H. Publications
which is amongst appendices (marked S).
Then pp. 20 - 21

App. T. pp. 22 - 29.