

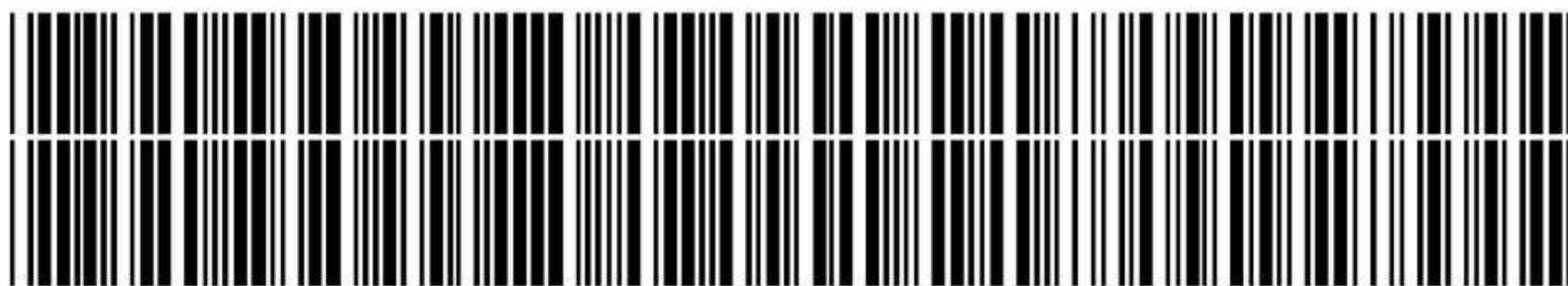
AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/247/1

Title: Folder, 1917 - 1933

Includes maps, cuttings, correspondence and extracts from diary of Pte W D Gallway on first battle of Bullecourt; correspondents include Sir Brudenell White, Capt D S Aarons, Brig Gen H E Elliott and Newton Wanliss.



AWM38-3DRL606/247/1

FIRST BULLETCOURT 247.

1st SET. AWM38 3DRL 606 ITEM 247 [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
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C. E. W. BEAN.

OPEN

First Bullecourt.

The Tanks at Bullecourt

(By Major-General J. F. C. Fuller, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.)

HISTORY, though easy to read, is difficult to write, and I doubt whether there is anything more difficult in the whole of history than to arrive at the correct estimates of a battle, and more especially so of one which ended in failure. In April, 1917, as G.O.C.1. of the Tank Corps (still called the Heavy Branch M.G. Corps), I was in as good a position as anyone to know what took place on the 11th of this month, when No. 11 Company of the 4th (D) Battalion of the Tank Corps co-operated with the 4th Australian Division in its attack on the village of Bullecourt. I remember the doubt which existed at Tank Corps Headquarters, the energy of 1st Tank Brigade, under command of Colonel Baker-Carr, and the eventual results of the battle; but of the fighting, my knowledge rests solely on the reports of others, and these reports are so conflicting that I doubt whether the truth will ever be laid bare. I hope, nevertheless, that this paper may throw some light upon what happened.

Theoretically, the idea of attacking the Germans at Bullecourt and east of this village would have been sound enough, had time, weather and means been more favourable. In actual fact, however, few attacks could have been more unsound; because: (1) The time wherein to prepare for the attack was insufficient; (2) the weather was at its worst, and the ground was covered with snow, making every man or tank that crossed it a bull's-eye to shoot at; (3) the number of tanks was totally insufficient, they were hastily gathered together and were asked to do a task which so far had never been attempted.

Theoretically, the idea was sound, because, on April 9, the Germans had been driven back from east of Arras by the Third Army, and, on the 10th, were occupying a fairly pronounced salient shaped roughly like the letter L—Monchy-le-Preux-Bullecourt-Queant; the horizontal line of the L being bounded by the two last-named villages. Now, as the bulk of the German force were concentrated along the vertical line of the L, it was obvious that if the Fifth Army (which was on its flank) could cut through the middle of this horizontal line, these forces would be taken in flank and reverse and compelled to fall back, causing a gap through which (this was the prevailing obsession at this time) thousands of horsemen were to gallop and complete the victory.

As the Fifth Army was incapable of massing sufficient guns to bombard the Hindenburg Line at Bullecourt and east of it, it was decided to use tanks instead; but this army only possessed twelve, the Third Army, operating to the north of it, possessing 48. But after the battle of the 9th many of these 48 machines were out of action; yet, in spite of this, Tank Corps Headquarters suggested that such as could still move should be shifted south, but this was not agreed to. In any case, I doubt whether another 20 tanks—and this would have been the maximum which could have joined the Fifth Army by about the 12th—would have made any difference. The truth is beyond doubt, the Fifth Army attack was based



Major-General Fuller.

on a pure gamble, the dice being heavily loaded against success.

AUSTRALIAN EVIDENCE

I will now turn to the details of the attack, and will summarise my sources of information. The first consists in an admirable series of articles and reminiscences which appeared in "Reveille" (official journal of the R.S.S.I.L.A., N.S.W. Branch) of April, 1933. The second of the reports of the H.Q. and 1st Brigade of the Tank Corps, and the third, of certain German reports. Though these do not agree, and cannot in any way be made to agree, they are interesting, if only to show how difficult it is in a modern battle to arrive at what took place.

Bullecourt lay in a small salient, and was strongly held. The Hindenburg Line consisted "of two parallel lines of trenches, protected by a barbed-wire entanglement of unusual depth and height. Instructions were received that it was to be attacked by the 4th and 12th Bdes. In the 12th Bde. the 46th Bn. would seize the first line, and the 48th, following behind, would "pass through us and attack the second" (Lieut.-Colonel H. K. Denham, D.S.O., V.D., C.O. 46th Battalion).

Another account reads as follows:—

"The 46th and 48th Bns. (12th Brigade) were to assault the Hindenburg line on our (4th Brigade) left, the 46th also capturing the village of Bullecourt, after which the 62nd Division (Tommies) would come up on their left. A division of British cavalry was to pass through when we had made a way; the job of piloting them through would fall to the 13th A.L.H. Regiment." At about 9.30 p.m. on April 9, ". . . we learned that the orders had been altered. The barrage had been dispensed with and a tank attack substituted. This news came as a thunderclap. Every officer and man knew his job by heart. Now we were to forgo all these instructions and act as fresh ones. There was no chance to get the men together—the best we could hope for would be to get the officers and N.C.O.'s to know the new plan as well as we could.

"The 4th Brigade had every confidence in its ability to follow a barrage. It had been said of it, 'They lean up against the barrage, and when it lifts they just fall in on top of the enemy.' But of tanks we knew nothing—we had never seen one in action. At my suggestion Lieut.-Col. McSharry asked if we couldn't have a barrage as well, but met with the answer that 'tanks could not co-operate with artillery.'" (Lieut.-Colonel David Dunworth, M.C., Captain in the 15th Bn. of the 4th Brigade.)

Thus the muddle began in a change of plan. It is quite untrue that tanks could not co-operate with artillery, the real reason was shortage of guns. Next the muddle was continued:—

"The attack was arranged to take place on the morning of April 10, not with the usual artillery barrage, but with the assistance of tanks—instruments of warfare that we had only seen as derelicts on the old Somme battlefield." (Lieut.-Colonel W. R. Wadsworth, D.S.O., M.C., Captain in 14th Bn. of the 4th Brigade.)

"4.45 a.m. on 10th April was zero hour. All battalions were in position, with patrols since midnight covering 1000 yards between the sunken road (our jumping-off line) and the first objective—the foremost trenches of the Hindenburg Line. No sign of the tanks which were to play such an important part. The responsibility of getting them there was that of the 5th Army Staff and the O.C. Tank Corps." (Brigadier-General C. H. Brand, C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O., A.D.C., G.O.C. 4th Infantry Brigade.)

As a matter of fact, the G.O.C. Tank Corps had nothing whatever to do with it. The attack was called off.

April 10 followed slowly, and speculation was rife as to whether or not the attack would be abandoned. At last, during the evening, word was

(Continued next page)

CARMICHAEL, Lance-Corporal ARCHIBALD (No. 53; 42nd Battalion)
Killed in action, 4/10/17.

CARTER, Staff-Sergeant ALFRED SHARPE (No. 6; 43rd Battalion)
Died of wounds, 5/6/17.

CASH, Private PERCY (No. 5059; 49th Battalion)
Killed in action, 7/6/17.

CASH, Private REGINALD ROY (No. 5051; 3rd Battalion)
Killed in action, 29/1/17.

CASHMAN, Private GEORGE THOMAS (No. 5350; 9th Battalion)
Killed in action, 31/10/17.

CASIMIR, Private LOUIS AUGUSTUS (No. 2394; 53rd Battalion)
Killed in action, 20/5/17.

CASSIDY, Sergeant ALBERT HENRY (No. 7342; 4th Battalion)
Killed in action, 28/4/18.

CASSON, Private JOHN (No. 4750; 53rd Battalion)
Killed in action, 20/2/17.

CASTLE, Private ALFRED ERNEST (No. 1909; 2nd Machine Gun Battalion)
Killed in action, 4/10/17.

CASTLE, Private HAROLD (No. 2141; 54th Battalion)
Killed in action, 15/5/17.

CASTLE, Private WILFRID GEORGE (No. 1946; 35th Battalion)
Killed in action, 20/7/18.

CASTLESMITH, Private RUPERT (No. 118A; 15th Battalion)
Killed in action, 11/4/17.

It is Still War

REVUE

Vol. 7—No. 1
SEPTEMBER 1, 1933

Published by the N.W. Branch of the R.S.P.A. at the N.W. House, 11, Victoria Road, Sydney, N.S.W.

That so pungent modern philosophy, the late John

Wanderer, said—

And you had better take no rest with

Does it is an unconscious rebellion of the

birth of these words which is responsible for the great

stings or too occasional) trial reference by those who have

made knowledge to the independent activities and work

and year out

The average member of the League

results as inevitable—for granted—which perhaps up to a

point, it is at it should be. Most of him discovers no rise

to analyze and experiences no great desire to criticize

except in obscure individual cases

The orators who take the platform for the League are

naturally concerned usually with immediate contingencies

of the moment. They have little time

to give to the time of opportunity to pause and

look back or to elaborate upon the future. This mainly

because there has been no reason to "glance over"—seldom

reason to "vociferously defend". The League has stood

and marched on its own feet with no call for brass bands

and loud hoots to help it on its way. No need for dim

lights and soft music while the body is carried away

a bag. No need to "glance over" the past

braving in League

highways or byways

The League's progress has been, and is, definite, orderly,

and—unintentionally—not always and everywhere appreci-

ated as it might be.

If the 80,000 eligible members in New South Wales—

members of the A.L.F.—plus the great Legion of Imperial

Commission and Ally or service men in the War Service

the Commonwealth had led the League and to do the

the history and affairs of the League and to do the

picture that lie in the to-morrow, as well as the present, one

can only visualize a State Branch with an indisputable

strength of some hundred thousand members.

But League triumphs seldom dawn, and the true tale

is told too infrequently. Consequently those who have

been touched by the fingers of the League

are in distrust and apprehension.

It is a great pity—whose horizon

that I do not speak disparagingly of those hopes and

genone war victims who have, for no greater fault than

that they served their country, truly and well, been forced

into the queues of want—have not yet learned what the

League has written for all ex-servicemen to learn.

It had been my intention to cram this page with inco-

herent facts, emphasizing the splendid

League's part, the mighty achievements of the

the glorious possibilities of the future. But I suddenly

realize that justice could not be done in such short com-

pass.

The right branch in Victoria very probably hasn't said

all it could have said in a closely packed and most excellent

Handbook of no fewer than eight thick

pages.

and MIGHT BE—

A million men and youths in Australia would give years

of their lives for the privilege of wearing the badge that

is the badge of the League.

And the badge is not for something indefinite

of a never-to-be-forgotten old-time comradeship—

emblem of transient-time service.

Yes, it is still War—this time not for something indefinite

for something really real and—at the ex-

emplom of present-time service.

And the badge is not for something indefinite

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emblem of transient-time service.

KILLED IN ACTION 4/10/17
 DEATH LIST FOR THE 11th COMPANY (NO. 11) 11th BATTALION

KILLED IN ACTION 80/4/17
 DEATH LIST FOR THE 11th COMPANY (NO. 11) 11th BATTALION

sent round that Zero hour had been fixed for 4.45 a.m. on the following morning." (Lieut.-Colonel W. R. Wadsworth.)

We come now to the crucial day—April 11.

"On April 10 we left Favreuil about 10.30 p.m. in readiness to attack at 4 a.m. Here we received further orders and counter-orders. The tanks arrived, making a fearful din; we 'gassed' Bullecourt, causing annoyance but little damage. We were ordered to wait until the tanks had reached the enemy's position, pressed down the wire and mopped up the machine-guns, whereon they were to show us coloured lights as a signal to us to come on. Then this order was shortly after cancelled, and we were told to give the tanks 15 minutes' start and follow them.

"Two minutes after the 14th Bn. moved off the 15th Bn. followed in artillery formation. Out of 11 tanks, I saw three which failed to move. Only one reached the line, and then only while the 14th and 15th Bns. were scrapping there. . . ." (Lieut.-Colonel David Dunworth.) Brigadier-General Brand says, "only one out of the eleven allotted to the division actually reached the wire," and Captain D. S. Aarons, M.C., 16th Bn., says: "If I remember rightly, there were six tanks allotted to the day, but at zero hour only three were on time, the others having broken down on the way up. Actually only one of these tanks was of very much use, and this one got to about the first line of wire for the first trench."

From these accounts it would appear that only one of the eleven tanks came into action. We come now to another account.

Brigadier-General R. L. Leane, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., V.D., who commanded the 48th Battalion, writes:—

"Snow fell during the night of the 10th/11th April. At 4.30 the men were again in position to attack. The tanks, on which so much depended, again failed to arrive on time. Daylight did not delay for them, so at 5 a.m. the battalion advanced to the attack. The order of attack was: 4th Australian Infantry Brigade on the right; 46th and 48th Battalions (12th Australian Infantry Brigade), centre; British troops on the left.

"The men were forced to advance in the open, with little assistance from the tanks and artillery. Despite the heavy toll taken by the enemy during the advance, the first objective was taken. The 48th Bn. pressed on, and after heavy fighting, captured and occupied the second line. No touch could be established with either the 4th Brigade on the right or the British troops on the left; both flanks being in the air.

"By this time two of the four tanks detailed to assist in the attack arrived. I instructed the Tank Commander to go to the assistance of the left flank. One tank went into Bullecourt and was captured; the other, after travelling about 100 yards in the direction ordered, turned and returned to the railway line near Bullecourt. . . . Here the tank crew abandoned the tank and made for the rear. . . . the enemy artillery concentrated upon the tank, and eventually set it on fire. . . . The tanks proved, on this occasion, a dismal failure."

So far the accounts of eye-witnesses in "Reveille," and that they are truthful, I do not for a moment doubt. I have not been able to check them with the Australian Official History, as I understand that Vol. IV., dealing with this period, has not yet been published, nevertheless, Sir Charles Lucas corroborates them in his book, "The Empire at War," Vol. III., see pages 135-36. Yet, are they accurate? I will now turn to the Tank Corps reports.

TANK CORPS EVIDENCE

That of the 1st Tank Brigade reads as follows:—

"11 out of the 12 tanks started off at 4.30 a.m. in line at eighty yards

interval and about eight hundred yards from the German line. Four tanks attacked Bullecourt and two the Hindenburg Line to the north-west. Two of the former were knocked out in the village and two returned damaged—both those on the Hindenburg Line were knocked out by shell-fire while waiting for the infantry. Three tanks advanced on Riencourt and Hendecourt—one of these was knocked out while the other two, operating with two hundred Australian Infantry, cleared Riencourt and then advanced on Hendecourt, clearing that village also. Of the two tanks operating against the Hindenburg Line to the eastward, one was knocked out and the other returned safely.

"In the operation tanks replaced the barrage covering and opening the way for the infantry attack—and the tank operations were excellently and most gallantly carried out. The ground was covered with snow and gave the enemy artillery a great advantage as regards observation of the tanks."

The report of Tank Corps H.Q. does not so much corroborate as amplify this report, as it was in parts based upon it. It reads:—

"Eleven tanks were drawn up in line at 80 yards interval and 800 yards from the German line. The tasks of these tanks were as follows:—

- (a) To advance to the Hindenburg Line in U.29.a. and U.29.b.
- (b) Six to wheel westwards, 4 to attack Bullecourt village, and 2 the Hindenburg Line N.W. of Bullecourt as far as U.20.b.
- (c) Three to advance on Riencourt and Hendecourt.
- (d) Two to wheel eastwards to smash the wire in front of the Hindenburg Line, and then to work south along the Switch Line to U.30.a.

"All 11 tanks started at 4.30 a.m. Two of the tanks operating against Bullecourt were knocked out in the village and 2 returned damaged. The 2 detailed to operate in U.20.b. were knocked out by shell-fire whilst waiting for the infantry on the Hindenburg Line, as was also one of the tanks allotted for the operation against Riencourt. Two tanks operating with infantry cleared Riencourt and then advanced on Hendecourt, clearing this village.

"Apparently the arrangements which had been made to cover the right flank of the infantry attack were not carried out, and the result was that a German counter-attack was delivered against this flank and 2 tanks were captured, east of the Hindenburg Line. It is practically certain that the two captured tanks were burnt out at their rallying points.

"Of the 2 tanks operating against U.30.d. one was knocked out and the other returned safely.

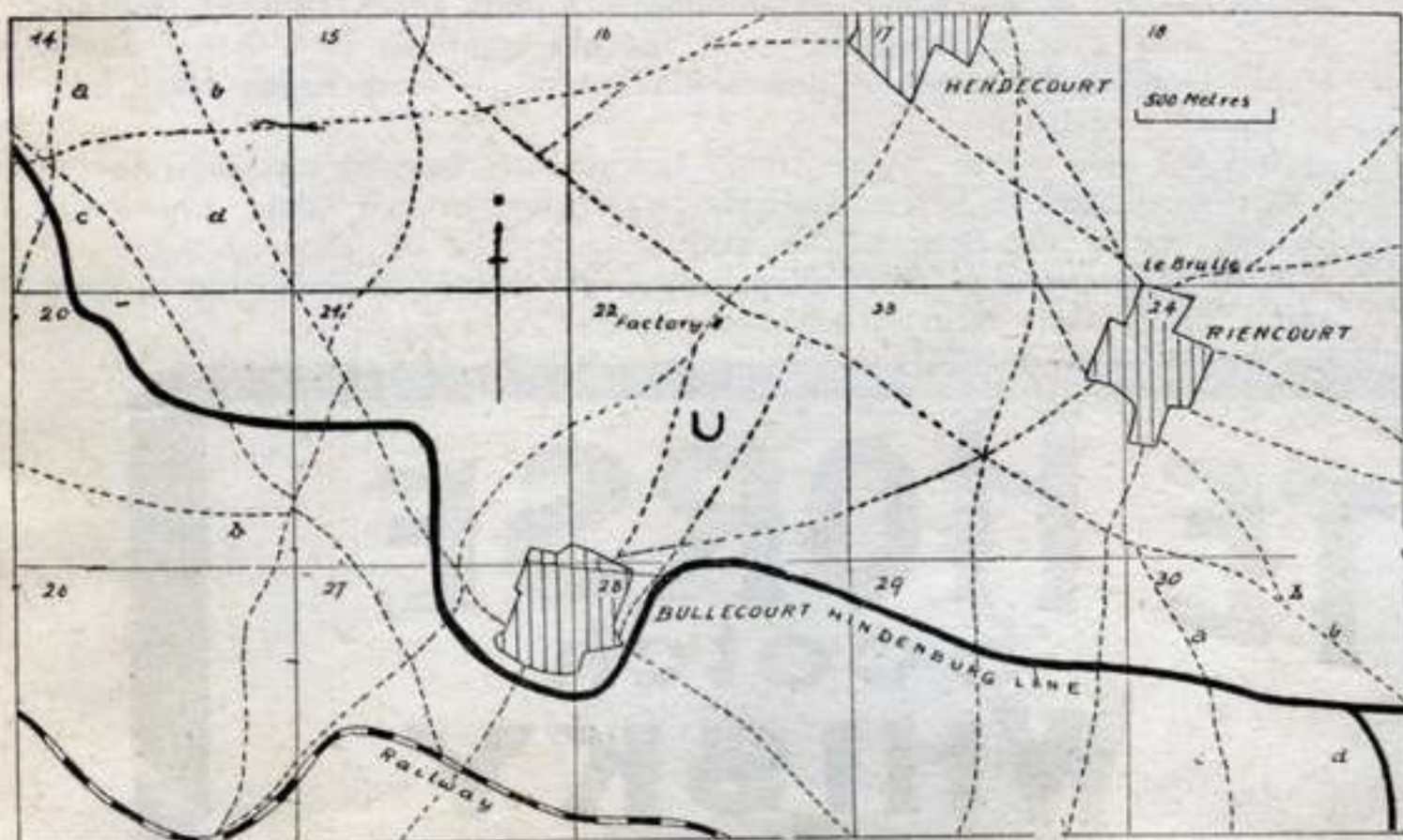
"In this operation tanks took the leading part and by opening and covering the advance of the infantry replaced wire cutting and the artillery barrage.

"The ground was most favourable for the operation (except for the fact that snow lay on the ground and showed the tanks up), but the lack of counter-battery work, and of a right flank guard, nullified what might have been a brilliant operation."

I append a graph showing the work of each tank.

The main point of interest in these two reports centres round the two tanks which are alleged to have entered Riencourt and Hendecourt. Sir Charles Lucas says:—

"Owing to a mistaken message that a tank with about 200 infantry had penetrated both trenches and gone farther ahead, no artillery fire could be used to cover the infantry in line," and that this was the cause of the main disaster in this battle (p. 136). But was this message sent in error? The Tank Corps reports say, "No"; yet in a law court it might be said that these reports were prejudiced, and in reply it might be urged that the 4th Australian Division, to exonerate itself, threw the
 (Continued on page 31)



12 Tanks No. 11 Coy D Bn	Starting Point Usage and Usage	British Front Line System	German Front Line System	REINCOURT	HENDECOURT
D 28 586	Zero				
D 26 799	1/2				
D 13 796				BULLECOURT	
D 21 798					
D 22 531					
D 30 797				BULLECOURT	
D 29 800				BULLECOURT	
D 29 590				BULLECOURT	
D 24 593					
D 32 585					
D 25 711					
D 52 702					

Tank Operations 11th April, 1917. 12 Tanks of No. 11 Company "D" Battalion.
 Nos. 586, 799, 593 Objective REINCOURT and HENDECOURT.
 Nos. 796, 797, 800, 590 " BULLECOURT
 Nos. 798, 531 " U. 20. b
 Nos. 585, 711 " U. 30. d

KILLED IN ACTION 80/4/17
 DEATH LIST FOR THE 11th COMPANY (NO. 11) 11th BATTALION

CASWELL, Private DOUGLAS (No. 397; 30th Battalion)
Killed in action, 20/7/16.

CATES, Lieutenant ATHOL, 11th A.F.A. Brigade.
Killed in action, 11/9/17.

CATHCART, Private MATTHEW ROY (No. 403; 33rd Battalion)
Killed in action, 23/9/17.

CATHER, Private ALBERT ERNEST (No. 860; 30th Battalion)
Died of wounds, 15/6/18.

CATO, Private REGINALD JOHN (No. 2402; 56th Battalion)
Killed in action, 2/4/17.

CATTERALL, Private AUGUSTUS VICTOR (No. 7716; 1st Battalion)
Killed in action, 27/5/18.

CATTO, Private FRED (No. 1922; 4th Battalion)
Killed in action, 6-9/8/15.

CAVANAGH, Private CLARENCE WILLIAM (No. 3020; 34th Battalion)
Killed in action, 30/9/17.

CAVANAGH, Private JOHN (No. 2591; 3rd Battalion)
Killed in action, 22-27/7/16.

CAVANAGH, Lance-Corporal ROXBURGH REGINALD (No. 5810; 25th Battalion)
Killed in action, 17/7/18.

CAVILL, Sergeant WALTER WILLIAM (No. 1483; 3rd Battalion)
Killed in action, 25/4/15.

CECINI, Private PETER JAMES (No. 5781; 26th Battalion)
Killed in action, 4/10/17.

Tanks at Bullecourt : —(From page 3)

blame for the defeat on the tanks, for at the time, on both sides feeling ran high. I do not accept either of these views; in place, to throw more light on this question, I will now turn to certain German reports.

GERMAN EVIDENCE

On April 14, 1917, a memorandum marked "Ia No. 1130," and headed "Experiences gained during English tank attack on April 11 1917 (Bullecourt sector)," was issued by the 27th German Division. It was signed "v Maur," and fell into our hands a few days after publication.

The following are extracts from this paper:—

"The machine-guns at the fore end of the tanks open fire when within 500-100 yards of our lines.

"The guns of the male tanks can only fire to the front and to the side. Their arc of fire is considerable.

"On reaching or passing our trenches the majority of the tanks turn to the right or left, to assist the infantry in the mopping up of the trenches. Odd tanks go ahead to enable the infantry to breach our lines.

"Ordinary wire entanglements were easily overcome by the tanks. Where there are high, dense and broad entanglements, such as those in front of the Hindenburg Line, the wire is apt to get entangled in the tracks of the tanks. On the 11.4.17 one tank was hopelessly stuck in our wire entanglement.

"Deep trenches, even 8 feet wide (? at the bottom) seem to be a serious obstacle to tanks.

"At long ranges by day, tanks will be engaged by all batteries that can deliver fire with observation and that are not occupied with other more important tasks.

"All kinds of batteries put tanks out of action on 11.4.17. Battery commanders must be permitted to act on their own initiative to the fullest possible extent.

"By night, fire at short range only promises good results. The 11.4.17 proved that rifle and machine-gun fire with armour-piercing ammunition can put the tanks out of action. Fire directed at the sides of the tanks is more effective than fire at the fore end. The greatest danger for the tanks is the ready inflammability of the petrol and the oil tanks. Machine-gun fire is capable of igniting them.

"The garrison of the trench will take cover behind the traverses and will direct their fire at the hostile infantry following the tanks; firing on tanks with ordinary S.A.A. is useless.

"Anti-tank guns are indispensable; they are particularly useful for combating tanks which have penetrated our lines and are within our front lines; however, the anti-tank guns are a source of danger to our own infantry. On 11.4.17 seven tanks were put out of action by artillery, three being settled by anti-tank guns.

"The most effective weapons against tanks would be small trench-guns served by the infantry, which should be kept in dug-outs up to the actual moment of coming action, when they deliver fire at point-blank range. These guns should be nearly as easy to handle as machine-guns.

"Trench mortars of all kinds are also suitable for anti-tank defence. On 11.4.17 a light trench mortar put a tank out of action.

"The moral effect of tanks on the infantry is very great; it is somewhat minimised in this Division by the successful repulse of the tank attack on 11.4.17.

"The actual effect of the tank guns and machine-guns must not be underestimated, 124th Inf. Regt. suffered considerable losses from them on 11.4.17.

"The issue to the infantry of plenty of armour-piercing ammunition and of trench guns would put into their hands weapons which would bring to an end all tank attacks."

From this memorandum it would appear that the Germans did not think altogether lightly of what the tanks accomplished, in spite of their repulse.

On April 30 another document was captured. It apparently must have been written shortly after the 11th. It contained an excellent sketch of a tank and a description of tank armour, etc. It is not worth quoting, except for a footnote added by our Intelligence Department, which reads:—

"The many inaccuracies which it (this document) contains will probably be, in some measure, corrected as captured photographs show that the enemy had in his possession near Hendecourt from 11.4.17 two tanks which appeared almost intact."

This is strong evidence that two tanks did get to Hendecourt.

THE READER MUST JUDGE

My evidenc is now completed. I have given the Australian account, the Tank Corps account, and the enemy's account; but the summing up I will leave to the reader. At Tank Corps H.Q., rightly or wrongly, we

believed that the tanks did cross the Hindenburg Line, its wire and its trenches, and that two did get to Hendecourt. And on this belief were the tactics of the great tank victory at Cambrai, on November 20, 1917, founded.

See May Reveille for Dr Sean's reply

CHAD, Private ATHOL HANDLEY (No. 7558; 4th Battalion)
Killed in action, 23/8/18.

*Defence report
for War Pension for*

CHADWICK, Gunner HENRY WILLIAM (No. 1179; 1st D.A.C.)
Killed in action, 11/1/17.

*There was a general
impression that
right from the other side of the pole
had been well behind Williams in starting his great
summer it was too foggy for flying. Meanwhile Bird, who
would develop the expected power in the spring and*

CHADWICK, Private WALTER STEELE (No. 15059; A.A.S.C.)
Died of illness, 1/2/18.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHALKER, Private AUSTIN STANLEY (No. 2349; 18th Battalion)
Killed in action, 3/8/16.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHALKER, Private ERNEST EDWARD (No. 4922; 45th Battalion)
Killed in action, 15/10/16.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHALKLEY, Private JAMES ARTHUR (No. 2000; 42nd Battalion)
Killed in action, 4/10/17.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHALLENGER, Private ALBERT (No. 250; 4th Battalion)
Killed in action, 5/5/15.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHAMBERS, Private FREDERICK HENRY (No. 518; 20th Battalion)
Died of wounds, 24/8/15.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHAMBERS, Private FREDERICK R. (No. 2130; 25th Battalion)
Killed in action, 5/8/16.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHAMBERS, Corporal KEITH (No. 239; 4th Battalion)
Killed in action, 1/5/15.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

CHAMBERS, Private THEODORE (No. 1619; 54th Battalion)
Died of wounds, 30/10/16.

*Mr. Freston
all-round athlete, and won many events in
training and boxing, including an all-round athletic event. He was
the winner of the latter division of the H.E.T. boxing tournament, held
at Staples in 1913, and also represented the V.I.C. in the Derby de
is Victory, run in Paris in January, 1913. He also played the
French Capital with the V.I.C. Rugby Union football team. Other
Centres at which he took part in athletic events were Brisbane, Charlton,
Chatter, Heath, Paris, London, and Sydney.*

War Pensions Inquiry Box

CHAMPION, Corporal THOMAS GEORGE (No. 679; 9th Battalion)
Killed in action, 27/4/15.

TELEPHONE NOS.
F 2597.
F 2598.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
"AUSWARMUSE."

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO
"THE DIRECTOR."

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

No. 12/3/35

"They gave their lives. For that public gift they received a praise which never ages and a tomb most glorious—not so much the tomb in which they lie, but that in which their fame survives, to be remembered for ever when occasion comes for word or deed"

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL,

POST OFFICE BOX 214 D,

EXHIBITION BUILDINGS, MELBOURNE.

21st June, 1928.

H. N. Bullock

Dear Bazley,

Question No. 64 of Mr. Bean's questionnaire reads as follows :-

"Any report on discipline or training of Australian troops when in rest area after Bullecourt? (Around Querrieu - I think in 3 Army.)"

I made a thorough search in London for any record of this nature but could not trace the actual report. The only thing bearing on it that came to my notice was a note in a Third Army file to the effect that a letter dated 24th June, 1917 relative to the training and discipline of the 1st Anzac Corps, had been despatched to G.H.Q., but I was unable to trace the letter itself.

Secret

The above information is passed to you in case it may be of some interest.

Yours sincerely,

H. N. Bullock

Mr. A. W. Bazley,
C/o. Official Historian,
Sydney.

*Acknowledged
26/6/28
A.W.*

5253.

12 December 1929.

Dear White,

I am tussling with Bullecourt and with fragmentary evidence as to the origin of the plan. Both you and General Birdwood gave me certain details at the time, and in particular I noted that General Birdwood received from Haig a message to the effect that the first Bullecourt attack was a very urgent and important matter and that he set great store by it, and that it was this message which ~~caused~~ your opposition. I remember your afterwards telling me that the message was taken by Gough over the telephone, and that you sometimes wished that the matter had been pressed further ^{up to the point of obtaining} ~~and that you had got~~ an order from Haig direct. There are two occasions on either of which this may have happened -

- perhaps.*
- (a) On the night of April 9, when about 11 o'clock General Birdwood, and at 11.45 you yourself, rang up General Malcolm and asked whether, in view of the news from Arras, the order to attack next morning ought to be given. Gough replied to Birdwood that the matter was urgent and important and the C.-in-C. set store on it, and that it must go on. It is possible that this is the message from Haig as to which I am seeking information.
 - (b) On the other hand, I think I remember you telling me that the incident occurred at a conference: that Gough said he would telephone to Haig and left the room, and presently returned with that statement. In this case it probably occurred at the conference at noon on the 10th, at which General Birdwood urged a number of objections which were overruled.

I have written to General Birdwood asking if he will assist me in the matter, but his memory of this sort of event is not keen, and I should be very grateful if you would let me have the benefit of anything that you can recollect concerning it. The whole attack is a matter of intense interest, and the true genesis of the Bullecourt plan will be eagerly read by a great many people.

Yours ever,

Major-General Sir C.B.B. White, K.C.B., K.C.M.G.,
N.Z. Loan & Mercantile Agency Co. Ltd.,
538 Collins Street,
Melbourne, C.1, Vic.

H.W.

538 COLLINS STREET,
MELBOURNE.

13th Dec 1929.

Dear Beau.

✓ I have just received your note
of yesterday's date.

My mind is still clear upon the
point in question - but of course I
cannot state the date. The meeting was
at Gen. Sough's headquarters shortly after
noon. We were having considerable
success, I thought, in our arguments
against the operation. When we had
L.E. When Sough was trying to make up his mind
~~about~~ reached a decisive stage, Sough
was called to the telephone & left the room.

2

He was away for some minutes
When he returned he informed us
that he had just been in telephone
conversation with the C.G.S. who had
informed him that the C.M.C. had
decided that the attack should be made.
He had put up all the resistance
possible up to this stage but in view
of Sory's message & the manner of its
delivery I felt that no further
opposition was open to us and that

we would have to obey the order.
But Bidwood had formed a like
Conclusion. Afterwards, but not at
the time, I did feel that we should
have gone one step further and have
asked for the C in C consideration of
our objections and his definite order.
The step wd. have been an extreme
one of course, but much as we
admired Weyss in his many qualities
we knew his impetuosity and feared
it - and that might have been
our excuse.

What I have written above may

be taken as completely accurate.

Yours Sincerely

Benedict White

12 December 1929.

Dear Sir William,

I fear that this will not be in time to reach you before Christmas, but it bears our heartiest wishes for yourself and Lady Birdwood in the New Year. We down here are just now going through a very difficult period, and I don't feel sure that 1930 may not bring some intensification of it. I fancy that the action of the laws of supply and demand is only delayed, and not averted, by our arbitration system, and that we have still to go through our final period of post-war deflation. That seems to be what is happening now - there is a great deal of unemployment and much real deprivation in which returned soldiers are bearing their full share. The worst of it is that one cannot really see any satisfactory end to it until the less enlightened sort of employer sees his way to follow the more enlightened and lets the rank and file right into the secret of the profits and loss in his industry, and so gives evidence that he is not really profiteering. That is the suspicion at the back of the men's minds, and good and unselfish leadership could, I feel sure, do with them what it did during the war - for they are just the same material.

I do not often see White, who is, I fancy, kept fairly well occupied by his New Zealand Loan & Mercantile Agency Company business and seldom now visits Sydney or Canberra. Gellibrand I see occasionally. Chauvel and Monash, you will have seen, have been made generals - Chauvel thinks that this was on the recommendation of the returned soldiers' league. He is, I believe, retiring about April or May, though this may not be generally known. At present we have Heritage as Commandant in Sydney, Dodds having gone to Melbourne as A.G. and Bruche to London. Who will be the next Inspector-General, I don't know. Some fancy that the office will be separated from that of Chief of Staff, and that Bruche will be appointed to one and perhaps Dodds to the other; but the Government is out to save money, and this may not commend itself. There is talk of closing the Naval College - I greatly hope that it will not be done, just through a passing wave of financial difficulty. This difficulty is not so great as it appears, for, although the Government has about £70,000,000 of loan money to repay this year, it is mostly borrowed in Australia and will either be reinvested in a new loan or will set free money to be invested in business and so enable other Australian money to be put into the loan. The new Prime Minister, Mr. Scullin, is a man of fine character and widely trusted, but people are uncertain about some of the rest of his team.

My war has now proceeded as far as Bullecourt, and I have been struggling with the fragmentary evidence, largely given to me by yourself at the time, as to the origins of that battle. I remember your telling me that you disliked the plan of the attack with tanks, but that you had received before the battle a message from Haig saying that it was a very urgent and important matter and that he set great store by it. I can't find this message in the records, but think that it must have been given to you through Gough at the final conference on April 10, after the first attack had been called off and before the attack was finally delivered. It may, however, have been delivered to you when you rang up Malcolm late on the night of the 9th and urged that the attack should be postponed, as the people on the left had not seized the Hindenburg Line as expected. If you have any recollection that would guide me in connection with this battle, I would be very grateful if you would give me the benefit of it. Volume IV is the most difficult of the series, containing as it does the whole story of 1917, but I hope to finish it some time ~~next year.~~ *in 1931.*

I greatly hope that we shall see you in Australia on a visit, if not for a more lengthy stay, in the course of the next few years.

With every good wish,
I am, Yours sincerely,

H.V. 1st Bullecourt

538 COLLINS STREET,
MELBOURNE.

16th December 1930.

C. E. W. Bean Esq.,
Victoria Barracks,
PADDINGTON, N.S.W.

Dear Bean,

Your letter of the 2nd instant and the three chapters dealing with Bullecourt and Lagnicourt duly reached me and I have read the first three chapters with a great deal of interest. If I may venture to say so they represent some of the very best work you have done and I am impressed at the extraordinary skill with which you have pieced together a great mass of information.

I have no very important comments to make. As far as I can see or am able to say the account is a perfectly fair one. In chapter 9 page 366 I feel a little disposed to question, not so much the substance but the wording, of the criticism of Haig and ~~self~~ ^{rough}. The wording you have used states the truth, as I believe it, quite ~~actually~~ ^{accurately} but the wording might I think be improved. In chapter 10 page 384 where I have made a pencil annotation I would suggest re-wording in order to avoid giving a wrongful impression that men refused to stand. The body was only a small one and the point is therefore not of great importance but still adhering to the truth I think it might be re-worded in

such a way as not to give opportunity to ill disposed persons of seizing on a point not in Australia's favour.

I should be very glad in due course to receive the remaining three chapters.

May I take this opportunity of sending to you and your wife my very warmest wishes for all possible happiness at Christmas and for a new year crowned with all blessings.

Yours sincerely,

Ronald White

Australian War Museum,
Wool Exchange,
King Street,
MELBOURNE.

November 5th 1919.

C. E. W. Bean, Esq.,
Tuggranong Homestead,
Via QUEANBEYAN.

*He proposes to
be in Melb. on 14th*

Dear Charlie/

have

I ~~enclose~~ a note from Langley to whom I wrote about the 'Young Australia' idea. I want you to see him and if you wish him to be in Melbourne before the evening of the 14th, please send me a wire and I shall advise him.

Many thanks indeed for Buchanan's letter. He wrote me on similar lines. I have not the least feeling about his hostile attitude and I am greatly obliged to you for your reply to him. He appears to be one of those old-fashioned people who is disposed to prostrate himself before everything British. Enduring Imperialism does not lie that way. It is a thousand times better that Australia and Britain should deal squarely and openly with one another than that Australia should be sacrificed because of what India or America might think.

Chauvel is very interesting and convincing on the question of Allenby and his failure to punish natives for outrages against the Light Horse. Also you will be interested to know that Chauvel now frankly agrees that my attack has done much good. He has come completely round, although of course he strongly believes as we all do, that Surafend was greatly to be deplored.

Buchanan and one anonymous man are now the only two who have protested. Our fellows do not seek flattery and I think their unanimity against Allenby and Murray is the best possible evidence of legitimate grievance.

Yours sincerely,

P.S.G.

*I enclose copy of a rough note
on Allenby.*

*with
Muller's
papers*

H. J. Gullett on cf. Bullcourt
ALLENBY.

Allenby, in his attack at Beersheba, followed in detail the scheme put on to paper by Chetwode before Allenby arrived. Although the disposition and attack which led to the breaking of the Gaza-Beersheba Line was very masterfully carried out the subsequent pursuit was very feeble. Whether Chauvel failed Allenby with the cavalry is as yet unknown but that the cavalry did fail badly in not destroying practically the whole of the Turkish Army is undoubted. Apparently the blame lies against Allenby. The Jerusalem operations were finely conceived and vigorously carried out. But in the three next enterprises Allenby had three bad failures, first on the Plain of Sharon, second the Amman raid, third the proposal to take up the area Es Salt-Amman-Madeba. The first two failed chiefly because of G.H.Q.'s extraordinary leakage of information. The first principles of a surprise attack were neglected. Everyone in Palestine and as far back as Cairo, knew of these operations which depended absolutely upon secrecy, two or three weeks before they were carried out. The second venture East of Jordan was more jealously guarded, but even then the coming attack was fairly common knowledge. Contrast Jackson's secrecy. Allenby profited by by these blunders in his last great advance, the preliminary work to which was admirably concealed and much convincing ^{bluff} ~~plunder~~ and camouflage put into operation.

In any estimate of Allenby as a great General, consideration must be given to his overwhelming force and to the wretched moral and physical condition of the enemy in the last months of the campaign. Allenby certainly made the very most of his opportunity but any general with qualities above mediocre must have won decisive success. Allenby's only claim to rank with the great captains lies in the fact that he exploited his opportunity to its extreme limit.

5796.

8 May 1930.

Confidential

Major W.H.L. Watson, D.S.O., D.C.M.,
The White Cottage,
Drax Avenue,
Wimbledon, England.

Dear Sir,

In writing the narrative of the First Battle of Bullecourt for the Australian Official History, I have been much assisted by your interesting book, "A Company of Tanks". It is natural that the various sources on which the narrative depends differ widely in certain respects, but I have proceeded on the general principle of adopting those parts of each account which must be correct (assuming that the witnesses are honest). There remain, however, a good many points that require clearing up, and it is possible that some of these have been elucidated by members of the tank crews who returned from Germany. It is possible also that there may be another side to the view that the staff work of the Tank Corps was seriously defective in that (a) the tanks, when an experimental and uncertain instrument, were employed as if reliance could be placed upon their punctuality and speed, and (b) after the first failure in punctuality (for which there were obvious reasons), they were nevertheless unpunctual on the second morning.

I think that you will find the narrative is fair to the tank crews. The identification of the particular tanks, however, is only tentative, and I should be most grateful for any assistance in this matter, or for any other comments. This was our only unfortunate experience with tanks, with which we were afterwards happily associated more often than members of the A.I.F. perhaps realise. I think most Australians appreciate the fairness of your references to the A.I.F. and, as you know, their cordiality towards the tanks greatly increased in the later stages of the war.

I should be glad if you would return the enclosed narrative, which of course, until it is published, is confidential, together with any comments. Sir James Edmonds, the British Official Historian, is kindly acting as the medium for my correspondence with British officers.

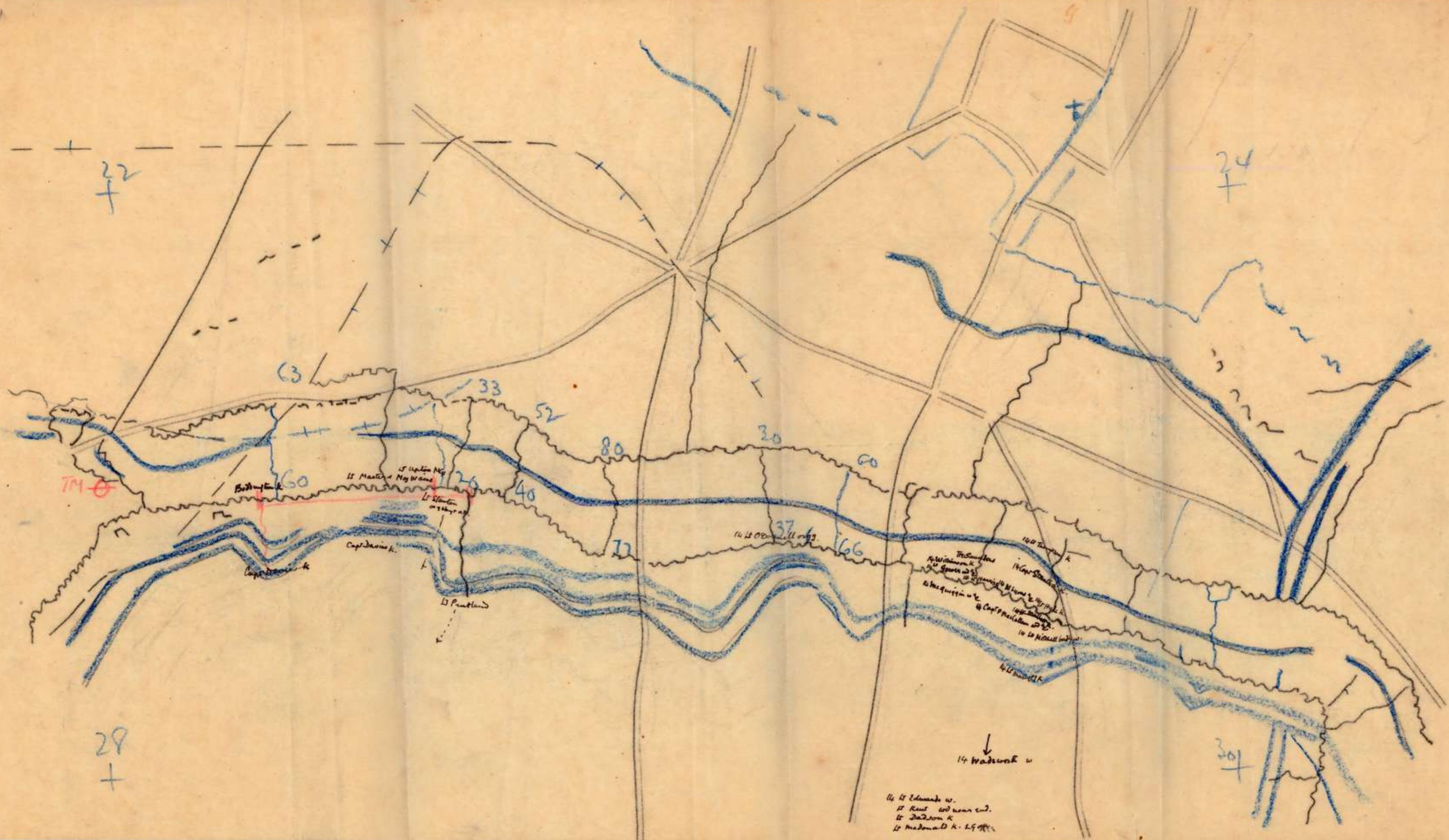
Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean.



28

Tracing of wire in front of Hindenburg
line ^{Apr. 11, 1917} from air photos. (Capt. Bean.
(It is not quite correct in U30A 91))



TM

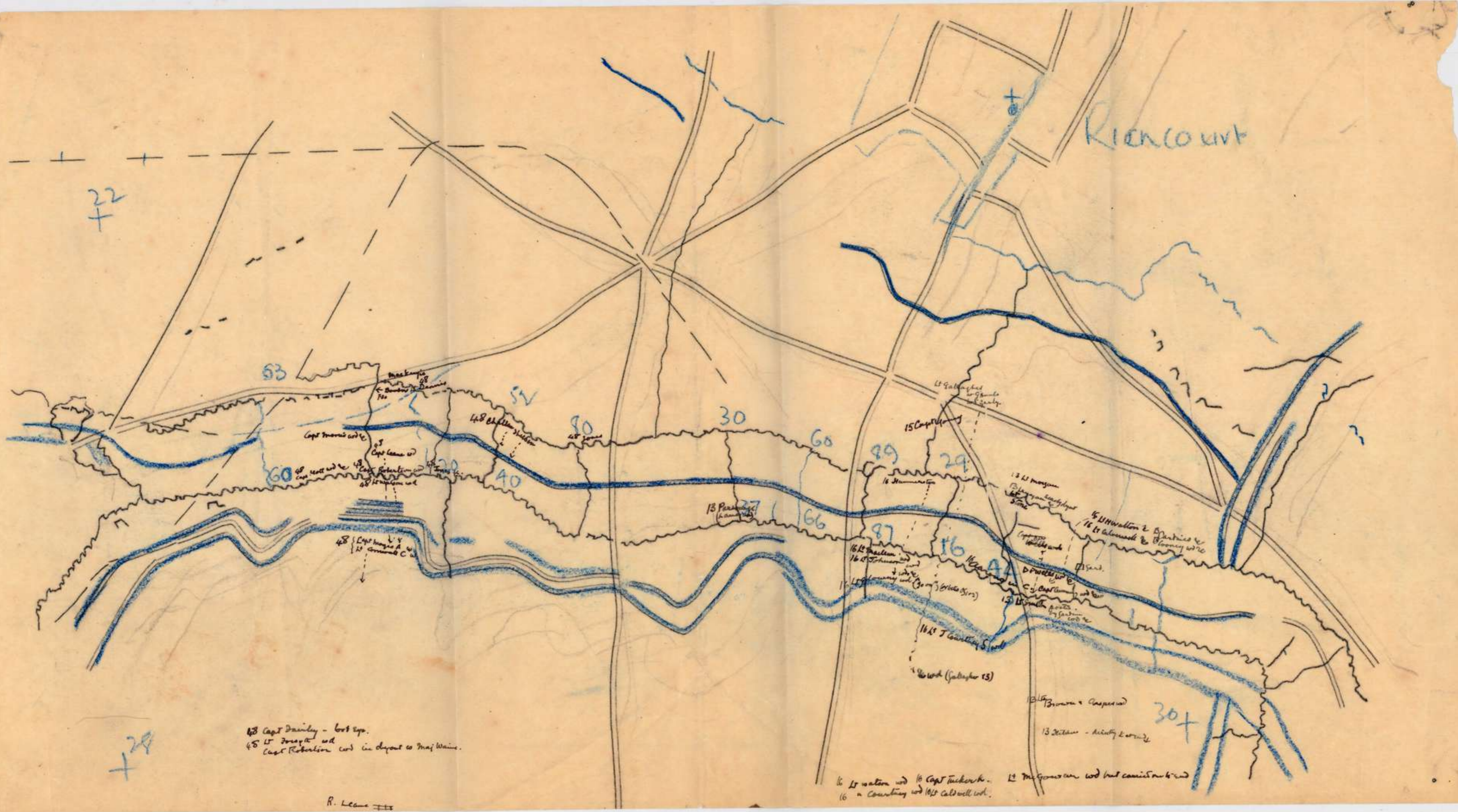
Bedford K.

Capt. Jackson

1st Pennington

14th Edwards W.
 1st Ruel
 1st Dalton K.
 1st Mademoiselle K.

14th Edwards W.
 1st Ruel
 1st Dalton K.
 1st Mademoiselle K.



48 Capt. Draxley - lost exp.
 48 Lt. [Name] and
 Capt. Robertson and in deposit to Maj. Wain.

R. Leane

16 Lt. [Name] and 16 Capt. Tucker -
 16 n. Courtney and 16 Lt. Caldwell and.

12 Lt. [Name] and had carried on to

5451.

6 February 1930.

Brig-General C.H. Brand, C.B., C.M.G., C.V.O., D.S.O.,
Defence Department,
Melbourne.

Dear General,

In writing the narrative of the Battle of Bullecourt I find the statement by Major Watson of the tanks that when, early in the morning of April 10, the tanks failed to arrive Holmes postponed the attack for an hour (presumably from 4.30 to 5.30) while waiting for news of their arrival, and that when they arrived about 5 o'clock he cancelled the attack, as they could not reach the front in time. In the records I can find no trace of the order for postponement from 4.30 to 5.30.

I should be grateful if you could give me the benefit of your recollection.

Yours sincerely,

(E. W. Bean)

2ND CGS/AK.



IMPERIAL GENERAL STAFF

(AUSTRALIAN SECTION).

ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS,
VICTORIA BARRACKS,

No.

MELBOURNE. 6th March, 1930.

Dear

Bean

Re the Bullecourt stunt on 10th April, 1917, I have seen Colonel Miles G.II of the 4th Division who represented that Division at my Headquarters. He knows of no instruction issued either verbally or in writing for a postponement of the attack from 4.30 a.m. to 5 a.m. on that morning.

Tanks Last night I had a long talk with Capt. Jacka who was the Bde. Intelligence Officer on that occasion. He remembers asking me, 20 minutes before zero hour viz: 4.30 a.m. to hold up the attack for half an hour to see if the ~~Tanks~~ would turn up. They were back near Mory. I must have said yes and acquainted Division. More than half an hour's grace would have disclosed to the enemy our intentions for at 5 a.m. day was breaking.

No doubt the O/C. Tanks heard of this extension of time, even then there was no appearance.

Yours sincerely,

CH Brand

Captain C.E. Bean,
War Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
SYDNEY, (N.S.W.).

(Brigade Operation Orders 76 and 77)

To FACE.

The Battalions L.O's moved out over the ground at 12.15 a.m. and patrolled in front of jumping off place. They next laid tapes to indicate Battalions and Coys flanks.

At 2.15 a.m. Battalions started to move out into position in Sunken Road and were all in place and ready for the attack by 3.30 a.m.

At 3 a.m. first "Tank" arrived at rendezvous at Railway crossing. L.O. PAD got in touch with section commander of tanks operating on right front, and found it impossible for tanks to beach 1st objective in 15 minutes. O.C "Tanks" was then taken to Battn's H.Q. where he verified above statement to C.O's. Col. Brockman then informed FACE and asked for infantry time to be put back 15 minutes. This was not granted. Decision was to stick to programme. In the meantime two other tanks had arrived, and a 4th was reported out of action.

At 3.20 a.m. tanks were led out to and lined up in front of jumping off place. The interval between tanks was approx 100 yards. Three tanks were in position and ready to move off by 4.20 a.m. The other two tanks to operate on left flank were not then in position. L.O. got in touch, pointed out level crossing to one who ignored same, and tried to get over Sunken Road. Consequence was tank got into road and could not be got out again. The other Tank complained of engine trouble. This left us with only 3 Tanks to operate on whole front, instead of 6.

At 4-30 a.m. 3 Tanks already in position moved out, followed at 4-45 a.m. by Infantry in 4 successive waves. About $\frac{1}{2}$ way to first objective, 2 Tanks stopped and commenced to open fire; thus giving away position, and almost telling enemy that some attack was in progress. Infantry decided to push on alone, and soon were in first objective. The third Tank by this time had got up to first objective, and crossed over to between that and 2nd. objective, and was almost immediately put out of action by a Gun firing from REINCOURT.

Runner got back to Battalion Headquarters at 5-16 a.m. with message from Major Black of FILE, stating first objective gained, and pushing on to 2nd.

At 6-3 a.m. message came stating all Units in first and second objectives. From this time on, the fighting was most severe, continual Bombing parties having to be beaten off, while all the time Machine Guns from all directions kept up a continual fire ~~XXXXXXXX~~ ~~XXXXXXXX~~ on Parapet, also very heavy gun fire. Absolute infilade fire from QUEANT being experienced, causing serious casualties.

At 7.21 a.m. definite information was obtained that 1st and 2nd objectives and being consolidated and that also casualties were very heavy: that tanks were an absolute failure and that prisoners were being sent back.

At 7.48 a.m. first contact plane flew over and drew very heavy M/Gun fire from QUEANT.

At 8 a.m. S.O.S. signals were sent up 18 times by our troops but failed to get any response from artillery.

Prisoners arrived: 37 in one party and several small parties of twos and threes. Many of these were killed by enemy shell fire. Prisoners examined belong to 3rd M.G. Coy, 124th WURTEMBERGERS.

At 8.45 a.m. report received from Captain Murray of FACT confirming report as to capture of 1st and 2nd objectives.

At 10.12 a.m. message from Captain Wadsworth of PAD urgently asking for S.A.A., bombs and also men.

At 10.45 a.m. Col. Breckman sent to FACE asking for carrying parties from reserve Battalion, also for artillery co-operation on flanks, especially the right.

At 11.20 a.m. Lieut Aarens of FILE came back reporting situation very serious, both flanks being bombed back, supply of S.A.A. and bombs almost expended and only 25% of personnel left.

Proposed to fall back to line of shell holes out in front, out of bomb range and hang on there until night.

At 11.30 a.m. Sgt Beland of PAD reported supply of bombs absolutely used up, and Brigade on our left retiring.

Having lost about 80% of strength and supply of bombs and S.A.A. being expended, FACE at 11.45 a.m. was compelled to retire to original line held.

N.B. Special report is being forwarded, dealing with "Tank" operations.

Jacka Capt.
J.O.
14th Bn
AIF

TINGHA

N.S.W

13TH BATTALION,

A.I.F.

FRANCE.

10.3.23.

copy of 2nd
copy of 2nd

Dear Mr. Bean,

Colonel Durrant says Col. Peck says that he saw evidence of the following at the War Office.

Re Bullecourt: - It seems that the Germans specially feared the 4th Bde. & that their front line troops were always warned when we were opposite them. Also there was a reward of 1000 marks for each C.O. of our Bde & 1500 for the Brig.

I have the 13th's History ready for publication, but would like something more definite on

the above. Can you kindly
put me on the track?

Yours very sincerely
T. A. White

says that he saw evidence of the
following at the War Office.

Re Buller's court: - It seems that the
German especially feared the 4th Bde.
* that their front line troops were
always worn when we were
opposite them, unless there was an
reward of 1000 marks for each C.O.
of our Bde & 1500 for the Brig.

I have the 13th's History ready
for publication, but would like
something more definite on

TELEPHONE:
CENTRAL 4780.



ADDRESS ALL COMMUNICATIONS
TO "THE SECRETARY."

H/V
Bullecourt.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

No.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE,

MELBOURNE.

March 14th 1923

My dear Sean

The document referred to was shown me by one of the 14th Bn officers who returned from Germany after the armistice. I did NOT see it at the War Office. It

was the intelligence summary of the German Division opposing us. which his fellow (examined) had picked up in the dug out.

The German guessed it, in searching him. It gave the names of Graud, Durant, McSharry, Prockman and self. and an estimate of our characteristics. based on reports given by our prisoners (Australian)

The 4th Bde were given a very bloodthirsty "chit" in common with other Australian troops and states that it was the constant policy of the Bde "to kill all prisoners except a few 'samples'" It then went on to say that the capture of the unarmoured units

be rewarded by a money gratuity as follows.

Grand 1500 marks

each Co. 1000 marks

I hasten to say that the mark had greater value then than now

I was going to get a copy of the document but we were busily engaged on the new military employment Section of Demob: at the time and so missed the opportunity

It was quite apparent that the Germans had copies of our Force lists. Because the record of the permanent officers was quite accurate

My endeavour to get touch with Edmunds (I feel certain it was he) if you like, and ascertain if he has the document still. Hope you are keeping very fit.

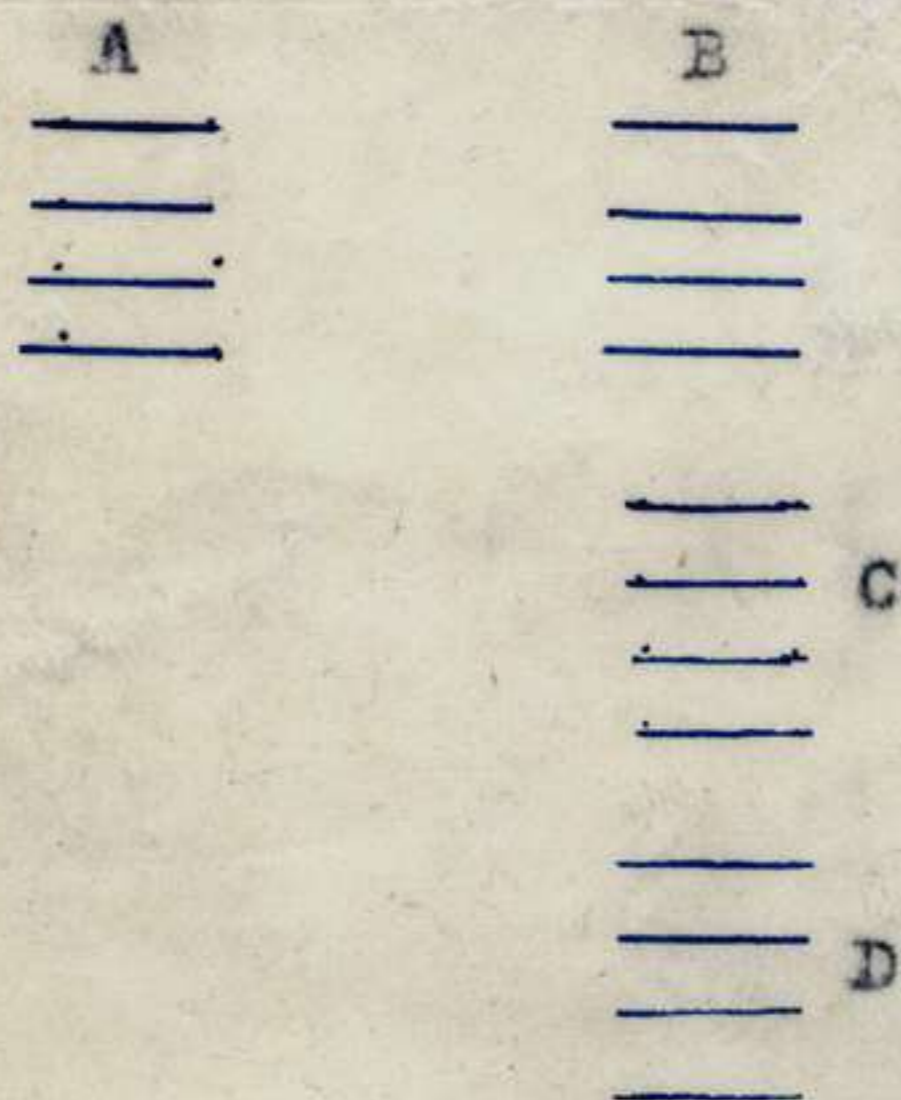
Yours sincerely
J. Beck

13th BATTALION, A. I. F.

REPORT ON OPERATIONS NEAR BULLECOURT, 11th April, 1917.

Reference Maps, 57c N W and 51b S W, 1/10,000.

- (1) The Battalion was bivouaced at FAVREUIL and on the 8th April, the C.O. made a personal reconnaissance of the ground with Battalion Staff and Company Commanders.
- (2) There was a conference of C.O.'s at Brigade Headquarters, NOREUIL at 10.30 a.m. on 9-4-17 and at 12 midnight on night 10/11th April, 1917.
- (3) On morning of 10th the Battalion was in readiness to attack but owing to tanks being late this attack was cancelled.
- (4) No written Battalion orders were issued but the C.O. had several conferences with Company Commanders and officers, and all understood their orders. These verbal orders were based on 4th Aus. Inf. Brigade Order No. 76 of 10-4-17 issued at 6 p.m., and the continuation order of same date issued at 10.45 p.m.
- (5) My plan was to have the battalion entrenched in Railway cutting from C 5 d 2.8 to C 6 c 1.4. At 4.45 a.m. the battalion was to move out in Artillery formation and follow the 16th Battalion, and forming lines when the second objective was crossed, they were to push on in the following formation



and dig in as follows:-

"A" Coy.	U 18 c 6.4	to	U 24 b 0.6
"B" Coy.	U 24 b 0.6	to	U 24 a 9.5
"C" Coy.	U 24 a 9.5	to	U 24 c 6.8
"D" Coy.	U 24 c 6.8	to	U 24 c 4.0.

Four platoons, one per company, were to assist the tanks in mopping up REINCOURT.

If the 16th Battalion met with serious opposition in taking the Hindenburg line, the 13th Battalion was to assist them, and then carry out their full orders as far as possible.

Four Vickers Guns of No. 1 Section, 4th A.M.G. Coy. under Lieut. Veness were attached to the battalion and were allotted one to each company.

- (6) At 3.35 a.m. the Battalion was in the railway cutting ready to move out, and I had a final conference with the officers.

(7)

At 4.45 a.m. punctually, "A" and "B" Companies moved out, followed later by "C" and "D" Companies at distances of 200 yds.

As soon as they left the shelter of the cutting losses from shell fire commenced. When about 600 yards from the 1st objective the battalion came under heavy machine gun fire, which became more intense at the first wire and officers and men fell fast. The 16th Battalion had then taken the 1st objective but were seen to be in very great difficulties with the 2nd objective, the wire in front of which was uncut, and it was only too evident that the 16th Battalion had suffered enormous losses from machine gun fire in taking the 1st objective. The Tanks had then not reached the first trench; there was a Tank in the wire, and a German Machine gun only 10 yards from it, firing heavily on our men. This gun was put out of action by our leading Company (A). The 13th Battalion pressed on and with the 16th, took the 2nd objective, mainly by bombing up the communication trenches and then bombing to the right and left. They soon established touch with the 14th Battalion on their left; and by bombing extended their right flank to U 30 b 0.6 and U 30 a 9.4.

The machine gun fire rendered visual signalling impossible and the open ground swept by machine gun fire was almost certain death to runners, so that no messages were coming in to Battalion Headquarters, but at 7.15 a.m. Captain Murray wrote an account of the situation, which I received at 9 a.m. and transmitted to Brigade Headquarters by runner.

About 7.20 a.m. a large amount of enemy movement was seen around REINCOURT. Captain Murray sent up S.O.S. flares for an artillery barrage but none was forthcoming.

At about 7.30 a.m. the Germans counter-attacked by bombing down a communication trench from REINCOURT. This was beaten off and a combined party of 13th and 16th bombers beat the enemy back this trench to within 100 yards of REINCOURT putting in a block. At the same time the enemy counter-attacked our right in the 2nd objective with bombs but were beaten back suffering heavy loss.

At 9 a.m. a battalion of the enemy in close formation moving from QUEANT to the N. of REINCOURT was dispersed by our machine gun fire, suffering heavy loss.

From then until 10.45 a.m. our men were re-organizing and consolidating, during which time two small bombing attacks by the Germans on our left were beaten off. All the bombs were collected and dumps made near each bombing block.

Captain Murray went along the whole position and reports that the 4th Brigade held 900 yards of the Hindenburg line. He commenced the organization of the whole brigade position. At 10.45 a.m. heavy bomb attacks by the Germans were started from the right and left of both objectives, also down the communication trench from REINCOURT and a communication trench running N and S on the W. of REINCOURT, six attacks in all.

These attacks were very severe and our bombs were quickly exhausted, and our men pressed back to the centre of our position from all sides. The Germans had machine guns trained on the parapet which frustrated every endeavour on the part of our men to go along the top and attack the bombers with the bayonet.

Attempts to call up an Artillery barrage by power buzzer and S.O.S. flares failed, the buzzer being jammed by the Germans and the flares apparently not being observed.

Except where parties were cut off the men tried to get back over the open under a fearful machine gun and rifle fire; the losses being very heavy.

Shortly after noon the position was entirely evacuated.

(3) At nightfall, the remnants of the Battalion, under cover of the outposts of the 52nd Battalion, withdrew to NORREUIL and thence to FAVERUIL.

(9) The failure of the Tanks was the primary cause of our failure to carry out our original plan. They were knocked out by an anti-tank gun situated on the W. side of REINCOURT, at a range of about 600 yards. This gun was right in the open shooting over open sights. No Tank reached the second objective, and only one (perhaps two) crossed the first objective. Our men put the anti-tank gun out of action with Machine gun fire from the second objective, but by this time it was too late to save the tanks. The fact that ~~our~~ our artillery were slow in putting a barrage on REINCOURT resulted in the bombing attacks being pressed with great vigour; also the gap between the 4th and 12th Brigades gave the Germans a great advantage. We did not have enough had grenades or rifle grenades, but the role allotted to the 13th Battalion was an above-ground one, hence we took more S.A.A. and fewer bombs. Ground flares were lit at 8 a.m. I cannot understand why the R.F.C. thought we were in REINCOURT.

(10) Our losses are as follows:-

	<u>Killed</u>	<u>Wounded</u>	<u>Missing</u>	<u>Total</u>
Officers	6	6	9	21
Other ranks	19	112	358	489
	25	118	367	510.

J. Masman
Lieut-Colonel,

C.O., 13th Battalion, A.I.F.

5391.

22 January 1930.

Lieut.-Colonel H.W. Murray, V.C., C.M.G., D.S.O., D.C.M.,
Glenlyon,
via Richmond, N. S'land.

Dear Murray,

I have been writing up the narrative of the First Battle of Bullecourt. The records are fairly complete, but there are a few points on which I should be grateful for your help, if you could give it to me:-

- (1) I remember your telling me that, on hearing of Black's death, you looked for him, but I think you said that you were not sure whether you saw his body, though you were under the impression that you did. I should be glad if you could give me the benefit of your recollection on this point; also whether this was before, after, or during your survey of the trenches.
- (2) Some time before the final order to withdraw there was a conference of a number of officers which decided, if necessary, to leave the trench and hold on to a line of shell-holes. Can you tell me what officers were at this conference, for example, was Sommerville there? Aarons gave me most of the names, which, as far as I know, included yourself, Gardiner, Hummerston, Aarons, and Kerr. Was Sommerville or Fletcher there?
- (3) I have a note that all your platoon commanders and your runner were wounded. I think this occurred before reaching the trenches. Could you tell me if this was so, and what were their names?

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

P.S. I think I remember your telling me years ago that some photographs of the Bullecourt fight were in existence. Could you put me on to anyone who would be likely to possess them?

Glenlyon,
Richmond,
N.Q.

12 3 30

Dear Captain Bean

I am enclosing replies to your questions. I have forgotten quite a lot. The replies are for your use publicly, this is strictly private, & not in any way for publication.

It was George Gardiner's first fight in France his company. in fact B.C. & D Coys of the 13th had a pretty good passage over, as the 16th supported by A. Coy of the 13th had for the time smothered the German fire. It was absolutely impossible to form any rear line of defence with the German wire uncut, their absolute command of the position & good visibility, & there were no shell holes I saw only 3 on my return journey from the German trench.

Sorry I don't know of any photographs of Bullecourt— There's quite a lot one could say, but it's better left unsaid, you would have your own ideas of the veracity of the various officers. Arsons left the trench long before the general retreat, although long reports had gone back to the 13th & 16th boys.

With kindest regards

Yours sincerely
Hunnery

Glenlyon,
Richmond,
N.Q.

? (1) Black was killed between the front + support line of German trench after capturing the front line & attacking the support. I saw his body within fifteen minutes of his being hit. He was shot through the head & as I was assisting the 16th attack on the support line I had not time to even take his personal effects.

? (2) I cannot remember the names of the officers at the trench conference. I never seriously entertained the idea of forming a line of shell-holes or digging in behind the German wire. First because there were practically no shell-holes, secondly the Germans commanded the position with enfilade oblique + frontal fire. I estimated we would get only

Glenlyon,
Richmond,
N.Q.

(2)

10% of any party through the German wire & these would not be physically or mentally fit to dig in or fight.

?(3) All my platoon commanders were wounded in the attack before reaching the German trenches & my number was wounded in or near the German wire. His name was Stewart and a particularly brave good lad. The only platoon commander whose name I can remember was John Brown wounded by machine gun fire fully five hundred yards before reaching the wire & afterwards in early 1918, killed at Neuve-Eglise by a long range shell.

5474.

10 February 1930.

A.R. Compton, Esq.,
"Beverley",
24, Balmain Road,
Leichhardt, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

I am writing up the narrative of the First Battle of Bullecourt for the Official History. Captain Gardiner happened to mention the other day that, in the middle of this scrap, you came to him with a ration of rum, which you insisted on his drinking. I had never heard the story before, and would be grateful if you would let me know how the rum got through and how it was distributed.

I enclose a stamped and addressed envelope for your reply.

Yours faithfully,

C. E. Bean
Official Historian.

"Ceverley"
211 Belmont Rd
Luchland
12.230.

Mr J. E. H. Bear.
Official Historian.

(5474)

Dear Sir,

Well I remember. As I kept
gardeners to have + nip of rum. Having made
it + practice to carry + water bottle full of
same when in the line, experience taught
me that many men required + broken
when conditions had been warm, or were
warm. There was no rum brought for-
ward to us whilst we were in the
Hindenburg line ^{11-2-17.} to my knowledge. In
fact no beer + bomb. let alone rum,
came forward. As I gardeners was one of
many whom I gave + nip to that day.
In fact Mr Dean to be exact, I had
two bottles full of rum on this occasion,
because, having gone to do this attack.
on the 10-4-17, we were turned back + whilst
on the return journey, I soon ran out
of rum, so deemed it wise to carry more.
Knowing we were in for + good dealing
up. At least that was my thoughts.

When we were told that the attack would
 be on ~~the~~ following morning. That is
 how the run was there. I always
 remember the storm as Bencoolen.
 because the 13th + 16th attacked there.
 However should you wish it I could
 give you a good detail of the whole
 affair. Trusting I have given you the
 desired information. By the way I had
 quite a job to prevail upon Capt Gardner
 to let me see the map. why I do not know.
 I am inclined to think ^{that Capt Gardner thought} I was larking
 + joking with him. I may add I never
 drank rum. the smell was enough
 for me.

Yours faithfully
Albert Plompton

Bullecourt

Rayleigh

Point Lonsdale

29th March 1924

^W
C. E. Bean Esq.
Historian
Tuggranong
Federal Territory
via Queanbeyan N S W

Dean Mr Bean

Mr Barrett has written and informed me that he has some maps kindly given ^{by you} to him for me, and which I will get next time I go to town. I highly appreciate your kindness and as I have said before any military correspondence I have will always be at your disposal. I trust Mr Barrett's retainer can be extended beyond 30th June next. His assistance has been of great value to me.

You were good enough to offer to assist me and whilst I don't want to ~~abuse~~ your offer I would like some assistance in reference to the first battle of Bullecourt which I am just about to describe. I will give you my general impressions and then indicate one or two points on which I would like enlightenment.

I look on General Gough as a man of considerable courage, but of mediocre intellect, and saturated with that prevalent optimism, which in the late war would have often been grotesque but for its continually tragic consequences. He was also a lazy man disinclined to intellectual thinking, obstinate, and backed up by an extremely ^{inefficient} staff. The success of Allenby's offensive at Arras was grossly overestimated by that officer (also an optimist) and his communications to Gough led that General to think that the German army was on the point of disintegration, and that he (Gough) could break through on his front without trouble and chase them to Berlin, incidentally gaining a great reputation. This idea became an obsession with Gough, and ^{no} evidence to the contrary was allowed to interfere with ^{this} alluring picture. Australian protests were treated with contempt and he determined at all costs "to bullock" his idea through.

The plan of a surprise attack with tanks seems to have originated with Major Watson their commander, and to have been adopted off hand by Gough. After the fiasco of the 10th April when the show had been given away and a surprise was no longer possible, why the attack was not abandoned — as surprise was the "essence of the contract" and especially after the Fleurbaix example — is beyond me. Some say that Colonel Peck (14th) then declined to accept responsibility for the result. I understand the Germans took advantage of the interval (between 10th and 11th April) to bring up thousands of storm troops, and made the attempt

absolutely impossible.

The tanks appear to have failed very badly. I recognise they did not receive fair play and the personnel was exhausted, but their effort (as a body) appears to have been very feeble.

The 62nd Division's part in the battle on the left appears to have been purely ornamental. It is alleged that that Division was not to attack Bullecourt until it had been attacked by the 46th and 48th Battalions A I F. In other words two Battalions were to clean out the position and then a division was to walk in after the job had been done. Assuming that to be correct ~~the~~ the 62nd seems to have made no effort even to assist the Australians in the retreat. That division failed badly again on the 3rd May and its record is not a creditable one.

The 4th Division Artillery appears to have been very poorly handled in the engagement, the sum total of its achievement being practically to butcher a lot of our wounded at the end of the battle.

I would feel obliged if you could advise me how far my general impressions are correct and give me what details you feel you can—consistently with your duties as official historian—in reference to the tanks, the part played by the 62nd Division, and our 4th Division artillery. The story of the Battle has never (so far as I am aware) been written and I am very anxious to get a clear ^{and accurate} grasp of the facts. Thanking you in anticipation,

Yours sincerely

Newton Wanliss

8th May, 1924.

CONFIDENTIAL.

N. Wanliss, Esq.,
"Rayleigh",
Point Lonsdale, Vic.

Dear Mr. Wanliss,

I am sorry that I have left your questions of March 29th pass so long without an answer. I don't really know enough about Gough to be sure of the nature of his intellect, but he had no grasp of the principles which were necessary for the control of great offensives in the late war. He was a cavalry officer and would have been an excellent dashing patrol-leader, but he made many gross mistakes with his army. His worst fault, we used to think, was his tendency to undertake partial and disjointed attacks on narrow sectors. His chief-of-staff cannot I think have been an officer of sufficient grasp, or he would probably have prevailed on his general to prevent some of these attacks. I wouldn't say, however, that his staff was extremely inefficient. I personally think that Gough was a very bad general, impulsive, and thoughtless, and he probably made great difficulties for his staff.

Gough's notion at Bullecourt was to break in behind the rear of the enemy. Strategically it was a good move but he overlooked all the tactical difficulties, and his plan of attacking the Bullecourt re-entrant was an impossible one. I think he was probably anxious to have a hand in the Arras fighting, possibly from mixed motives, but especially because he was optimistic about his chance of breaking in upon the enemy's flank and rear. Birdwood of course thoroughly disliked the Bullecourt plan, but could not prevail with Gough.

The Tank Corps had always been urging that the proper way for using tanks was in mass. This was the first

attempt, but the tanks were then comparatively weak instruments and there were not enough of them. Later at Cambrai, Hamel, and in the Battle of Amiens they were employed according to this theory with great success. The tanks used at Bullecourt, however, were slow and weak, and not impervious against machine-gun fire. Our experience of them in later years was that they were manned by very game officers and crews, but I think on this occasion they ^{crews} were dazed through rough handling. I don't think it is the crews that you must blame, but the tank of that date. As to the "surprise" of the 10th and 11th, I was inclined to think that the assembly on the 10th must have been observed by the enemy, and that he must have realised what it meant. I have since been through some of the German records, which seem to show quite clearly that the German staff had no suspicion that its line was so nearly attacked on the 10th. Some of the troops on that day must have been observed, but the meaning of their movements must have been misunderstood.

Again with regard to the 62nd Division, the orders were somewhat as follows. The 4th Australian Division was to deliver a surprise attack at dawn with twelve tanks. If this attack succeeded three tanks were to move through Bullecourt and then back through the enemy's wire, breaking it down in front of the 62nd Division. Upon this being done the 62nd would attempt to deliver an assault by daylight through the gaps in the wire made by the tanks. Only one tank actually reached Bullecourt or its outskirts, and none broke through the wire in front of the 62nd Division. The attack by the 4th Division had been assisted by the fact that it was made at dawn, and that it was to some extent at least a surprise; and also by the fact that the tanks undoubtedly attracted much of the enemy's attention at the time when he would have otherwise been firing on the infantry. The 62nd was afterwards appealed to, to deliver an attack on the flank, and I believe its commander refused to do so. In my opinion he was right. The ground over which his troops would

have had to move was as flat as a tennis-court. To attempt any operation over it without artillery, in plain daylight, after the enemy had been well awakened by our operations, would simply have meant the annihilation of any brigade which he put at the task. No Australian commander, I think, would have attempted it. I have felt that the criticism often loosely levelled by our men at the 62nd Division was never fair. I was there at the time of both attacks and saw the position and the ground; and the fact that the 62nd was a Territorial Division, and perhaps not one of the best, has I am sure nothing whatever to do with the result. In the same way the artillery of the 4th Division acted as it was told to do. The attack was to be made without bombardment, and as far as I know, or could see at the time, the divisional artillery carried out its task as ordered. Its instructions were, so far as I know, to barrage the German trenches as soon as the troops were driven from them. At such a time it is inevitable that there should be wounded lying about the ground which its own artillery is shelling. The alternative would be to withhold shell-fire, but that would only allow the enemy to pour his fire upon any troops who might be later than the others in retiring, and on this occasion the 48th Battalion was in the line on the left for an hour longer than the others. I have not yet been able to study the orders given during the battle, so I am speaking from my recollection; but I doubt if the artillery could be fairly blamed. The blame in this action must I think be borne by the man who planned it, and that was Gough.

Yours sincerely,

G. E. W. BEAN

Confidential

Rayleigh
Point Lonsdale
15th May 1924

C E W Bean Esq.
Tuggranong
Federal Territory

1 enclosure.

Dear Mr Bean

I am in receipt of yours of the 8th inst. and thank you for your clear and lucid answers to my questions. Not having seen the terrain is of course a great handicap to me. I realise the magnitude of your work and thoroughly understand the cause of your delay in replying.

Your opinion of Gough largely coincides with my own. He was evidently a man dominated not by reason but by impulse. In reference to his staff Philip Gibbs (Realities of War p.389) states "I found a general opinion among officers and men, under the command of the Fifth Army, that they had been the victims of atrocious staff work, tragic in its consequences. From what I saw of some of the Fifth Army staff officers I was of the same opinion..... Battalion officers and divisional Staffs, raged against the whole of the Fifth Army organisation, or lack of organisation, with an extreme passion of speech."

I quite realise the soundness of the strategy at Bullecourt as you state but a strategical scheme which ignores the tactical factor is foredoomed to failure. And away at the back of Gough's incompetence in my opinion Haig incurs a heavy responsibility. Qui fecit per alium fecit per se. If a Commander-in-Chief persists in utilising an incompetent subordinate after his repeated failures he incurs in my opinion an awful responsibility. If Haig were spending his own money for any purpose he would undoubtedly go to where he would be best served, yet where hundreds of thousands of valuable lives are concerned he is prepared to leave them in the hands of an admittedly incompetent man for reasons of friendship or otherwise. The British Army is not run on business lines. Gough was not removed after Bullecourt.

In reference to the tanks in my opinion there were far too few in this battle. If there had been 250 available instead of 12 there might have been a chance, but 12 was ridiculous especially with the incomplete mechanicism of the tanks of that date. Captain Jacka, Captain Dunworth (15th Btn) and other officers have told me that the tank officers in that engagement absolutely lacked confidence. Perhaps they knew the attack was hopeless. At all events their conduct was not marked by courage or vigour.

In reference to the "surprise" of the 10th April I can only say that Captain Dunworth, Sergt Dalitz (of the 14th who speaks German fluently) and other ex prisoners have informed me that they were told by German officers that after the fiasco of the 10th the German staff realised what was coming, and rushed up during that day thousands of storm troops and made every preparation for the contest. It was a repetition of Fleur Baix exactly.

As regards the 62nd Division I am glad of your statement which clears up matters, but one cannot help noticing the extremely subordinate position allotted to that Division in the battle. The Australians were evidently intended "to do the trick".

In reference to the artillery it may have obeyed orders, but its observation officers and others seemed to me to have been obsessed with the same optimism that possessed Gough. Messages from the front (from the men who were in the actual firing line) were treated with contempt, and the S.O.S signals frequently sent up (Captain White in "The fighting Thirteenth" says 18 times), either not noticed or disregarded. I might mention that Colonel Leane (C.O 48th Btn) had exactly the same experience at Passchendaele; the 4th Division artillery disregarded his S.O.S signals and Leane was severely wounded when again futilely endeavouring to get artillery support.

I could write much more on this most interesting subject but must again thank you for the fullness and clearness of your explanation, and also assure you that when you write the account of the battle all my contributions will be at your disposal.

Yours sincerely

Newton Wanliss

P S

I am enclosing the War record of my old school which holds its Diamond Jubilee next month. Its record for its size must I think be unique in Australia. It is worth a perusal.

Ballarat College.

Old Collegians and the War.

During the ten years prior to 1913 the total number of pupils enrolled was only 294. On the declaration of war in 1914 there were just 23 boys over 16 in the School; yet our total enlistment for active service has been over 300, including three masters and two former masters. Of this number 103 (one in three) attained commissioned rank, and 44 non-commissioned rank. Forty-six decorations were won (one for every seven enlisted), 62 or more were wounded, some several times, and 65, including one master (one in 4.7) gave their lives in defence of right. A comparison of the war losses of the public schools throughout the Empire is interesting. Eton, which had 6000 old boys on service, has had a loss of more than one in five. Of the other English schools the losses amounted to about one in seven. Among the other Australian public schools the losses have been slightly worse than one in seven. Our proportion of one in 4.7 is therefore very high. The 46 decorations include one K.C.M.G., three C.B.'s, three C.M.G.'s, nine D.S.O.'s (one bar), one D.S. Cross, 13 M.C.'s (three bars), one Air Force Cross, two D.C.M.'s, two M.S.M.'s, nine Military Medals, one Croix de Guerre (with Golden Star), one Legion of Honour, one Order of St. Anne of Russia. A large number have been mentioned in despatches, some twice, or thrice, or four times.

The war record of the College is truly a glorious one, and the story of the individual acts of heroism performed reads like an epic. It is quite impossible within the compass of this leaflet to give even a summary of them, but a number of outstanding episodes must be recalled. **At the very beginning of the war, in August, 1914, it was an old Ballarat College boy, Lieut.-Colonel C. S. Wanliss, that led in a colliery village near Mons what has been recognised as the first bayonet charge of the war by British troops. Two of the first four Victorian Battalions in the 1st Division were led by Old Collegians, Lieut.-Colonels D. S. Wanliss and H. E. Elliott. The late Captain Harold B. Wanliss (then Lieut.) was the first subaltern in the**

War Memorial.

The School has thus proved itself by its measure of service and sacrifice, which is the true test of character. The war has told on the boys of the present who are learning to give themselves, to spend and be spent for an ideal. To enable us to

A.I.F. to win the D.S.O. Another Old Collegian, the late Flight-Lieut. Wilfred Salmon, attacked single-handed a whole fleet of 22 raiding enemy planes. His brother, Capt. (then Lieut.) Bob Salmon, M.C., worked for seven days and nights on one occasion in No Man's Land, and was the means of rescuing over 300 wounded. It was another old boy, Major (now Lieut.-Col.) A. C. N. Olden, D.S.O. and Bar, commanding the 3rd Light Horse Brigade, that led the first Australian unit into Damascus after the brilliant capture of the great garrison of 10,000 Turks. Ten duxes of the College enlisted. Of these six made the supreme sacrifice, two others were wounded, the ninth won the Military Cross, and the other is a boy who enlisted towards the end of the war. In the silent Navy, from 1915 to the signing of the Armistice, Lieut.-Commander C. S. Sim, D.S.O., was engaged in mine laying in the Heligoland Bight, while, as naval attache at Washington, and head of the Secret Service, Capt. (now Rear-Admiral) Sir Guy R. A. Gaunt, K.C.M.G., brilliantly counteracted all the mischievous schemes of the wily German Ambassador, Bernstorff. **And, amid a galaxy of famous A.I.F. officers, one stands out pre-eminently as the fighting Brigadier. Year after year, throughout the war, lustre has been added to our records by Brigadier-General H. E. Elliott, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O. As Lieut.-Colonel, at Lone Pine, in Gallipoli, he beat off for twenty-four hours 4000 Turks, his battalion of only 700 being reduced to four officers and 138 men. In charge of his gallant 15th Brigade, during the first German retreat from the Somme, he led the advance guard of the Australian Corps, reducing thirteen towns and villages in three days. His brigade took part in the brilliant counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux, and finally, after a lengthy period of continuous fighting, captured Peronne, Bellecourt, and Hamel. For this last series of triumphs his sixth decoration, the Croix de Guerre, with the Golden Star, was conferred by the French Government.**

commemorate fittingly the service thus rendered to the Empire we look for loyal support from our many friends in the effort now being made to raise funds for the erection of a Memorial Hall at the College.

*also capt. Sulloch one of the
two officers to reach their objective
on 25. 4. 15
was an old
Ball College
boy.
Burdwell White's elder brother
of two brothers of Colonel Alex
White (3rd Light Horse) were
also old collegians.*

5393.

22 January 1930.

Dear Mr. Wanliss,

I have made full use of your valuable account of the Battle of Bullecourt in writing my own narrative. I take it that during this action Jacka, after having led the tanks into position, was acting as observing officer for the 14th Battalion, and probably had an observation post on the railway or sunken road. If you can answer this off-hand, I should be grateful for the information, but please do not go to any trouble, as if you are uncertain I would write to Jacka myself.

Yours sincerely,

N. Wanliss, Esq.,
"Rayleigh",
Point Lonsdale, Vic.

Point Lonsdale
Victoria

24th January
1930

C E W Bean Esq
Historian
Victoria Barracks
Sydney.

Dear Mr Bean

I am unable to answer your question as to where Jacka was after leading the tanks into action. Curiously enough I have never asked him though I have frequently discussed with him incidents prior to that ^{time on 11.4.17.} date. Early in the morning he was hurled off his feet by the explosion of a shell which mortally wounded the

assistant I. O. (M^c Hurley) & he was the spectator
of a very destructive shell that landed among
^{our} the trench mortars but after his work with
the tanks I don't know where he was. He was
appointed I. O. Monthly before this engagement
& was detailed to advise & assist the tank

officers with his expert knowledge. It is
very probable he was deserving but I am not in
a position to say. The histories of the three
Württemberg regiments which participated
in the Battle are in the War library at
Post Office place Melbourne but I suspect
you have already got them ^{from Mr McAllan}. Major Watson's
"company of Tanks" gives a clear insight into
the origin of the battle.

Jack's private address is
N^o 23 Murchison St East St Kilda & his
business address is Jacka Edmunds St^o
Elizabeth St^o Melbourne (two doors from
Robertson & Mullins).

Captain D. R. Macdonald

(a very intelligent officer) is in business in
Sydney. I could give you his address if
wanted. Captain David Dunworth is in
the employment of J. M. Burke & Co (I
think now is in their Brisbane branch).

I notice that the account of the
battle in the 16th Battalion history coincides
very much with my account of it.

Yours sincerely

Newton Warliss



FEDERAL MEMBERS' ROOMS,

TEMPLE COURT,

422-428 COLLINS STREET,

HE/JF MELBOURNE.

24th June, 1930.

Captain C.E.Bean,
Official Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
SYDNEY N.S.W.

Dear Captain Bean,

Herewith I enclose copy of Captain's Jacka's report on the Tanks co-operating with his Brigade at Bullecourt. I heard that all copies of this report were directed by General Birdwood to be expunged from ~~the~~ records of the A.I.F.

As you will note it embodies all the ideas that were subsequently adopted in regard to the use of Tanks under which conditions they became highly successful.

Yet I believe as it was conceived to be a criticism of his superior officers, from that onward Jacka suffered to the extent of receiving neither promotion or reward for his latter work at Polygon Wood and elsewhere.

Yours faithfully,

Enclosure: 1.

OFFICIAL REPORT

ON CO-OPERATION OF "TANKS" FIGHT OF 10/11th APRIL 1917.

- "TANKS" The TANK co-operation in the attack made on the HINDENBURG LINE on the night of 10/11th April 1917 was useless, or worse than useless as shown below:-
- (A) TANKS were late in arriving at rendez-vous, which means that they were late in getting to the jumping off place, in fact only three reached the latter place at all.
 - (B) Of the six TANKS allotted to the Brigade, five reached the rendez-vous; one being out of action before that place was reached. Of the Five: One disregarding guidance by I.C. FAD tried to cross a deep sunken Road, and in consequence got in and could not get out again. A second one was out of action through engine trouble before jumping off place was reached, leaving three only to co-operate in the attack.
 - (C) The TANK Crews seemed to know little or nothing of an attack by Infantry or nothing whatever about the particular operation they were to participate in. For instance:- In the case of No. 2 TANK The TANK Commander had not even synchronised his watch; his time being five minutes behind true time as given to the Infantry. Further:- TANK crews did not even know the direction of the enemy. This is verified by the fact that they opened fire on our troops, thereby causing us many casualties. One TANK in particular opened fire on our men at jumping off place, killing four and wounding others.
 - (D) The organisation seemed to be bad and no one appeared to be in direct command of the show. This was shown by the fact that TANKS wandered aimlessly about in every direction, thereby drawing enemy fire on us and on all our trenches.
 - (E) One TANK only reached the objective and did good work, but was almost immediately put out of action by direct hits from a gun in RIENCOURT. Commanders and crews of other TANKS seemed to make no effort to reach their objectives and although TANKS were in no way damaged, even after the attack was well under way and TANKS could have given the great assistance in helping to connect up between us and the Brigade on our left, they made no effort to go forward, and wandered back moving along the front of our jumping off place and finally pulling up alongside one of our dressing stations. Other TANKS which had made no effort to get up to their objectives were found in various places on fire although they had not been hit by shells. One crew in particular was asked why they had vacated their TANK, stated that it had caught fire, but gave no reason for same. This same crew returned carrying two sandbags, one containing enamel ware and the other food. Personal safety and comfort seemed their sole ambition, another crew was asked why they did not go forward to help to clear a communication trench. They replied, "They had no officer so could not do so". This showed a great lack of initiative and that the whole affair as far as this tank was concerned to be the responsibility of one man and that man gone; the TANK could do no more though undamaged. One TANK returned almost to Reserve Battalion Headquarters, pulled up right on the skyline and in full view of BULLECOURT, thereby making a splendid aiming mark and drawing severe enemy gun fire which made the route very dangerous for troops.
 - (F) The whole outfit showed rank inefficiency and in some cases, TANK crews seemed to lack BRITISH TENACITY and PLUCK, and that determination to go forward at all costs, which is naturally looked for in Britishers.
- In my opinion manned by the bravest of crews and placed directly under the Infantry Officers concerned in operation would be of great help, but they should NEVER be relied upon as the sole arm of support in an attack by Infantry. Further when TANKS are being got into position we think it absolutely necessary that a heavy barrage be put up by our guns to deaden the sound of the TANKS.
- In our case not a shot was fired when TANKS were taking up their position, and so the whole operation was given away to the enemy.

SGD. A. JACKA. CAPT. FAD.

538 Collins Street,
Melbourne,
11th July 1930.

C. E. W. Bean Esq.,
"Clifton",
Ortona Road,
LYNFIELD, N.S.W.
Ludfield

Dear Bean,

Very many thanks for your private note of 7th instant. I really doubt if it is worth while entering into conflict with Elliott. One is a little inclined to wonder if his mental balance has not been disturbed. For your own private information I enclose in this two letters which I received from him recently and my replies; from which no doubt you will conclude as I have concluded that he has become obsessed with the promotion idea which to some extent has affected his reason. I am inclined to think that his methods will very soon discount the value of anything that he says or writes and it is better perhaps to let him bring about his own ruin than to enter the lists with him.

I can say without any doubt whatever that Jacka's promotion was never in any way affected by his report on the Tanks at Bullecourt. The very idea is perfectly absurd. I do not know what Elliott means by saying that an order was given for Jacka's report to be expunged from the A.I.F. That is certainly not within my knowledge and would be a most improbable course.

Strangly enough the day after I received your letter a copy of the "Revielle" was sent to me presumably by Elliott. I have no doubt that he would like to draw me into a defence of General Birdwood.

Yours sincerely,

Birdwood White

5394.

22 January 1930.

Lieutenant-Colonel D. Dunworth, M.C.,
P.O. Box 567 J,
Brisbane, Q'land.

Dear Colonel Dunworth,

I am writing the narrative of the First Battle of Bullecourt for the Official History, and would be grateful if you would inform me whether it was while in the first trench that you were wounded, or when attempting to proceed to the second trench.

Yours sincerely,

Bullecourt I.

H.N.

Capt Dunworth from Bisbana called in on 5.2.30 to give me any information he possessed.

Dunworth. Passed a tank far from H. Line.

Crossed O.G. 1: got under wire in front of O.G. 2 by sap. Reached O.S. 2 100' E of

Cannistatter Gaben. Some of 14 & 15th here.

Dunworth called to them (thinking all were

15th) to go on with him to the Star X roads

(wh. was to be his H.Q.) Some sd they

had they had to stay in O.G. II (14th men

no doubt.) but he could not tell the

difference in their shoulder patches

& called them on. They ~~came over~~ ^{charged},

& most of them were killed. D. & a

few reached the Cannistatter from ^{from} which

they fled but D. was wd. He crawled

back along the Cannistatter to O.G. II.

At its entrance he heard an Australian

say "Don't shoot, he's one of ours!"

They Dunworth had his wounds bandaged

& then came back and ~~they~~ held this

flank with Lt Eibel. & from there sent his

were off by pigeon. They had been
beaten back ^{at an early stage} ~~they~~ by bombs along O.G. II,
but held on barricading O.G. II some
distance west of the Cannstatt for.

Here Lt Barnes, sent up by
McSharry, found him. He told
Barnes to get ammunition sent up to them.

Emerson had been sent by
Dunworth on 1 way over to take
charge of Kenyon's pln, Kenyon
having been hit. One section was
blown out by a shell from Quéant on
the way across it.

Eibel at the barricade fought
with the greatest bravery till done for.
Then he sent back his maps (wh
reached McSharry).

5480.

11 February 1930.

Captain E. Binnington,
State School,
Leyburn,
via Clifton, Q'land.

Dear Captain Binnington,

Among the records for the First Battle of Bullecourt (11 April 1917), upon whose history I am now engaged, is an account by Private W.E. Ramsden, 15th Battalion. He says that his objective was the sunken road immediately in front of Riencourt, but "we did not get there. The line was too strongly held, and we were driven back." Twenty men, however, under Corporal Wheeler occupied an advanced position beyond the second Hindenburg Line. You apparently visited the position, but had worked your way back before the message to retire arrived. Corporal Wheeler told them to "fight it out like Australians". They fired on the advancing enemy, but were eventually surrounded and captured.

I should be grateful if you could give me some indication as to where this outpost was. I know that, as soon as the two Hindenburg Lines were taken, some men (Captain Dunworth leading one party) went on towards Riencourt but were driven back, except for the troops who seized the more westerly of the two communication trenches leading to either side of Riencourt respectively. Ramsden evidently was in some small advanced post.

I enclose a rough map showing the area attacked, and on it the names of officers of the 15th with their positions as far as I can make them out. If you can remember the position of Wheeler's post, I should be much obliged if you would mark it for me on the map together with any other details that you remember. If you would ~~also~~ jot down for me any notes of your memories of that day, it would also be of great help.

Yours faithfully,

(E. Binnington)

5539.

22 February 1930.

W.E. Ramsden, Esq.,
Lewisham Boarding House,
Wharf Street,
Brisbane, Q'land.

Dear Sir,

Among the records of the First Battle of Bullecourt, on the history of which I am at present at work, is a very interesting narrative from yourself. I am anxious to ascertain the precise position of the advanced post which Corporal Wheeler and your party were holding. Was it to the left or right of the advanced communication trench to Riencourt, which was held by the Australians? I should be most grateful if you could see your way to jot down for me any recollections of the battle; and I would send you a sketch-map on which the position of your post could be marked.

Yours faithfully,

(E. E. Bean)
1930

5254.

12 December 1929.

Captain D.S. Aarons, M.C.,
49, Berkeley Street,
Hawthorn, E.2, Vic.

Dear Captain Aarons,

You may remember that in April 1917 you kindly gave me a number of details concerning the attack by the 4th Brigade at Bullecourt on April 11. I have been writing the story of this action, which is one of intense interest, but have much difficulty in ascertaining the precise position reached by each of the tanks. We now have very full German accounts of this fight and can place some of the tanks by the details given in these.

I assume that at the beginning of the advance the light was such that men were not likely to see tanks more than 100 yards away on either flank, and that, when the flares began to rise ten minutes later, their attention would chiefly be rivetted upon their direct front. Most men in the 4th Brigade mention having seen either one or two tanks, one in front of the 16th and one in front of the 14th. It is possible, however, that there were two in front of the 16th, one on the right and the other on the left.

I think it was you who told me that about half-way to the German trenches you came on the central tank of the brigade; she was stationary, and pointing to the right. The troops shouted at her, and she then changed direction, went straight, opened machine-gun fire, and then stopped. The line of the 16th also stopped, but presently the tank officer was told that the infantry would not wait, and the line went on.

Another account says that the 16th passed a tank not far from the wire, and that, when heavy fire was opened on the troops at this point, Major Black went forward to the first wave and, saying "Come on, boys, ----- the tanks!", led the men through the wire.

It is possible that both these accounts really refer to the same incident, and that it was Black who told the tank commander that the infantry must go on without waiting for it. On the other hand, it is possible that Black was nowhere near this particular tank. I think he had "B" Company, which was on the right, and there may even have been another tank (the right-hand one) close to him - one tank certainly entered the wire later about that point, and eventually crossed the trench and broke down.

I realise that memories of these incidents are probably vague at this time, but I should be most grateful if you could help me with any recollections that you care to jot down. In particular, do you know who was the officer who decided to go on past the tanks and who told the tank commander of his decision?

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

H.A. Ballet 11. Ap. 1917.

90 William Street,
MELBOURNE.
30th December, 1929.

Mr. C. E. W. Bean,
Official Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
PADDINGTON. N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

I desire to acknowledge your No. 5254/FL.4151, regarding the attack by the 4th Brigade at Bullecourt on April 11th.

I well remember my talk with you subsequent to that action but I cannot now recollect exactly what I said. Unfortunately my diary for 1917 was lost when the Meteren dump was blown up during the Fritz attack in March/April, 1918, but fortunately, I have the original letter I wrote to my sister on April 18th and with your permission I will quote therefrom.

"Our Brigade in conjunction with another was scheduled to attack the Hindenburg line at dawn on April 10th and tanks were to be used in the attack but owing to the fact that the tanks could not get up in time the stunt was called off but not until the two Brigades were practically in position and a patrol of ours had made contact with a Fritz patrol. We, however, were fortunate enough to capture one *each* of their officers and men.

This contact had the unfortunate effect of providing information to Fritz of an impending attack, in fact there is no doubt that the Fritz patrol must have seen the tape lines which were laid in No Man's Land to fix the jumping off point for our attack.

Then again the attacking troops were directed to return to their dug-outs and they just simply streamed for home, and as it was quite light, Fritz must have been blind not to have seen several thousands of troops streaking off home just after the break of dawn. However, the stunt was fixed for next morning and on April 11th at approximately 4.45 ~~am~~.

Mr. C. E. W. Bean,
PADDINGTON. N.S.W.

30th December, 1929.

3 tanks were in position instead of 12 and the attack could not be delayed so it went on with the support of 3 tanks and no artillery assistance. It was never intended that the artillery would assist us.

The ground was covered in snow and therefore although it was only dawn the white ground made the light much brighter, so much so that there was quite good visibility. However, at 4.45 a.m. our two Brigades went off, something in the vicinity of 7,000 strong in four waves relatively equal.

Two tanks were quickly out of action due to, I think, some mechanical defects. The other tank, however, kept on, but in addition to the light, the fact that there was no artillery barrage to deaden the noise, its noise would alone have drawn Fritz's attention to something unusual.

These tanks were supposed to be quarter of an hour in advance of the infantry, the idea being of course to mow down the wire and make it possible for the infantry to go right ahead.

When the troops got very close, if not almost up to Fritz's wire, they opened with countless machine guns and shrapnel and literally mowed down our troops by the hundred. The wire was uncut, in fact it was almost impassable. It was so thick that it was almost possible to walk along the wire.

Quite a large number of us got into Fritz's trenches, we actually took our two objectives and so a part of the Hindenburg line was in our possession. Quite a number of my good pals were killed, including Major Black. We inflicted quite a lot of casualties on Fritz and took a lot of prisoners which we were unfortunately not able to get back to our lines. What our casualties were I do not know but they probably reached something in the vicinity of 5,000 for the two Brigades, including prisoners.

The location of the Hindenburg line was approximately 1,000 yards from our own lines, there were no communication trenches or cover of any sort to get back and the only ammunition we had was what the troops were able to carry plus what Fritz left behind.

It was not long after we got into the trenches that Fritz counter-attacked from our flanks and down communication trenches directly running into his own line (which was now our line). It was patent to Fritz that we had no means of bringing

Mr. C. E. W. Bean,
PADDINGTON. N.S.W.

30th December, 1929.

up supports or ammunition supplies and that we had comparatively few men.

We were gradually being bombed towards the centre of the trenches and meantime the other tank which had done a good job, was shelled and put out of action. As I have already told you, the other two got somewhere, maybe round about half way across No Man's Land, and broke down.

It was quite useless to attempt to charge Fritz over the top because the moment a head was shown his numerous machine guns would open fire.

Our intention of course was to hang on until dark came when support could have been brought up; it would be quite futile to attempt any support during the day time. However, things were getting worse and worse, casualties occurring every minute. Frequently we were gathering up our wounded and putting them into the big dugouts away from further danger.

We endeavoured to send back runners to headquarters to report the position but it is doubtful if any messages got back as no support came from the artillery and this was the intention of sending back the runners. At about 10 o'clock things looked pretty desperate and it was only just a question of an hour or two when Fritz would have completely regained his trenches and all taken prisoners, so a conference of a few of us, including Jack Kerr, Hummerston and Murray, was held, and I volunteered to attempt to get a message back to headquarters. It was about a 100 to 1 chance of getting through but I took the chance. Kerr helped me out of the trench into a shell hole and by a little bit of strategy and care, the runner who accompanied me and myself leapt from one hole to another and I do not recollect being in the air for more than a fraction of a second when - ping, ping, all around. After about 200/300 yards of this I got very tired and then made a dash for a road-way, the edge of which had about 6 to 9 inches to a foot of cover here and there and I wriggled along that for goodness knows how far on my stomach, using my elbows and toes, until I got more or less out of effective range of Fritz's machine guns and then made a dash for our support line where I was able to report to our Colonel and Brigadier, which brought about the necessary artillery assistance - in the last few yards a shell burst, just slightly chipped my hands - not much more than scratches - lucky once again.

In the meantime, however, those who remained in the

Mr. C. E. W. Bean,
PADDINGTON. N.S.W.

30th December, 1929.

trenches had got together and decided to make a dash for home and take the risk. Unfortunately it was necessary to leave behind our wounded but some good chaps decided to forego their chance of reaching safety by standing by the dugouts; voluntarily offering themselves as prisoners in order that they could prevent Fritz from bombing the dugout where our wounded were located.

A little later on we were able to see our fellows coming back individually and well scattered and in due course many reached home."

The rest of the letter only deals with general details of the stunt and does not help in any way with the questions you ask.

Dealing now, however, with your letter in detail..

Regarding the point reached by the one tank. I am not now absolutely sure but I can definitely and absolutely picture it either lying across the wire or across a trench but whether it was the actual front line trench or a sap leading out through the wire I cannot now say, but I do know without any question of doubt that it reached one or other of these points.

The tank, during its approach to Fritz's line had changed direction obliquely and it was I personally who ran up to the tank and directed the operators to change direction. The tank was firing at various times and it was its firing across our line of approach that made it necessary for me to communicate with the operators of the tank. I cannot now recollect just how much firing took place from the tank after it changed direction as once it changed direction I did not have any further contact with the tank operators.

I am not in a position to make any comment upon the fourth paragraph of yours under response, that is, with regard to Major Black's appeal to the boys to go on without regard to the tanks, although I do not doubt he would have made such a statement, but even if he had not, the position was such that the lads themselves would have gone forward. There was no alternative.

Personally I cannot see that Major Black would have

Mr. C. E. W. Bean,
PADDINGTON. N.S.W.

30th December, 1929.

made contact with the tank operators at that critical stage as I am inclined to think he would be well to the right, whereas my Company was actually following the same line as that taken by the tank, although Major Black was such a master soldier that it is quite possible he would have covered a pretty wide frontage in his control of the Battalion.

No doubt after a discussion with others familiar with the detail of the stunt, little points would come back to my mind which might throw some further light on the tank operations but just at the moment of writing I cannot recollect anything more that might assist you.

I can say this, however, that the statements made herein are not the results of imagination, they are absolute in respect to :

- ✓ 1. The approximate location of the tank when it was put out of action.
- ✓ 2. That I personally made contact with the tank operator and intimated the need to change direction.

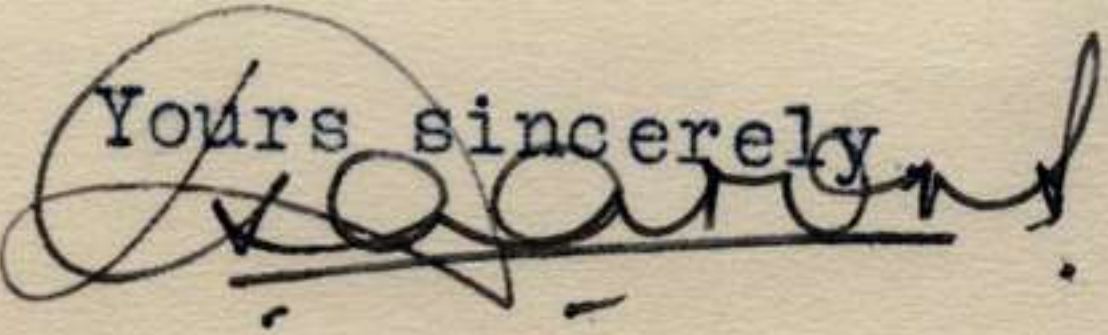
and with regard to No. 2 it is not at all unlikely that other officers did the same thing.

✓ Maybe you will be interested in knowing that after our troops had retired, several efforts were made to approach the wire for the purpose of gathering in our wounded but on more than one occasion Fritz intimated his displeasure by firing on the approaching stretcher bearers, but later on he did allow our stretcher bearers to actually approach the wire and remove the very badly wounded troops. I can only assume that his first action was to give him an opportunity of consolidating his line and secondly to take over those who were not badly wounded.

The immediate foregoing statement is not based upon the result of my own personal experience but it is fresh in my memory as the result of statements made to me by stretcher bearers who had gone out and were forced back and who ultimately went out and achieved success and it was told me immediately following the time it took place.

I sincerely hope that the foregoing information will be of some help to you and appreciating the honor in being asked for information.

I beg to remain,

Yours sincerely


5842.

16 May 1930.

Captain R.S. Somerville, D.S.O., M.C.,
59, Wattle Street, East,
Fullarton Estate, S.Aust.

Dear Captain Somerville,

I have to thank you for your letter and for your offer of further assistance. I should be very grateful if you could give me the benefit of your recollection of the fighting at Bullecourt on the 11th of April 1917. In particular, I should be obliged for information on the following points:-

- (1) What did you see of the tanks in your part of the advance, and did you see any tanks in front of any other part?
- (2) Any particulars of the defence of the trenches, and of other officers seen there.
- (3) Did you take part in the conference about 11 o'clock with Captains Gardiner, Murray, Hummerston, and others, when the withdrawal was discussed and provisionally decided upon.
- (4) Any particulars concerning the few men who advanced beyond O.G.2 towards Riencourt.

The fourth volume will be finished about the end of next year; the narrative of Messines and the Third Battle of Ypres having still to be completed.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean.

Deubam ∴ The Bde orders for Bullecourt I Capt Souerwille
11. 4. 17 cannot have (16th)
been clear or his
orders would have
been in accordance
with them.

5847

9, Wattle St East
Dullarton Estate
S.A.
28/5/30

The Official Historian
Dear Capt. Bean

Yours of 16th Inst. to
hand reference Bullecourt action
There is a certain
amount of information that I can
give you. though it will only refer
to a few main points owing to
the fact that the damage that I
received to the consequent following
inconspicuous has caused me to
forget most of the minor details.

(1) Tanks. Two or three points I can
bring to memory. (a) I noticed particularly
that the tanks were quite visible from
a good distance off owing to the
blue light that was continually
showing apparently from the top of
the tanks (b) That when we were about
300 yards from the enemy barbed
wire a tank stopped + held up our

advancing front wave owing to its continuing to fire at the enemy though it the crew apparently had lost control & were unable to continue to advance. This was on my left front, but before I reached it, some one had apparently got the crew to cease firing as the time commenced to move forward again (c) The only other tank that I remember particularly well was one that got to the enemy front line & stuck there. This was on the right of where I entered the trenches, & was so under the enemy gun fire that that spot was avoided by the infantry as particularly dangerous. (I regret that I am not able to give map references as all my papers maps etc were destroyed). I have no clear recollection of any other tanks in the action.

(2) Defence of the trenches. (a) Enemy. The wire where I first attempted to enter was not broken & to find an opening (as it was too thick to go through)

I had to move down to the right,
by g'd an opening there which I
think had been opened up by shell
fire. The machine gun defence at
this time was very strong the enemy
firing along his own lines of wire.
There was a large collection of
men at this point, they apparently
having come from the right also owing
to lack of openings. One remark I
have heard since by a man who was
lying wounded outside the wire was
to the effect that "the wire seemed to
be a mass of fireflies owing to the
sparks caused by the bullets striking
the wire". On going through we
entered the post line moving along
till we came to a sap running back
to the second line. Passing down this
we cleared a dug out & collected
a ^{few} couple of prisoners who had come
across diagonally from the right, from
the post line & were making for the sap
to effect an escape to the rear. Leaving
these men under control we moved
on to the second line. I think the com-

100
27.1

? Canister
no communication trench ran straight
on through. At any rate at this
corner, I stopped to see how things
were going on our flanks. There
was not much happening on the
right of me but on my left in the
German second line a German
machine gun was mounted firing
at our men in the first line &
holding them up. A Lewis gun
was obtained (whether this was with
me or whether I sent back for it
I can't remember), and the necessary
action taken to bring it into operation
from the side of the communication trench
where it continued past the second line.
At this time the men in the first line
were engaging the enemy gun with
machine gun & rifle fire from the
first line. Unfortunately on the Lewis
gun coming into action to fire
slightly into the rear of the German
gun crew, our own men mistook
taken it for a second German gun
as owing to lack of time we had not
been able to throw up a side protection

to mask the fire as they immediately
opened up on us & the gunner
dropped with a bullet wound through
the head. Deciding that there was no
time to take action to cover our
fire we moved down the trench to
the gun only to find that the gun had
been perished & I think 3 or 4 dead
Germans left there all being killed
with head wounds. We moved some
distance down this trench coming
across no one but one small
Australian & a big German down
with a bayonet wound. The A had
been moving down the trench ~~towards~~
~~us~~ ~~away from~~ ^{towards} us & the two had met
the boy getting in first & as a result
was very surprised. He was
still standing looking at his captive
when we reached him & immediately
asked what he was to do. The advice
given by someone was to "go on &
bayonet some more". Moving back
we continued on the communication
trench towards the rear, till I think
we came to an open road with the

Sir
Carter

enemy holding the other side. A post
was established at this point. Going
back to the 2nd line we went some
distance to our right & met
resistance. (From this point things
are hazy as far as I am concerned.
Though bombing was I can remember
much indulged in.) My next partic-
ular recollection is that we were
held at all points & that it was
daylight. Bombing must have
been going on because I went back
to see what arrangements could
be made to get more bombs. I
found that the trenches at the back
were full of men doing nothing. They
were a mixture of our own men &
the supporting battalion who apparently
instead of going straight on through
as had dropped into our hands. I
made what arrangements I could
to have bombs collected from them
& sent up to the bombing posts.
By this time it was certain that
we could not organise another
attack during the day & it was a

S
Colts
bombs

question of if possible holding the enemy till night & making another try to get on. Bombs were where possible collected from those lying outside the trenches if they were under cover from enemy fire (The enemy machine guns had done much damage particularly on a curved track that ran through their lines).

By this time our offensive had stopped & it was a question of holding as much as we had got. The only officer that I remember seeing about this time ~~was~~ I ^{was} ~~was~~ lieut McCarthy I think whom I met in the second line running a bombing post. (a) Our defence.

This really started from the time that our bombers were held up & continued throughout the morning till we got out of the trenches. Owing to lack of potatoes we were not able to hold our posts & the enemy's pressure kept steadily increasing. Efforts were strongly made to keep up the supply of bombs, but they could not be got up fast enough. I am unable to

McCarthy
2 lines

give details of the fighting. My best
recollection is of the conference. I
traced my way. I think I arrived as
it was just over & do not remember the
details except that I immediately left
to have our telephone communication
destroyed. These were situated in
a dugout to the right of the position
where the conference was held. On the
way there I was able to use the
trenches, but on the return journey
owing to the enemy pressure our
posts had been forced to retire
& I had to take to the open between
the trenches. On entering our own
line I found that in the spot I had
entered an instruction had been
given by a junior officer of our
supporting battalion allowing our
men to put up the white flag, which
they had effected by tying handker-
chiefs on to rifles with fixed bayonets.
These were immediately taken down &
suitable advice given. I then went up
to the posts again & found them
very much pushed in. & after advising

I found
down to
surrendering

those that I saw as to the decision
to retreat slowly as the support could
not be kept up. I moved back towards
the first line. There seemed to be
very few of our men about then &
the Germans were coming in very
close. so I decided to leave some
where about between 12.30 + 1 pm.
There could have been very few
of our men on our left then as
we were getting on to the open. The Germans
had their guns firing again from
the front line. There seemed to be
a fair number of our men in shell
holes in front of the German lines
but they did not seem to be to move
owing to the fire. A lot of these
were probably taken prisoner, after
leaving the lines & seeing the men
in the shell holes & then getting hit.
I only saw one of our men moving
& he was trying to take his gun out.

(4) I regret I am unable to
give any information regarding
these men as I did not see them
& have no information. Our

Saw
the last

obscure as far as I can remember
when the front lines & to let the
cavalry through but owing to lack
of an effective attack & the complete
clearing of the enemy we were
unable to do much above the
surface.

Our troubles arose from
ineffective action by the tanks as
an advance action

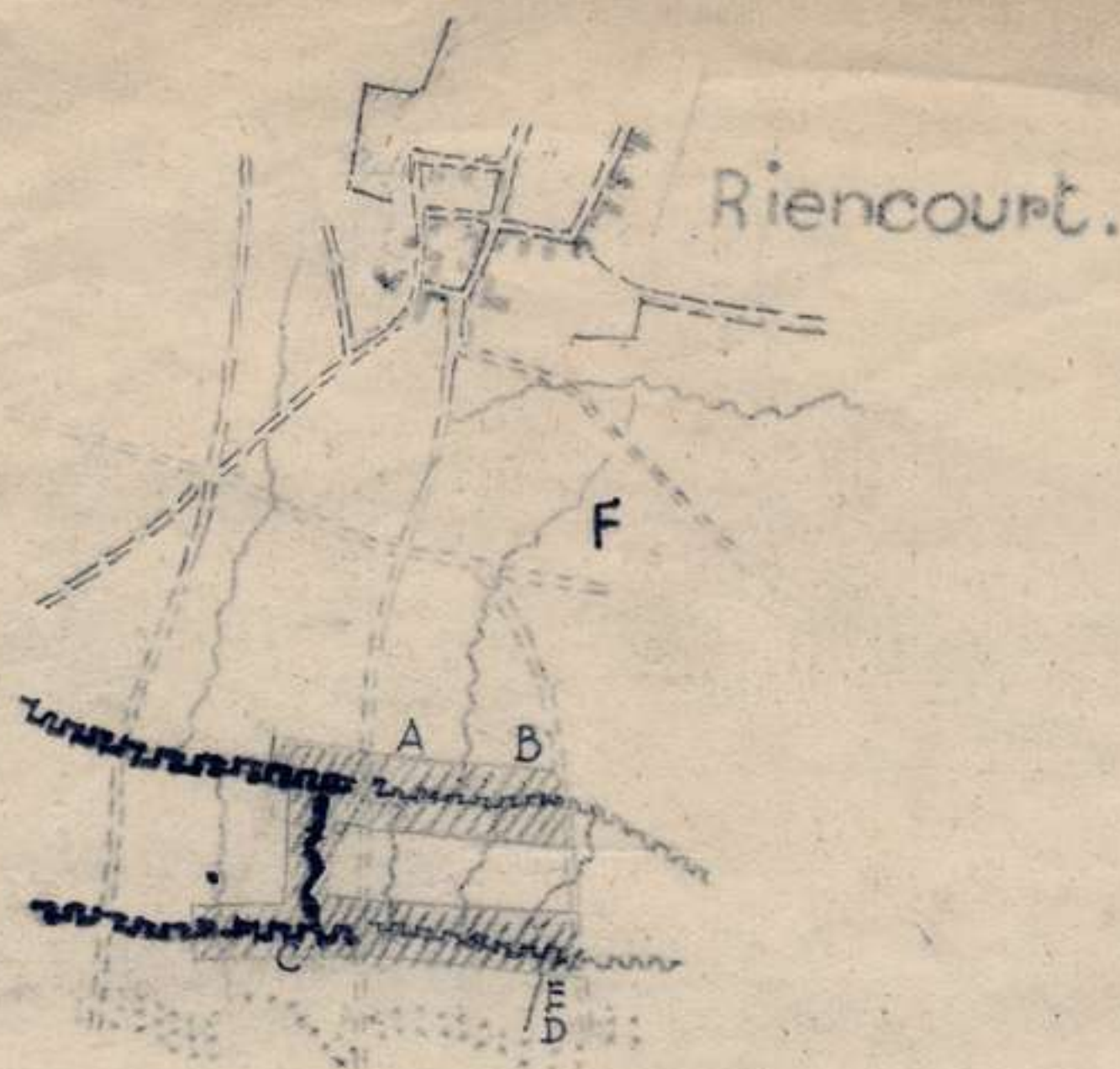
Holding up by h.Q. fire on
account of lack of quick means
of movement through the enemy
wire.



Subsequent inability of supporting
troops to move through our own
captured trenches

Generally through lack of supporting
methods of attack on a strongly
defended & well held position

Yours faithfully
Robertson

Examined two
16 Bn men who
escaped from
Germans after Bellecourt.



Black  our present right (14th Bde.)
Shaded  Sector taken on April 11th by 4th Bde.

On April 11th L/Cpl. PARSONS was No. 1 of a Lewis Gun in a shell-hole at the mouth of the sap from RIENCOURT (at A). He threw a dead German out of the shell-hole and put the gun in there commanding the approach from RIENCOURT.

Pte. STEWART, G. was one of the team of another Lewis Gun under L/Cpl. Smith. His gun was at B. on the extreme right of our position in the HINDENBURG Line.

Where these men got in, the HINDENBURG wire had not been out at all. They filed in through a narrow passage in the wire. At Parson's position, by the sap, the fighting was almost continuous as the Germans were always attempting to bomb down the sap from RIENCOURT.

Bombs ran out as the morning wore on, and German stick bombs and egg bombs were collected, and also every bomb that they could get off a dead Australian. Capt. Somerville (16th Bn.) was there cheering his men when things were looking blue, and so was Lieut. Watson (16th Bn.), the latter pulling the boys together as the situation began to look very bad, and continually cheering them.

Matters came to a stage when our troops had no bombs to throw at the Germans, and the Germans were coming down the trench in three directions, from RIENCOURT, from the right flank and from the left flank, throwing bombs which our men could not repay. The left and right retreated down the trenches with the German bombs falling in amongst the tail of them.

In this retirement Parsons, having no further chance with his gun, took it with him and was headed off towards the left rear at about C. He got out into a shell-hole; several others were in the same shell-hole. He there dismantled his gun, and put some of the spare ~~parts~~ parts in his pocket, meaning to put it together again if our luck turned. He then started to crawl back on his stomach, with his gun, over the green country towards our lines.

The wounded are said to have been taken down the sap to RIENCOURT and dressed in the dug-outs there. The unwounded left the sap and passed by RIENCOURT on the open to the right of it. It was back here that our heavies were playing. A few big shells followed them along the road to VILLERS, towards which, on being assembled, they were marched. But these shells fell off the road at some distance and were harmless.

They were marched to a big house on the right hand side as you go into Villers of the street. It had a garden in front and a garden ~~xxxxxx~~ behind. Officers in motor cars came down to this house to have a look at them. It was clearly a headquarters. A flash lot of Uhlans on smart horses was stationed there. They were assembled in the yard and roughly searched, but the experience of Stewart and most men was that anything worth possessing was taken as a souvenir before the official search. They were told that razors, knives and letters must be given up, but that they were to keep money, watches, pay-books, etc. (The Uhlans had generally made this announcement a needless one by going thoroughly through their valuables). Our men began to tear up their letters and before long the yard was littered with torn papers. They were then told that if this happened again severe steps would be taken in punishment.

The searching took some hours; and the men were given a loaf of bread to every five and coffee was brought in, but as they had nothing except their helmets to drink it from, few got it. Snow was falling and all were wet through.

As they were sitting and standing about the yard, several young German officers came in amongst them and tried to make themselves very pleasant. The men had a shrewd idea that they were intelligence officers and were cautious what they said. They asked what was thought of the German submarines and were told very little was thought about them at all. One man said when asked a question: "Our officers told us that German officers would not ~~xxx~~ insist on ~~asking~~ us answering questions concerning military matters and that the only information we need give was our names and numbers." This rather choked the young Germans off.

A sergeant of the 15th Bn. who could speak German, was used by the Germans as their interpreter. (The officers were separated from the men after capture and were only once afterwards seen again -- there were three of them, two 13th Bn., and one 16th Bn.)

The men were all turned into a big church for the night, wet, and without blankets. No blankets have been issued to them at any time since.

APRIL 12th. In the morning they were called out of the church in batches, the name of each battalion being called, in order, and the men of that battalion going out in a batch. There were men from the 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th and 48th Battalions and 6 men from a tank crew. They were numbered off outside and then marched off in their battalions by the Uhlans. There were 756 men altogether, not including officers or most seriously wounded, though one man with a bullet through his chest, another heavily wounded in both arms, and a third with his fingers blown off by a bomb were amongst the men who were made to march.

Up to this point their orders had been given to them by a certain senior German staff officer, with an Iron Cross, who spoke English well and who seemed to have a fondness for harsh-

going them. He said at various times: "You mad Englishmen to think you could get through the wire like that -- mad Englishmen! There are a lot of your men hanging in it now."

He told them the Germans had hit 9 tanks out of 11. To four or 5 wounded men he gave a lecture on the sins of Lloyd George and the British Government. Lloyd George could have finished the war last year, he said, "if he had wanted to accept the good terms we gave him."

This morning the prisoners were given a loaf of bread between 4 men and coffee. This had to do them until the following morning, but they were not told so, and mostly ate it at once. The first night's bread had been too sour for many, but they were ready to eat it by next day.

The road they were marched down was a fairly good one, though slushy in places after the snow. The tank crew were not seen again. But the men of the 5 battalions marched down the road for 5 or 6 kilometres. They passed very little transport and few troops, but they met a number of men in snaeks yoked up with ropes to a waggon and pulling it whom they took to be Russian prisoners, and some men in old French civilian caps (and sometimes civilian clothes) cleaning the road who turned out to be British prisoners. The British, some of them, had old French blue overcoats. They spoke to our men passing and asked if they had any bully beef.

The march ended at a siding where they got into cattle trucks, 24 to a truck. It was a broad gauge railway and they travelled till dark. About 11 p.m. they shunted into a siding and stopped. About 2 a.m. on April 13th they were detrained, marched through several villages, and put into cellars. Here they got a drink of coffee. (It is suggested that this town was DURY).

About 7 a.m. they were taken to a big residence and halted in the yard. They were given 1/3 of a loaf of bread and a cup of coffee and told that it was for the day. After breakfast they were searched again, more carefully than before. Here 100 men were chosen out from amongst the 756 for examination. There did not seem to be any system of choice except that so many were taken out of each battalion. The 100 men when they rejoined later, said they had been given a good dinner, but Stewart and Parsons were not amongst them. The men chosen were asked questions as to who was next them on their right and left, and so on. The general reply was that they did not know.

The remainder were marched to LE QUESNOY, about 9 miles. They were put into a compound, where there were other prisoners, two flying officers, and some British soldiers beside themselves. The place is a sort of clearing house for prisoners of war; and they got here the best food and billets that they met with anywhere. They had a warm bath, and their clothes were dry-heated. They stayed here - only doing small fatigues in the compound, until April 16th. The 100 examinees rejoined. As this place was a collecting station for prisoners there were regular interpreters there. There was also a certain British Lance Corporal acting as interpreter. They noticed that, for a Lance Corporal, he seemed to have a greatly exaggerated influence with the Town Major and this made them suspicious and doubtful of whether he was a genuine "Britisher" at all. The word was passed and not to say anything in front of him which might be useful to the enemy.

It was during the march to LE QUESNOY that their real experience of German military brutality began. As they moved through the villages, the French civilians would throng the streets and would try to give them bread or cigarette

re

rettes. The prisoners had a new guard drawn from some Prussian Guard Regiment; the guard was very numerous and marched on each side of the column cutting it off from the civilians. One woman gave them a little bread. A German at once hit her in the face and knocked her down. A little girl ran out to them with bread, the guard smacked her in the face. The bread they pitched into the gutter. A Frenchman tried to give the prisoners a bucket of water to drink. The guard upset the water and threw the pail over the man who gave it. A priest came out with a loaf of bread and edged towards the column to try and give it to the men. An old lady saw him and tugged him back -- one of the guardsmen was watching the priest carefully.

After this the prisoners shook their heads when civilians offered them food. However hungry they were they could not stand seeing people treated in this way. The experiences of these Australians was that the French people the other side of the line would give you anything they had.

On April 16th they were sent by train to LILLE. It was 6 p.m. when they got there. The streets near the railway were ~~through~~ thronged with German soldiers and French civilians to see them. Outside the station one woman threw a packet of cigarettes which was caught by a sergeant. The guards at once pointed her out to a military policeman who arrested her and marched her off.

LILLE is pretty crowded. They only noticed two buildings knocked about by shell-fire and the glass in the top of the station roof was partly broken. There seemed to be a good deal going on in the railway yard.

The Australians were marched through the streets to an old underground fort with grass covered buildings in its ramparts. It was snowing and raining. A stop was made on the way there which the men thought was for a rest. They lit cigarettes which the military police knocked out of their mouths.

They were halted at the gate and told off into parties of 110 and their worst experience began.

All Australians were marched off into rooms on the upper story. 110 men ~~wit~~ into a room, 50 x 20 feet. The floor was tiled, there were no blankets or covering, it was bitterly cold and wet, the windows had to be ~~kept~~ kept shut all night for the cold. And in the corner of this room where they slept, ate and lived all day and night (with the exception of a few minutes daily exercises in the yard) was a single barrel without a cover, which was the only latrine they were allowed.

In this room for 5 days and 6 nights they were kept. They were given a loaf of bread to 7 men (that is one slice each man) daily, and some fomented mangles with two cups of coffee -- one at night and one in the morning.

They only had one wash during this week -- on the day when they moved out. Their guards would not give them anything extra -- the cook would not take a ^{man} mark for a bit of bread; and the guard when asked by the ^{man} cleaning the latrine barrel for a drink of water, refused.

But at the end a German corporal came into the room and asked them if they knew what they were there for. They said, "No". He said: "You may write and tell your people or your

Government all about it, and say that you are here as a punishment. Seven weeks ago the German Government wrote to the British Government about the employment of German prisoners near the line, and they have not received an answer yet."

The Australians told him that it was a lie about the prisoners. German prisoners were not employed within 30 kilometres of the line. "But of course that made no difference," they added.

At the end of 6 nights in LILLE they were sent by train to ~~XXXXXXXX~~ MARQUION, and in a better train, with carriages, and with a more lenient guard of youngsters of the Berlin Garrison. But half a loaf of bread and a little coffee had to do them for 2 days rations.

It was a double company of 240 Australians, mixed from the 4th Division battalions, but all Australians, which was sent to MARQUION. Their own N.C.O.'s were made by the Germans responsible for their discipline.

Beside the Australian Company a British Company of English and Scottish troops was there. They were camped near ~~the workhouse~~ one another on different sides of the road. The work was chiefly the unloading of a dump. This dump was coming under our shell fire and the light engines there had to be packed away to save them from damage; and the men were told by the German Sergeant-Major that the ~~whole~~ whole dump of engineering material had to be cleared by June 5th. The work consisted of unloading duckboards, dug-out timbers, etc. onto the dump from the broad gauge railway, and afterwards loading it generally on to the light railway. Dug-out timbers were also carried along by the working party for the making of dug-outs in MARQUION -- one of which seemed to be mined, for the slabs of explosive were seen by it. There was a windlass at a big building at W.16.a.5.7. Cement was being put onto to the broad gauge trucks from the dump.

One company used to work in the morning, the other in the afternoon. The first turned out at 4-30 a.m.; coffee at 4.45 a.m.; 5.15 a.m. Fallin; march to dump and work till 1 p.m. Then the other company took over and worked till the train was unloaded, even if it kept them till eleven at night.

The ration on which this was done was 1/3 of a loaf, issued over night -- which some men could not help eating then and there and a stew at midday consisting of horseflesh with a little barley -- they used to count the grains.

The result was the men used to beg their guard to be allowed to go out and cut rape, stinging nettles, dandelions, sometimes potato peelings which the ~~XXXXXX~~ Germans had thrown out (until the run on these became too great)- One Western Australian dropped on the roadside -- the men were falling ill at the rate of 4 a day.

The work at the dump was sometimes done under shell fire. When this happened the guards would take cover behind the dump and keep their rifles and bayonets poking round it. Our men saw blood on the road one day, and on another occasion a smashed up field gun.

The Germans were taking down huts, and cutting down some trees which they left lying.

While at LILLE three of the men had made up their minds to escape at the first chance. at MARQUION they started planning, and mentioned it to Cpl. Job who agreed readily. They told a friend about it, in case they were never heard of again.

The guard at WANCOURT Farm (MARQUION) was doubled because a 13th Bn. man escaped. He was recaptured. The first plan of the four men was spoiled by their finding a sentry outside the point they had intended to escape by. They were always on the look-out. It was decided that ^{the} night must be wet, and very dark. On one such night Parsons noticed the German sentry on one beat down at the end ^{of} taking to his mate, and the sentry on the other beat doing the same. He hurried to tell his friends. He had picked up a pair of wire cutters at the dump, after looking out for them a long time. By lifting two wire fences and cutting one they got through in 20 minutes from the start, two by two. They had previously planned their direction by the nearest balloon and by the direction of the shell fire at the dump.

Loison
At dawn they reached a wood with a quarry near it and transport busy in the quarry (BOIS de LOISON) A British bombardment was on another wood on their left front. They heard German batteries firing. All day they lay behind a ~~hedge~~ hedge, a German passed within two yards the other side of it. They ate their last bread there (which Stewart had bought in exchange for his leather waistcoat).

At 11 p.m. they left and made for the nearest flare. They had to pass some guns, men were digging dugouts in a Sunken Road, 3 complete trenches with wire easy to cross; as they lay on the parapets of one of these, 3 small parties of Germans passed along the parapet -- a working party returning. Flares were pretty bright and if the Germans had looked at them they could not have missed seeing them.

They next saw a village, and kept away to their left of it -- they did not know it was RIENCOURT. They could hear transport going along the road into it.

They had left RIENCOURT about 500 yards to their right in the rear, when, in going through tumbled shellbroken country, they lost Job and Smith. Job and Smith had passed ahead through some wire broken down by shells, and Parsons and Stewart were to follow. In going over the shell holes they missed meeting. They had arranged that at such a stage it was to be everyone for himself. Parsons and Stewart then saw two men going down a sunken road between stumpy trees. For a moment they thought it must be their friends, they ~~they~~ supposed they were Germans. Presently they thought they saw them again.

However, they could not wait. They crossed a broken down trench with wire in front and then got into shell holes which they found to be a sunken road. Just there the bank was low, and no Germans were in that part; but 20 yards on either side there were plenty. After crossing this they ran into Germans

in a sap leading ~~leading~~ towards the front. Stewart and Parsons swerved to the right; then up a bank. They found a German waterbottle of weak coffee in a shell hole, and drank it. They had been looking for dead men to get food from, but found none, though they knew by the smell that there were dead there.

They went from shell hole to shell hole. Parsons said to Stewart, "Its death or bacon for breakfast." Then some one fired, the shot missed. Parsons got up again. There was the flash of a rifle and Parsons was hit through the shoulder. They decided to go another 30 yards and lie up in a shellhole till daylight when they could see. About 10 yards further on they got the word, "Halt." The accent was unmistakably English or Australian. Parsons asked, "What are you, Australians?" The answer was, "Yes."

Parsons said, "Come on Stewie, we're home and dry," and ran without his hands up -- and in his French civilian cloth cap into our trench. The first officer they met was naturally suspicious. But within a few minutes they were in a dug-out and eating their bacon, with longed for marmalade and margarine, and a tot of Rum. They struck the trench almost exactly where they left it, on the extreme right of our position, just missing the German position in the HINDENBURG Line.

The Australians in the company at MARQUION were falling ill at the rate of about 4 a day -- swollen legs, swollen faces being common. The Germans scarcely ever marked a man for "light duty" -- it was duty until you were marked hors ital.

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The Australians in the company at MARQUION were falling ill at the rate of about 4 a day -- swollen legs, swollen faces being common. The Germans scarcely ever marked a man for "light duty" -- it was duty until you were marked hospital.

6314.

3 December 1930.

Brig.-General J.C. Robertson, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.,
"Roseneath",
Taylor Street,
Teowoomba, Q'land.

Dear General,

In studying the orders for the Bullecourt attack, I find that there is a serious mistake in those of the 46th Battalion. I have seen Denham, and he tells me that this was due to the fact that instructions issued at Brigade Headquarters were capable of bearing the meaning which he assumed from them, as well as the correct meaning which was attached to them by Colonel Leane. They were verbal instructions - he states that the amended written order was not in his possession until after the attack.

The mistake will be clear to you from the pages which I extract from the chapter and forward herewith. It is a long time since the events, but if you have any recollection that would throw light upon this I should be grateful for the assistance. Would you be so good as to return the pages after perusal.

Yours sincerely,

C.E.W. Bean.

J. C. ROBERTSON

(J. C. ROBERTSON A. O. JACKSON)

REGISTERED SHARE BROKERS

TELEPHONE OFFICE NO. 1335

RESIDENCE J. C. ROBERTSON 1770

" A. O. JACKSON 685

APPROVED VALUATORS
SHARES

AGENTS—BRISBANE
SYDNEY
MELBOURNE

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS

"STRUAN"
TOOWOOMBA

POSTAL ADDRESS, BOX 160, G.P.O., TOOWOOMBA

Exchange Buildings,

Margaret Street,

Toowoomba,
Queensland.

H.N.

11 APR 1917

December 9th. 1930

C.E.W. Bean Esq.

Historian

Victoria Barracks

Paddington N.S.W.

My dear Bean,

I am in receipt of your letter dated 3rd. inst. The following has been taken from my personal Diary, it might throw a little light on the subject.

Tuesday April 10th. Orders received at mid-day that we are to carry out last night's postponed attack, to-night. Busy making arrangements all day, the plans have been slightly altered. Our definite orders did not arrive until 10.0pm. Held a conference with my C.Os at 10-15pm. and made the final arrangements.

The arrangements were verbal ones based on the Divisional Order and these arrangements were confirmed by the Brigade Order as soon as it was possible to get the order out.

It is a long time to remember but the failure of the tanks appeared to have delayed the movement until it was impossible for the attacking Battalion to carry out its role. The Bullacourt salient on the left dominated as soon as the barrage lifted and a fly could then have hardly got across.

C.E.W.Bean Esq.

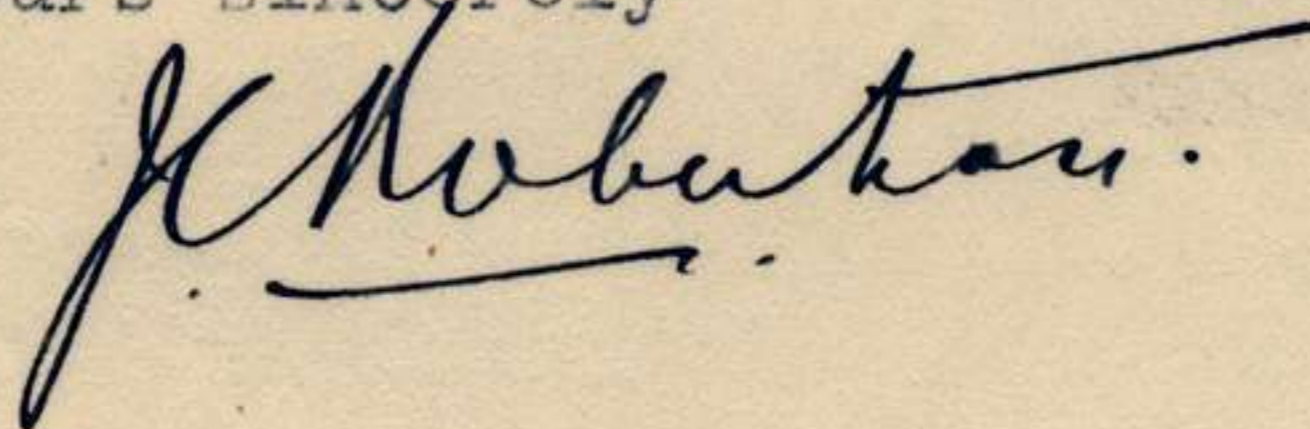
(1).

The failure of the Tanks was a contingency thought of for in my notes I mention a conversation with the Tank Commander who stated that only a direct hit by a heavy gun could put a tank out of action and such would be improbable.

It is many years since we have met, I hope the ~~years~~ years have treated you kindly. What a wearisome task you have had compiling the History, you must be truly tired of it.

Kindest regards and remembrances,

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "J. Robertson", with a horizontal line underneath the name.

N.B. Pages returned herewith

5795.

8 May 1930.

Lieutenant-Colonel H.K. Denham, D.S.O., V.D.,
"Montreaux",
85, Redmyre Road,
Strathfield, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

In writing the narrative of the First Battle of Bullecourt I have come upon an important discrepancy between the orders of the 12th Brigade and 48th Battalion and those of the 46th. The order of the 12th Brigade for April 10 (the abortive attack) was that the infantry should go forward fifteen minutes after the tanks, etc. The order for April 11 was that the tanks should go forward at 4.30 and the infantry at 4.45, the intention being that the infantry should advance at 4.45 whether the tanks arrived or not. The 46th Battalion's order for the April 11 attack, however, is that the infantry should advance fifteen minutes after the tanks, and I am informed by officers of the 46th that this instruction was the reason for their not advancing at 4.45 independently of the tanks.

I should be grateful if you could assist me by throwing a highlight on the discrepancy, which obviously has an important bearing on the outcome of the attack.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

Peatland (in kelt w brother remaining a coachably place).

H.N.

Major Waine, 46th - Re Ballecourt, Ap. 21st.
D Coy. 4 waves intended. Ts were to be followed by Left Coy wd
direct the advance.
One tank got k.o. in line w rt flank.
2nd tank got k.o. just in front of Sunken rd (centre Coy)
& 3rd k.o. behind the J.O.T. These Waine could see.
Coy on left were seen to advance & W. went on
too. ~~Re~~ Rpt, W.S. & arty fire ^{had} opened already,
& Cas. were occurring in J.O.T. (later much of
this fire came from left.) Forward was lost & they went
on as one line - Peatland got too far to right where
were was not cut.

wire well cut where W. got in. Few ft. there - as we
got to wire they bolted. Boddington's Coy was prod.
first in. Almost from 1st ft were att from both flanks.
B. started to att. towards C. & while bombs lasted he
drove ft well back - losing so many men on way
over we lost many bombs - W. saw no bags of bombs in Z.
B. blocks poured on both fls - on rt-Sandbag pulled
down into Z & party watched it.
Then occurred lull. Count taken & 65 men (including wd)
found.
W. was trying to ^{large} One ply of ammo carriers (A Coy) was seen
to leave but only att 6 and 47 Bn ^{North} got thro. (probly thro of a
by Boddington) with fascos.
About 9 Waine saw many Germans outside Rct, & in
a S. rd on the near side of it. ~~He sent back~~ notice of these by
runner & by pigeon - numerous messages. A trench mortar
bomb was now dropping in the trench. The wounded
had been collected in a bag & one of these bombs dropped
among them killing a member. W. then had them carried to a
depot. A message wh arrived from Denham showed to be
thought everything was going well. To show him that everything
was far from well, W. decided to write a long full message.
He went into a depot entrance - the 2nd entrance of depot,
to North & sat down on 1 step part of way down, writing
the message. A number of men suddenly tumbled down
depot entrance saying: "look out, Germans are out!" - & carried
W. & N with them. N. must have gone at once up 1 stairway. W. tried to
get to 1 other stair but found the ~~black~~ passage blocked w wd on whom he did not want to
be found. They cursed him & he turned back but found 1 first stair guarded by Germans. Going to the 2nd
he found it also guarded. The time he had lost in turning back had been fatal. He leave no of 1?
[Was North in the C/A in O/S? How many men did he see bitterly disappointed at his
what did he see of Tanks & of the G.A.] capture

Edley, Waine, & Brook were Sydney University Scouts officers - who had gone to the Bn from
The 19th after the Evac. Denham was sent along to it afterwards as colonel. He was a nice fellow,
& had commanded the Sydney Univ Scouts - but they were not really whole-heartedly
pleased to see him: he could not manage men.
Denham had told him: if no tanks turn up, of course you will have to go
forward alone. But they will turn up.

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get to 1 other stair but found the ~~black~~ passage blocked w wd on whom he did not want to
be found. They cursed him & he turned back but found 1 first stair guarded by Germans. Going to the 2nd
he found it also guarded. The time he had lost in turning back had been fatal. He leave no of 1?
[Was North in the C/A in O/S? How many men did he see bitterly disappointed at his
what did he see of Tanks & of the G.A.] capture

5683.

9 April 1930.

W.F.H. Master, Esq., M.C.,
11, Allister Street,
Cremorne, N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

I have been writing lately the official account of the First Battle of Bullecourt. The records for ~~the~~ the old battalion, the 46th, are very incomplete, but I have managed to arrive at a story which, I hope, represents something very close to the truth. I would, however, be most grateful if you, who are one of those who took part in several of the events described, could assist me by calling in for half-an-hour to talk over some of the matters dealt with. Major Waine is kindly coming in on Saturday morning between 10 and 11 o'clock.

If you would drop me a note or ring FL.4151, I could arrange to have the maps and air-photographs ready in case they would be of any assistance.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

Master - 7 Thiliwast Cremorne. X3377. Master. 66 Bn Bullecourt
 Coulson T.O. Bu seat off. could give some details (Res. of off) APR 11 1917
 as to distances. He made the recess on right of 10th or same night as
 Jacka

Bu HQ in Sunken rd. Shallow trench in front
 abt 600' from H.L. The left of trench wd be
 well in front of Sunken rd.

C Coy tank broke down on the hopping off trench
 in the dark. The Ts were making much noise
 before they reached this point.

When C Coy tank broken down close in front of J.O.T.
 Davies of Antres Coy rang up on telephone Dunham
 & asked what to do.

<u>B</u>	<u>C</u>	<u>D</u>			
Bodd	Dav.	Waine	=	=	=
			=	=	=
	<u>A</u>				
	(Spence)				

Abt 200' walking without a sound. Then up in front towards
 Ret opened. Cd see bullets sparking on wire. M. blew his
 whistle & gave the double. Davis was probly k. then. The
 row was v. pt.

Got to wire & got thro - it wd kick - & into the
 trench. M. made to ret to pick up D - who were separated.
 Big depot wd 2 entrances - posted sentries at each
 threw couple of Mills down - he came out - 2 k.
 & 1 wd. from wd g. ^(speaking rough trench) He heard it after they saw another
 going back right before they had refed line w. mps.

~~After~~ A part of Dlog job in with Clay. but v.
 little. Dlog objic was not taken. Right was blocked
 w a bit of timber.
 Short of men & bombs from first. Collected
 what could & made dumps.
 The depot was 300' & traverse from rd flank

masters sent a pigeon msg "If missing in Ret. must have
 artillery suppt."

Boddington on left abt 7 asked for men & bombs.
 He was sent what cd be spared - & stopped the ga.

parcel mail,
German food was found in dugout, with food parcels with
46 to eat.
There was no C/A early on it. - move on left. Had Comm
thro C.T. with 48th. In my cd see ps at S. end of Ret.
C/A Masters sent a pigeon message asking for arty
fire on Rieuxcourt. "ps missing in Ret - must have
arty support." abt 10 am Mr. had a sleep in the dugout.

~~About 11 am~~
He left (he thinks) Ridgewell & some men at the block.
They must have been bombed out for the next thing
M. knew was someone running down the stairs of
dugout shouting th ps. were on them, counterattacking.
He ran up the stairs, Spear after him, & found 1 y empty
& bombs flying over. Spear he did not see again. Stanton
& a Corporal & Masters cont'd to fight - the Cpl. warned
the men in the dugout (one of its entrances was still free)
but they would not (or did not) come up again. Masters,
Stanton & the Cpl continued to fight back along the y
until they came on 5 dead men who had been by C/A
from the other flank. Then they jumped out of y, leaving
seen no one else in it. Mr. was wd 30x from the y -
but ~~of the~~ lay still & was not killed. a little later

A 48th man afterwards
came up & sd he wd
get S/Bs, but M told
him merely to take off
M's equipment - who he did -
except his gas mask.

he crawled to a sap where he & Serjt Rafferty sat. into it,
~~separated~~ They watched 1 ps collecting all the walking
wd - they left no stretcher cases - ~~and~~ One f. off
was going along saying. "All right Tommy - you need not
be afraid!" 2 ps got into the same sap, ^{by were} separated from
M & R by only by a sheet of galv'd iron. M & R quietly
put out their cigarettes. Later these ps got out - & at
dusk M & R got back. ps didn't fire on our fls
th night.

[∴ ~~was~~, Spear, Ridgewell, Master were in dugouts
resting when fatal attack occurred.]

Denham's order shows it

$\frac{1}{2}$ of A Coy under Lt Stanton

was att'd to B & some of
its HQ to C or D Coy.

A Coy also provided 3.30 as carry pt.

Coy lines in TOT marked on my May 3 map.

11 - 13 St. James St.,

Melbourne,

17th. June 1930.

Capt. C. E. W. Bean,
Historian,
Vict. Barracks,
SYDNEY, N.S.W.

Dear Captain Bean,

Your memo of 14th. inst. to hand.

Unfortunately, I am not in a position to give you first hand information regarding the movements of "A" Company 46th. Bn. in the Bullecourt show. Although with "A" Company at the time I was left out of this action, being in charge of the "Neucleus" party withheld from this attack. Perhaps a few notes from my diary may be of some service. On the night of 9/10 April "A" Coy. was detailed for special fatigue, and we carried Stokes Gas Shells to the Front Line. On our return at 1.30 A.M. 2 platoons of "A" Coy., under Lt. Stanton, were ordered to the front line into support trenches. Although everything was in readiness for the attack, orders were received that the attack would not take place, and I believe the troops came back over the snow covered ground in anything but precise military formation, and, although in practically broad daylight and presenting a wonderful target for the Boche, for some unaccountable reason they were practically not shelled at all. We were told the attack did not take place because the Tanks did not get into position in time. My recollection of "B", "C" and "D" Coys' movements was that they were in a front line position for this cancelled attack, but that "A" Coy. were to be left out of this attack. After our men returned dog-tired from the fatigue work and their subsequent trip to the front line they slept for most of the day.

The Battalion went up again that evening and got into position for the attack, which took place next morning 11th. April. Just on midnight when I was turning in I received orders to supply a Carrying Party of 1 officer and 20 o'ranks to report to 12 Bde. H. Qters. in Noreuil. I took all the men left in camp, about 20, and we were carrying water and other articles to Advance Bde H. Qters till just before the attack commenced. I cannot give you details of the attack, but my diary gives me the names of the 46 Bn. officers who took part in the attack. The "A" Company officer who took

Capt. C. E. W. Bean.17/6/30.

part and was the only officer to return unwounded was Lt. J. A. Stanton. I don't know where Stanton is at present but he was in business as an Estate Agent at Mont Albert for some time. The Secretary of our Battalion Association is F. J. Hurren, 39 Bambra Rd., Caulfield, S.E.7, and he may be able to give you up-to-date addresses. Other officers wounded were Capt. Kimber, Lt. Master, Lt. Spiers, Lt. Bishop, Lt. Pentland. The last two named are both resident in Melbourne, but I am out of touch with the others. Besides these officers, Major Waine and Lt. Ridgewell were taken prisoner, and we lost Captain Davis and Capt. Boddington killed and there were probably others killed also. The remnants of the Bn. returned to our lines near Vaulx Vraucourt and an old Sugar Refinery nearby at about 7 P.M. Next morning I was put in charge of what was left of "B", "C" and "D" Coys. and we moved off for a back area - the average strength of each Coy. was about 35 and "C" Company were without an N.C.O.

I was with the 46th. Bn. practically continuously till 28/8/17 when I went to 3rd. Div. as A.D.C. to the G.O.C. 3rd. Div., and if I can be of any assistance in verifying dates or names of officers, etc., I shall be only too pleased to assist.

Yours Faithfully,



5715.

14 April 1930.

W.C. Pentland, Esq.,
18, Oak Avenue,
Elsternwick, Vic.

Dear Sir,

I have been writing the official account of the First Battle of Bullecourt. The records for your battalion are very meagre, but in conversation this week with Major Waine I have picked up part of the story. I should be particularly thankful if you would help me with your recollections. In particular, we have very little knowledge of the position of the tanks. I understand that there was one on the right of the 46th, and that it may have moved forward either just before or just after the battalion. Certainly one tank got caught in the German wire in the hollow some way beyond your right, and was knocked out there. Between the 46th and this tank would be a long sap leading out from the Hindenburg Line into the wire. I have no information as to whether this sap was ever reached by us, or whether it was held by the Germans. According to the records and the explanation given to me by Major Waine, you and part of the right-hand company were held up in front of the heavy wire on this flank, and you reported this fact to battalion headquarters and afterwards engaged in carrying up ammunition. The sap and the tank above referred to cannot have been very far from the point where your flank was, I understand, held up.

I should be most grateful for any assistance that you could give me on these or any other points.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

14 N.
First Bullecourt 46 Bn.
18 Oak Avenue
Essex
4. 5. 30

Mr Bear
Dear Sir

Replying to your request
for information regarding the first
Bullecourt attack
commencing from the night of the 10th
of April. The 46th Bn occupied the small
jumping off trench marked on the map
about 10 P.M.

We were to attack in 3 waves. I was in
charge of the 3rd wave of D Company
My position was at the right of the
jumping off trench
Just before daybreak on the morning
of the 11th of April, the tanks came
up. One of them passing about 30 yds
on my right, mistaking us for the
Germans, it ~~was~~ wheeled to its left,
moved along about 20 yds out from
our trench & parallel to the trench &
opened fire on us with a machine gun
The men in the trench called out in

2

no uncertain voice that we were
Australians. After moving along about
30 yds. The tank commander opened a
little shutter in the tank & asked who we
were. I told him we were Australians.
He then opened his door & came out. He
apologised for having fired on us
& asked where the German line was.
On being informed, he again wheeled
round & made for it, but he bore over
too much to the right & got into the
depression shown on the map. A few
minutes later one of his men came back
& reported to me that they had been
hit & he believed himself to be the only
survivor. I told him we were going
over in a few minutes & that he could
come with us. He said he would go as far
as the tank & set fire to it. I don't
remember seeing that tank when we
did go over, but it must have been in
the depression on our right some where
near where I have marked on the map.
Here is a little incident which happened
in connection with that tank & which
since struck me as being rather humorous.

As you probably know there was no
 zero time fixed for that attack, our
 signal to go over was "a green
 disc to be shown from the side of the
 tanks" I made numerous enquiries
 as to how we were to see a green disc
 1/4 of a mile away in the dark, but could
 get no information. However when that
 tank opened fire on us I saw a little
 green light blinking in & out on the
 side of it. The signal for us to advance
 needed to say we didn't obey the
 signal.

We were to have attacked in 3 waves
 with intervals of I think of 2 minutes
 between but the 2nd wave & hardly
 left the trench when the call of
 3rd wave to come on swept along
 the trench. I kept those near me
 back for a few seconds but I could see
 that if we didn't go we would be left. I
 crossed over with from 25 to 30 men,
 but the men were so eager they ran too
 fast & became scattered too much. We
 also made the same mistake as the tank
 & kept too far to the right, which brought

us to the German wire at a point slightly to the right of the tank you have marked on the map. That tank to the best of my recollection was on the third row of wire, you have it marked on the second. It had cut a lane through the first & second rows of wire for which a number of my men made but were mown down with machine gun fire, almost as soon as they entered it. I with a few others who were a little to the left made our way over the wire where it had been broken with shell fire. On reaching between the 2nd & 3rd rows of wire I found myself alone Serj. Major Tobin who was with me fell badly wounded. I then dropped into a shell hole & could see spurts of machine gun fire coming from the side of the tank which was then only a few yards from me & stationary. I called several times for any un wounded. but only one man answered the call. I looked to the left to see if I could see any of the rows of

1/5

the rest of the battalion but I could not see a single person. My own men had all become casualties with the one exception I concluded the attack had been a failure & with my one remaining man made my way back to Battalion H.Q. in the cutting in the railway line, where I reported to Col. Denham.

Shortly after reporting there a runner P^t Hilburforce came through with a message from Major Waine saying they had got into the German line & asking for reinforcements & more bombs. Col Denham arranged for 2 platoons of the 47 Co. to go over each man to carry a box of bombs. I went over with some of these reinforcements, but there were not many of them reached the German line. The whole ground between the two positions was being sprayed with machine guns from Bullecourt. On reaching the line I found it very thinly held. Trench mortars from Bullecourt were having deadly effect. Lieut Walker was having the wounded

6

carried down a German dug-out which were well made & had tiers of wire-netting bunks fixed in them. All those wounded must have fallen in to German hands. On our extreme right was another deep dugout, which Major Haine had made his H.Q. He being senior officer of the Bⁿ in the attack. This dug out would be somewhere near where you have the right of the Bⁿ marked on the map. He had a block built across the trench there & a bombing post established. Somewhere about 10 or 11 o'clock the Germans commenced bombing heavily at this end. Commencing with a fusillade of a couple of dozen stick bombs from which we suffered more casualties. One of them wounding me in the foot. Our bombers retaliated with the few bombs they had, not more than $\frac{1}{2}$ a dozen. One of them Pte Grendell having his left-hand blown off while resting it on the parapet to get more leverage to throw. By this time I was left with Lieut F Walker & 3 men. Our position was so hopeless that we decided to try to get

back to our original position I don't know if any of the men got back. Lieut Walker was killed & I had my leg shattered by a shell & was afterwards carried out by stretcher bearers under Serjt A Ramage - the Battalion scout serjt - who came out with flag the Germans allowing them to work for about an hour before dusk.

I feel sure that the sap you mention on the right - was never in our hands. The 46th Bn left originally extended to a bow - where I have marked it in black pencil. There was continual bone fighting there until our bombs gave out. Capt. Rodington was killed at that end.

I never saw anything of the 48th Bn during the whole of the attack.

The weakness of the position was lack of communication with our supports. Had we had a sap through which reinforcements & ammunition could have come through with reasonable safety I have no doubt we could have held on.

Yours sincerely
 G. W. Penland

5828.

15 May 1930.

W.C. Pentland, Esq.,
18, Oak Avenue,
Elsternwick, Vic.

Dear Mr. Pentland,

I am most grateful for your interesting account of the fighting at Bullecourt. It has been of great service.

Might I ask four more questions -

- (1) Did you yourself see or know any particulars of the fighting on the left under Captain Boddington?
- (2) One account, in describing the German attack on your block on the right, states that, as bombs came to an end, an officer endeavoured to organise an attack over the top, but the men who got up to attempt this were shot down. Do you remember anything of such an attempt?
- (3) Can you recall whether there was a communication trench to the German support line near this block, either in front or in rear of it?
- (4) I can find no Sergeant-Major Tobin, but a Lance-Corporal Tobin of the 46th was killed that day. Would this be the man you refer to?

Yours sincerely,

Ap 4 46 Bm

18 Oak Avenue
Blenheim
29. 5. 30

Mr Bean

Dear Sir

Replying to your communication of the 15th inst.
Reply to question No (1) When I entered the trench about where you had our left marked with blue pencil, two or three of the 47th reinforcements were with me. The bombs they brought over with them were at once seized by men waiting & run along to the left. where they told me there had been heavy bomb fighting but it was quite quiet at that time. Soon after however the Germans commenced with trench mortars & worked along the trench with them. I cannot remember whether Capt. Roddington had been killed at that time or not. I enquired for Major Haine who was my company commander & was told he was along to the right. I went along & saw him. So I have no first hand knowledge of the fighting on the left.

No(2) Question - About a week after the attack I met Lieut-Master in hospital. He told me that when the bomb attack was on he & Lieut Stanton were down the dug-out with Major Haire the entrance to which was in the same bay of trench as the attack until he told me I was unaware that he & Stanton were down there however by the time they & some men came up we had fallen back a couple of bays. Master told me that Stanton suggested a raid over the top but that he did not approve. As a matter of fact the same idea entered my head but I knew it would only be throwing more lives away as about 10 minutes before the bombing a sergeant & I had a peep over the top to see if we could see any thing of the Germans, we scarcely had our eyes open when a bullet kicked up the dust a few inches from our faces. They apparently had a good observing sniper posted (some are inclined to think that Major Haire might have

got out that dug-out when Master & Stanton did, but I knew that Major Haine was a very worried & exhausted man that day. Our company D had been occupying the front line (the railway line) for 3 days prior to the attack, although we did not suffer any casualties to speak of it was a very precarious position to be holding & made worse by some guns on our right rear who were dropping their shells very close some of them bursting in our rear. On the night of the 9th we were to have been relieved & were looking forward to a night's rest, instead we spent the night in the open waiting for the tanks to come up, which did not come. The next day was a very disorganised day. The whole Bn straggled back to Vaux. & I don't think Major Haine had any sleep that day. Then at night we marched back to the jumping off trench & lay there waiting all night. So that when the attack did take place we were very tired men. On top of that Major Haine had the responsibility of being senior Bn officer

to go over with the attack
I think this little explanation is only
just to Major Haine as people may
be apt to misjudge his action

③ Question — No I cannot remember
any communication trench near there
(though I would not say there was none
there) There was one further along
to the left near where I entered
the trench.

④ Question — Yes. Lance corporal Tobin
was the same man. He was our
company Serj. Major until about a
fortnight prior to then, when he was
court martialled for A.W.I. & reduced
to the ranks. He was almost immediately
promoted a gain to lance corporal
He was a very fine soldier

Yours sincerely
W. B. Gensland

5879.

24 May 1930.

J.A. Stanton, Esq., M.C.,
Roadside Mail,
Nungarin, W.A.

Dear Sir,

I have lately been writing the official account of the First Battle of Bullecourt (11 April 1917), and Lieutenant Master has mentioned that he was with you at the end of the attack when the Germans came over from the right. There is nothing in the records as to the commencement of that attack, or as to how the right flank was held.

I should be most grateful if you could assist me with any recollection either on that point or as to the fighting under Captain Boddington on the left, or indeed any recollection that you have of that day's fighting. It would also greatly help if you could assist me by marking on the enclosed map what you believe to have been the flank posts of the 46th Battalion.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean
C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

GI or OGI?

Note: 62 Div was not to alt. at same time.
Was this in Gen Robertson's open order?

46 Bn
1st Bullecourt.

Belmore Farm
Roadside Mail
Tungahin W.A.
June 2nd 1930

Mr G. W. Bean
Official Historian
Victoria Barracks
Sydney NSW

Dear Sir

Your No 5879 dated

24th May 1930, to hand.

I note with interest that you are writing the official account of the First Battle of Bullecourt (11th April 1917) and will be very pleased to give you any information that is in my power to give.

Excuse if narrative has a personal note, but under the circumstances, it could hardly be otherwise.

As far as my memory serves, B. C. + D Companies of the 46th Battalion were to take the first trenches of the Hindenburg Line immediately to the right of Bullecourt Village, as marked on maps under separate cover, with A Company in support.

Our right flank was our sister Battalion, the 14th of the 4th Brigade. We had no one on our immediate left, but on the other side of the village of Bullecourt, an English Division was to attack at the same time, and with the assistance of Tanks, we were to fight our way along the Hindenburg Line behind the village, but owing to the failure of the tanks, this was impossible. Being attached to A. Coy, we were engaged in carrying up

(their impression)

46th Battalion
 Gas shells to the front line during the night of the 9th, and almost at the last moment, I was lent to B Coy, as second in command to Kapitan Boddington.

We were on the left flank of the 46th Battalion, nearest the village.

We originally intended to attack on 10th April & were lying out in front in the snow waiting for the tanks, which did not turn up, so about daybreak, we were sent back behind the front lines.

The Germans saw us going back & sent over planes, which flew low, and no doubt had a good look at us, & knew what we intended doing, and consequently made preparations to receive us the next morning.

After a barrage (including numerous gas shells) had been put down, we attacked just before dawn on 11th April, over about 700 yards of snow covered ground. Our casualties were very heavy in this attack, as we were not only fired at from the Hindenburg Line, but we received a hot fire from the village a few yards on our left, which had not been cleared of Germans, although I think that the gas shells were supposed to have driven them out.

Rt Coy held by wind
 The dense lines of barbed wire entanglements in this sector were passable, although our D. Coy on the right flank, could not get through the wire where they attacked, and not knowing that we had got through & had taken our objective, returned to our old front line, where Colonel Denham sent them back to try further along, near us. I believe they got through this time.

The first person I met after jumping down into the

Hindenburg Trench, + rushing round a bay, was Captain Boddington, who exclaimed "Thank God Stanton, we got here safely." He told me to rally the B. Coy + to beat off any counter attacks, whilst he took charge of the left flank, and would try + bomb his way along the trench to join up with the English Battalions. Our tank did not turn up, having been disabled some distance back.

(Later the 48th Battalion went through us on to the next line of trenches).

Captain Boddington did some very heroic work, but it was impossible to work far along the trench, owing to the strength of the enemy, and the fact that we soon ran short of bombs. During this fighting, Captain Boddington was killed, and I was left in command + although we made every effort to advance along the trench, it was impossible without reinforcements and more bombs.

These were dispatched at various times during the morning, but very few reached us, owing to the fact that they had to pass very close to the Village of Bullecourt, which seemed to be full of Germans, who took heavy toll of our men.

These Huns gave our left flank a pretty hot time from this village by firing minenwerfer shells at us during the morning, so that we were really being fired at from 3 sides.

During a lull in the fighting, I went along to see how our right flank was getting on + to see Major Wain, who was

Boddington
+ Stanton

Stanton
in C of aft
B's death

Note defence
on May 3
to bomb
(2) Count rd
available

in charge of our Battalion's hop over.

There was no sign of the 14th Battalion linking up with us, + I do not know how far away they were.

Our right flank had blocked up the trench to prevent an attack from that quarter, and were probably not strong enough to attack along the trench towards the 14th Battalion, and some of the officers + men were resting down a dug out, probably temporary Battalion Hqs. I was invited down, but decided that I would get back to the left flank again. Some time later,

the enemy came over and attacked the right flank + took prisoners some of those down this dug out.

The remainder were gradually forced back on to us, and after a strenuous resistance, considering the shortage of bombs, the trenches being too deep for much sniping, we were gradually forced back along the trench. Whilst organising a counter-attack, we were heavily bombed by the advancing enemy, + I was rendered unconscious, + upon recovering, found that our men were returning across no man's land towards our front line.

It was either that, or be captured. This was about 11:30 am.

On looking towards the advancing Germans, I found that they were in the next bay, so I quickly slid over the parapet + dived into a shell hole. Private Davidson saw the dive + reported me as being shot.

After a short wait, I decided to try my luck + made a dash for the wire entanglements, hoping that I might get through and across no man's land.

Reason for failure to bomb but

deep 2/6

Stanton's escape

Every few yards, I had to dive into a shell hole to escape the snipers + machine guns, because as far as I could see, I was the last of the 46th Battalion in sight, + they certainly seemed to be concentrating their fire upon me, but beyond having my steel hat knocked off a couple of times, they could not hit me, + I ultimately reached our front line at the railway embankment, safely, with a sprained wrist only.

Out of the 13 Officers from the 46th Battalion in the actual hop over, I was the only one not killed, captured, or wounded severely enough to leave the Battalion.

Later on, I furnished Col. Denham our C.O. with a full report of the attack, from what I could see of it. Perhaps this is with the records of the Battalion?

During the day, parties of stretcher bearers were very busy bringing in wounded, + I believe the Germans allowed them to approach close to the barbed wire to collect wounded.

I was awarded the Military Cross for my part in the operation, and received the usual congratulatory letter from General Birdwood in which he referred to the manner in which I had led the company upon the Commander being killed, and to the fact that I had been rendered insensible by a German bomb + then recovered, to escape.

We understood at the time, that the 46th + 48th Battalions, hung on the longest of any Battalions in that sector, and we saw the 14th Battalion being driven out whilst we were still in the

refer
to Denham's
statement

Hindenburg line. After that they seemed to concentrate on us. Captain P.W. Simonsen (a nephew of General Monash) was with A Coy 46th Battalion, and could possibly give you an account of this attack from his diary.

Write to Simonsen

My cousin, Captain Fred. B. Stanton, 14th Battalion, went over with the same wave as myself, a few hundred yards to my right, & was never heard of again. He must have been killed in, or near, the enemy trenches.

At the time, we reckoned the reasons for not being able to hold the trench after capturing it in the early morning, were;

- 1 Failure of the tanks to assist in the operations.
- 2 Failure to clear the village of Bullecourt of the enemy, thereby allowing them to shoot down at close range, reinforcements proceeding from our front line, to the captured trenches.
- 3 Not receiving enough bombs owing to same cause.
- 4 The distance between our frontline trench and the Hindenburg line.

A very interesting account could be given by Captain of 48th Battalion, who was wounded and taken prisoner in the Hindenburg line & subsequently escaped from prisoner of war camp under sensational circumstances & reached England, where he had an interview, to relate his experiences, with the King.

Trusting this will be of some assistance to you & would be glad to read your account when it is prepared.

Yours faithfully
F. Stanton
Capt. 46th Batten A.S.

5714.

14 April 1930.

Lieutenant-Colonel F.R. North, M.C.,
Bayswater Terrace,
Hermit Park,
Townsville, Q'land.

Dear Colonel North,

I have been writing the official account of the First Battle of Bullecourt. The records for your battalion are very meagre, but in conversation this week with Major Waine of the 46th I have picked up part of the story. I should be particularly thankful if you would help me with your recollections, especially on the following points:-

- (1) Your company is said to have reached the trenches either with few losses or with none at all, whereas other reinforcements were almost annihilated. Do you remember any reason for this, e.g., was Captain Boddington (46th) just then bombing towards the left in O.G.1, and might this have distracted the attention of the Germans?
- (2) Did you go on to the second trench (O.G.2)? Were you present at the fighting on the left there? What proportion of your company went to each trench?
- (3) Major Waine mentioned that you were with him writing an urgent report in the dugout entrance, when the Germans broke through into O.G.1. Do you remember, through personal observation, how the flanks in O.G.1 were held, or what led up to this break-through?
- (4) Can you remember the position of any of the tanks, and also of the flanks of the 46th or 48th in the Hindenburg Line? I enclose a rough map of the sector, and should be grateful if, in answering this, you could use it in marking down any of the points referred to.

Yours faithfully,

48th Bn

Copy of Messages sent by H.Q., 48th Bn., on
11/4/17.

To G A B Y
G.H./32.

In position

Time - 4.26 a.m.

To Capt. Mott and Capt. Moyes
G.H./33 You do not wait for signals from tank. When the
first objective is taken you go on and take your objective.
Time - 5 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./34

G A I N Bn. advancing

5.16 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./35

On account of lateness of advance have arrangements been made
to keep barrage longer on flanks of Bullecourt

5.19 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./36

Wind report aaa Sap aaa

5.23 a.m.

To A B C D Coys.
G.H./37

4th Brigade have gained first objective

5.38 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./38

Priority.

Right of second objective gained by us

6.17 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./39

Priority.

2nd objective captured by us

6.18 a.m.

To D Coy.

Priority.

Do you hold 2nd objective from your right to road on left.

6.20 a.m.

To D Coy.
G.H./41

Do you require ammunition if so what amount

6.24 a.m.

G A B Y
G.H./42

Priority.

In continuation of my G.H./39.

Capt. Leane reports strong parties of Germans reinforcing up SUNKIEN ROAD. This attack was broken by Lewis gun fire, he is now short of ammunition. Have sent it to him. Also sent up two Vickers guns and 1 male tank to assist him on the flank

6.50 a.m.

To D Coy.
G.H./43

Are you consolidating digging firestep and making block?

7.10 a.m.

To D Coy.
G.H./44

Priority.

Have called for barrage on SUNKIEN ROAD V 22 D 2 3 Can you give me map reference of right and left of your position Are you in touch with 4th Brigade on your right

8.10 a.m.

O.C. 12 A.L.T.M.B.
G.H./45

Please send up your 4 trench mortars 2 to report to 46th Bn. 2 to report to 48th Bn. in second objective this will greatly assist in holding our flank Acknowledge

9 a.m.

The H.Q. of 12 A.L.T.M.B. not being where map reference stated this message could not be delivered.

G A B Y
G.H./46

Am not in touch with 4th Brigade Strong hostile post
with rifle grenades held me up Will you please ask 4th Brigade
to try and get in touch with us

9.30 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./47

Lt. Upton 1f 12 M.G. Coy. requires ammunition in front line
at once urgent

9.45 a.m.

To G A B Y
G.H./48

Confirming my verbal message the Intelligence Officer reports
that a body of men are marching from the direction of HENDECOURT
From appearances the trenches are strongly held on our right
and left.

O.C. D Coy. reports that he expects a counter-attack.
He has only 7 officers and 200 other ranks left. Our casualties
apparently heavy. Most of my signallers and H.Q. men have
been either killed or wounded. The shelling has been very
heavy. I consider the position is very serious. Something
must be done on our left immediately if the trenches are to be held.

To G A B Y
G.H./49

Both 4th and 12th Brigades retiring . We hold this line but
you must assist with artillery barrage . Our casualties must be
very heavy.

11.15 a.m.

G A B Y
G.H./50

The 48th Bn. was forced to retire at 12.25 p.m. exactly
1 hour and 10 minutes after 4th Brigade 46th Bn. 47th Bn. retired.
We were forced to retire only on account of our own heavy
bombardment. Time and time again the Boche counter-attacked
after 46th Bn. and 47th Bn. retired.

Finally seeing our own barrage upon them what remained the
battalion fought its way back to our lines bringing in their
Lewis guns while heavy enemy rifle and artillery fire was
brought to bear on them.

12.50 p.m.

G A B Y
 G.H./51 Priority.
 Reply to B M. 52.

Barrage sufficient.
 Situation. The enemy is making no attempt to advance.
 What is left of my men have been 2 nights without sleep.
 Shall I withdraw them at dark as this place is too thickly held
 and casualties are heavy

12.55 p.m.

G.H./52

All Coys. and specialists

Please give your approximate strength to bearer

3.30 p.m.

To G A B Y
 G.H./53 Reply to S.C. 129.

Approximately 10 officers and 300 other ranks

3.50 p.m.

G A B Y
 G.H./54

G A B Y order 138 received

4.15 p.m.

To G A B Y
 G.H./53

Re your G A B Y order 138

Do you wish all 46, 47 and 48 Bns. to remain here in position
 until relieved by 45th Bn. The position is very crowded and is
 also held by 2 coys. of 13th Bde. Could not 45th Bn. relieve
 2 coys. of 13th Bde. now holding right ~~sub-sector~~ sub-sector
 and thus allow men of other Bns. here to move out as soon as it
 becomes dark. Will you instruct by wire on receipt of this
 so that I can make arrangements.

4.47 p.m.

SPECIAL ORDER.

The Commanding Officer wishes to thank the 48th Battalion for the splendid work Officers, N.C.O's and men did in the attack on Enemy Trenches East of BULLECOURT, on the morning of the 11th inst.

Under the best conditions the task set us was one that required the best of troops to carry it out successfully, yet you did it, and did it well, despite the heavy barrage, rifle and machine-gun fire that you had to face for over one hour from the time you were in position until you were able to penetrate his trenches. You successfully held the position for 6 hours, despite the fact that you were outnumbered, held on to the position for 1 hour and 10 minutes after the 46th Battalion in your rear, and 4th Brigade on your right had retired. And then retired in good order, Lewis gunners carrying out their guns.

It was an achievement of the very highest order and is well worthy of the Battalion. Our casualties are heavy both in officers and other ranks, but we proved again that we were more than a match for the Hun.

To have successfully broken into and held the Great HINDENBURG LINE is something indeed to be proud of. We have all of us lost comrades and brothers, yet we must not think the sacrifice in vain, but rather let it make us firmer in our resolve to use every effort to beat him to his knees.

We are waiting now for the next round. Let it be a real knock-out blow the next time we meet him. Words of mine cannot express the admiration and pride I feel in commanding such men. You are indeed a credit to our loved Australia.

D.F. Twining Lieut.
Adjutant, 48th Bn.

The following are copies of messages received:-

From General Birdwood, Commander 1st ANZAC Corps, dated 11th April, 1917:-

"The Army Commander fully appreciates the splendid effort made this morning by the 4th Australian Division, which so nearly achieved a great and very important success. Even though we have not gained any ground locally, the Army Commander is satisfied that the effect upon the whole situation by the ANZAC attack has been of great assistance."

I am sure you all know how fully I appreciate the really good work done by every man who took part in this morning's operation. We have no cause to be disheartened at having failed to retain our footing in the face of overwhelming odds. Rather can we feel proud of the magnificent bravery displayed. Please convey my feelings of gratitude to all.

(Signed) L. Craig,
Capt.,
for Lieut.-Col.,
G.S. 4th Australian Division.

The following is a copy of wire from the Commander-in-Chief to 1st ANZAC:-

"Please convey to 4th Australian Division my appreciation of the great gallantry shown by them in their operations on the 11th last. Please convey this to all concerned."

Copy of letter received from G.O.C. 4th Australian Division:-

"My dear General Robertson,

Will you please accept yourself, and convey to the officers and other ranks of the Units under your command who took part in yesterday's operations my sincere thanks for their gallant services, and my congratulations on the success achieved in breaking the formidable HINDENBURG LINE, notwithstanding the failure of the Tanks from which so much was expected in the direction of preparing the way.

The fact that we could not "stick it" in the Line, was due to bad luck, and cannot be regarded in any way as a reflection on your Brigade, which fought magnificently, and in my opinion performed, under all the circumstances, a herculean task in getting there at all and staying as long as they did.

The Brigade has well maintained its previous high reputation.

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd.) William Holmes, Maj.-General.

Copy of letter received by Lieut.-Colonel Leane from Brig.-General Robertson:-

Fricourt Camp,
13th April, 1917.

"It was indeed cheering to hear your boys arrive this morning singing; it speaks volumes considering the terrible experiences they endured during the BULLECOURT operation.

I consider the effort made by the 48th Battalion truly magnificent. The failure of the Tanks upset all calculations and for them to have pushed on without artillery support through the thick ~~xxxxx~~ barb wire and finally have stormed and taken the second objective was wonderful and that the position was held so long by the gallant garrison redounds to the credit of your Battalion and the State from which they came. The retirement had to take place and under the circumstances it was the correct course to take.

I am very sorry for the heavy losses you have sustained. Such men cannot be replaced and we shall feel their loss very much. KISMET. We are in the corner now but may be we shall be in the centre of the ring again and our boys will not forget BULLECOURT.

My kindest regards Colonel to you and your brave lads of 48th.

Yours sincerely,
J.C. Robertson.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE

From Commanding Officer
48th Battalion.

To Headquarters
12th Aust. Inf. Bde.

Report on Operation 11th April 1917.

The 48th and 46th Battalions were detailed to take part in an attack on the Hindenburg Line, the attack to take place at 4.30 a.m. on the 11th inst.

First Objective, 46th Battalion - U 23 a 6. 8 t^{to} o U 22 d 4. 0

Second Objective, 48th Battalion - U 23 c 6. 1 to U 22 d 5. 3

The Battalion was in position to attack at 4 a.m. Receiving no word of the advance I wired to Company Commanders at 5 a.m. thinking perhaps they might be waiting for signals from Tanks ("You do not wait for signal from Tanks. When the first objective is taken you go on and take the second"). The tanks were slow in getting away. This proved very bad for us as it began to get light, and an advance of 1,000 yards had to be made before 1st Objective was reached under direct rifle fire from trenches east of BULLECOURT. Only two tanks reached anywhere near the enemy line and it was not until 6.18 that my men were able to reach 2nd Objective. While the barrage remained on enemy trenches East of BULLECOURT the fire was kept down, but this lifted at 5 a.m. to allow the Tanks to operate on the flanks, consequently the enemy had every opportunity to snipe my men from 5 a.m. to 6.19 a.m. which he did inflicting great casualties. I wired Brigade pointing this out at 5.19 a.m. as follows:
"On account of lateness of advance have arrangements been made to keep barrage longer on flanks of BULLECOURT". On account of arrangements made with the tanks nothing could be done. No artillery barrage was on the trenches yet the men advanced despite all obstacles and made their way through the wire.

This was necessarily slow work and many fell getting through it. Captain Leane was the only Company Commander who reached the 1st Objective. It was found that only a portion of the ^{45th} 48th Objective had been gained and my first line had to fight at the first trench to enable them to get through. It was not until 6.19 that 2nd Objective was gained. Bombers worked to right and established Block in trench at Sunken Road U 23 c 85.05. On the left they could not advance further than Sunken Road at U 23 0.4. Here they found the Boche in strength. A block was established at this point and several attacks driven off with loss to the enemy. Lewis guns were pushed out in front and these did good work on supports advancing from REINCOURT. The tanks never attempted to do the work they were allotted. One tank reported to me at Battalion Headquarters U 28 c 7.4 and I gave the officer orders to try and assist my left flank. He started out to do this but did not get far and the tank was hit returning. The crew promptly left the tank and came to my H.Qrs. I asked them could they not drive the tank away as it was standing 20 yards from my H.Qrs. and was being heavily fired upon. The N.C.O. declined to try, and the party left for the rear. This tank caught on fire about 30 minutes afterwards. Had the Tanks shown more pluck and initiative I quite believe things would have been different. The enemy trench mortars were causing my men trouble and sent the following wire to O.C. 12th A.L.T.M.Bty. to the position given me by Brigade U 27 d 54, but although my runners searched everywhere, both right and left of this position they could not be found, and I have since been informed that the mortars ~~were~~ never ^{went} forward. They would have assisted my line materially. Every effort

was made to get in touch with 4th Bde. but nothing could be done. From observation I should say that this Brigade was at least 400 yards to the right of the point they should have been. Between my Battalion and this point the line was strongly held by the enemy and constant bombing attacks were made, all were driven off with considerable loss. At 9.30 a.m. I instructed my Intelligence Officer to go forward and send me a report of the position and the map reference of Right and Left. This officer reported that a body of men, approximately a battalion were marching from the direction of HENDECOURT. Capt. Leane reported trenches on right and left strongly held and expects a counter-attack. This information I telephoned to Brigade, and repeated by wire I asked that some support be given on left immediately, otherwise doubted if the trenches could be held. However this was not forthcoming. At 11.15 a.m. I wired that 4th Brigade and 12th Brigade were retiring. I could see this from my position. The 46th Bn. never informed my Bn. of their decision - my men were placed with large numbers of the enemy on their right and left, and the trench in rear evacuated by the 46th Battalion was promptly regained by the Boche. Bombing parties under officers moved down communication trench and bombed out the Boche, working on both flanks, and the both trenches were again in our hands, but on account of the few men left and no communication possible except by runner, Captain Leane decided to evacuate the 2nd Objective and fall back and hold the 1st Objective. He knew by this time that the 46th had retired and could see the 4th Brigade going back but decided to hold on to the one trench hoping for assistance later. At 12.5 he despatched a wire "Our artillery

is making trench untenable" and at 12.25 he had to retire. The officers and a few bayonet men remaining to cover the retirement. My Battalion held the trenches 1 hour 10 minutes after the rest had retired. No words of mine can express the pride and admiration I feel for these brave men, officers and men alike did wonderful work and I feel that had troops come up on the left of BULLECOURT and captured the trench we would still be in the position. The failure in my opinion was due to:-

- (1) Tanks not carrying out their work.
- (2) Failure of British to attack left of BULLECOURT.

I am forwarding names of officers and other ranks whom I consider worthy of special recognition. During the afternoon and evening volunteers from the Battalion worked over No Man's Land to the enemy wire, rescuing and bringing in the wounded, despite the fact that they were sniped at and ~~fire~~ fired on with machine-guns. A great number of our wounded, also 46th and 47th, were brought in.

In the Field
13/4/17.

Raymond L. Leane
----- Lieut.-Colonel
Commanding 48th Battalion.

Report on Operations 11th April 1917.

Lieut. Imlay

I left with Ammunition Party at 7.30 a.m., whole party arrived and handed S.A.A. to Lewis gunners. The situation in 48th trench was fairly quiet but a bombing party under Lieut. Dennis was still working down towards BULLECOURT. Made a tour of 48th Sector and found several Lewis Guns in action in trench and three in shell holes outside. Two guns were out of action having been damaged by shell fire. These were taken to pieces and a complete gun put into action from the undamaged parts. I ordered men to collect ammunition from casualties so as to have a reserve supply. Had been in the trenches about 1½ hours when an intense bombardment was put on to sector coming from the direction of BULLECOURT and enfilading our trench practically from end to end. This artillery was at first thought to be our own, and on realising that it came from the enemy/^{the}trenches were patrolled by the officers. At this stage men from the 46th Battalion Sector were seen to be giving themselves up to the enemy. Considering that the 46th Bn. men who were surrendering did not have sufficient cause I ordered some of my men to fire on them but am unable to say with what success. A general counter-attack was in progress and Germans in fairly large numbers were seen to be coming down from the direction of RIENCOURT and were fired on by our Lewis gunners - several were seen to fall. Then a large number of men were observed in front of the 4th Brigade sector, and were at first thought to be reinforcements for that Brigade. However, on closer observation it was seen that there were a number of Germans amongst them, and were bounding the Australians up and sending them behind their (the German) lines, where they were collected and marched towards REINCOURT.

It was reported that the 46th had evacuated and on investigation this was found to be correct. The Germans were vigorously bombing on both flanks and as our supply of bombs was short it was decided to hold the first line only. This was done until the supply of bombs on the right gave out. It was then realised that without bombs the position could not be held, and the order was given to retire. The retirement was carried out under intense machine-gun and rifle fire, also a fair amount of small artillery fire.

The tanks do not seem to have co-operated with the infantry as was expected. I saw no signs of them having been inside the Huns wire. The wire was fairly well cut by artillery fire though most of the wooden standards were still erect. The first line of trenches ~~xxxxxxx~~ were very little damaged by our artillery.

REINCOURT seems to be a large centre for the Hun as horse transport was seen to leave there and proceed in the direction of BULLECOURT. The road was apparently in good order as the vehicle was travelling fairly fast. Two Germans were seen to stop this vehicle and it then turned about and returned towards REINCOURT at a hand gallop. Just in front of our sector there was situated a factory and several small out buildings. These were occupied by snipers who accounted for a fair number of our men. About 100 yards to the left of the factory the road disappeared behind a ridge and went on towards BULLECOURT.

Germans, with full packs up, were observed coming from the direction of BULLECOURT and proceeding towards REINCOURT. The fire was opened on these and several were seen to fall. After this the Huns came in ones and twos and made dashes over exposed places; however, our Lewis gunners accounted for several of them.

The ground behind the road does not appear to be damaged to any extent by shell fire, and had recently been cultivated.

Shoulder straps on dead Huns had, in red, 36 over a crown and all appeared to be fresh troops. Base plates of shells which fell in our sector were marked C 36.

Trenches were very well dug and were as attached sketch, with bays of about 12 yards divided by traverses of an equal thickness; were practically free from mud and dug in good solid ground. I saw four dug-out shafts, each of about 20 feet deep and timbered in the usual solid way adopted by the Hun. He was evidently still working on same as the tunnels at bottom were only a very few feet in. Doorway of dug-outs would be about 4 ft. 6 in. square.

Norman G. Imlay,
----- Lieut.

Lieut. Challen

At about 3 a.m. on the morning of April 11th "C" Coy. 48th Bn. prepared to advance to the "jumping off" position on the railway line. Each man carried 200 rounds of S.A.A., two "Mill" grenades and two sandbags in addition ~~14~~¹⁴ shovels, 6 picks and 2 mats for laying on the wire were taken into position.

The men took up a position about 200 yards in front of the railway line in two waves. The first being composed of bombers and bayonet men. The second wave consisted of Lewis gunners, rifle grenadiers, carrying party with tools, mats etc.

"B" Coy. was on the left of the Coy.; Lieut. Shadwick and 2nd Lieut. Sheldon were in the first wave on left and right flanks respectively. Lieut. Caldwell was in second wave and took up a position near the right flank. The Coy. was in position by 4.15 a.m.

At 4.30 a.m. the barrage opened and the tanks began to advance but it was nearly 5 a.m. when the latter reached our position and stayed there for about 15 minutes firing continuously towards the Coy. Objective. By this time the enemy artillery retaliated and "straafed" the area near the tanks very considerably causing heavy casualties in the Coy. ranks. The Tanks afterwards moved towards the right flank.

About 5.30 a.m. the word to advance was given and the lads got up quickly and advanced at a quick pace, almost at a run. The enemy barrage was thick both with H.E. and shrapnel and was supported by M.G. fire which caused heavy casualties.

The 48th Battalion lost no time getting over the First Objective and took possession of the enemy second line trenches. As our troops advanced the enemy fell

back so that on reaching the objective very little individual opposition was met with. Only a few snipers remained to oppose our advance.

The Lewis gunners took up positions to cover the consolidating party who commenced work reversing the trenches. Where possible the guns took up positions in front of the objective. The objective gained was from the road on right flank to the entrance of SUNKEN ROAD on left flank.

The enemy took up position in the SUNKEN ROAD on our left and in a previously prepared position in the valley about 1,500 yards in the direction of HENDECOURT. It appeared to me that the enemy had steel traps prepared which he let down after jumping into the position. The Sunken roads lead to BULLECOURT, HENDECOURT, and REINCOURT.

Between 8 and 9 a.m. things were quiet, but about 9 a.m. the enemy opened up on our position with trench mortars, "plum puddings", artillery and M.G. fire. The trench mortar caused the most casualties and considerably damaged the trenches. It was fired from BULLECOURT from the rear of our position.

During the early morning I went to the 46th line and found they were being driven in by bombing party owing to scarcity of bombs, but before returning to the front line a supply of bombs came up and the enemy were driven out. About 11.30 a.m. our position became more serious, the 46th Bn. had retired and the enemy attempted to cut off our communication. Bombing parties were organised and succeeded in driving the enemy out of the trench.

The enemy artillery and trench mortars were still causing heavy casualties so the S.O.S. signal was sent

up. Our artillery did open up but played havoc with our position, so that it was decided to hold the First Objective. Bombing parties held the flanks while the movement was carried out and this position was held until 12.25 p.m. when the order to withdraw was given.

L. Challen,
----- Lieut.

2nd Lt. Sheldon In the attack on the enemy lines on right of BULLECOURT by 46th and 48th Battalions I was in charge of No. 9 Platoon "C" Coy. of 48th Battalion on the extreme right flank of the attacking line. Advancing across No-Man's Land we passed through the enemy barrage of shell, machine-gun and rifle fire and had very heavy casualties.

When we arrived at our objective, the German support line, we found that the enemy had already evacuated and we established at the road which runs through the enemy line at U 23 c 85 05. Lewis guns were placed to cover our flank and one gun was sent forward in front of our line about 30 yards to enfilade the enemy support line on our right. A bombing post was established at U 23 c 85 05 on the road to prevent enemy bombing parties entering the trench. The riflemen dug a firestep on the reverse side of the trench, and our consolidation was complete within half an hour of our occupation of the trench.

Our Lewis guns and rifles were very effectively employed in dispersing enemy working parties, and bodies of men which could be seen behind his lines. At 9.30 a.m. a count was made and a total of 9 officers and 218 other ranks was reached. Between 8 a.m. and 0 a.m. the situation was quiet. After 0 a.m. the enemy fired trench

mortar bombs into the line held by the 46th Bn. and into the communication trench between the two lines. A battery of field guns which was situated in or near the village of BULLECOURT enfiladed our line with H.E. and "whiz-bangs" doing considerable damage to the trench.

Between 11 and 11.30 a.m. the 46th Bn. evacuated their line without informing us of their intention to do so until they had gone, when a runner from the 47th Bn. reported to Captain Leane that the 46th Bn. had evacuated.

Immediately a bombing party was organised and the trench evacuated by the 46th Battalion was cleared of the enemy. At 12.25 a.m. finding that the position was untenable, we retired leaving our wounded in the trench owing to our inability to remove them. Bombs were found in the line which had been occupied by the 46th, and I am of the opinion that they were not justified in leaving the line, and that they could have held on.

The enemy trenches are about 5 ft. wide at bottom and 8 ft. at top, with a depth of 8 ft. They have a firestep and are in first class order. The support line occupied by us had four dug-out ~~xxxxxxx~~ entrances all of them being in the course of construction. No tunnels have been dug. Had the attack on the left of the village been successful we should have had no difficulty in holding our position, and eventually in capturing the village.

Enemy working parties were observed constructing wire entanglements about 1,800 yards in front of the village of HENDECOURT-LES CAGNICOURT.

C. Sheldon,
----- 2nd Lieut?

Lieut. McKenzie

All ranks were in their positions by 4.30 a.m. and ready to advance, but the advance of the second wave of the 48th Battalion did not commence till 5 a.m. We advanced in the rear of "C" Coy., passed through the enemy front line entanglements with ease and entered the enemy second line trench which had already been occupied by "B" and "C" Coys. and was at that time clear of the enemy.

Under the orders of Captain Leane I took charge of the left flank of "C" ~~Coy~~ and "D" Coys. and proceeded to make a firestep while Lieut. Jones on the right flank organised a bombing party to work in the direction of the 4th Brigade. A block was established on this flank at the SUNKEN ROAD.

Shortly after this it was reported that the left flank of the 46th Bn. was being driven out behind us, so Captain Leane sent me to find out how matters stood. The officer in charge of that flank said that the enemy had attacked his flank but, as they (the 46th) had got some more bombs they would be able to hold against the enemy.

On my returning from the left flank of the 46th I met Lieut. Imlay with a party carrying ammunition for Lewis guns. I guided this party back to Coy. Hqrs. There was a lull in the action at this time for about an hour after which (at 9 a.m.) the enemy opened a bombardment with light field guns causing many casualties. These guns appeared to be firing from the direction of BULLECOURT.

Shortly after 11 a.m. the 46th Bn. were seen retiring from their position on our right. Shortly after this the enemy renewed their attack on the 46th Bn. on the left who retired.

This information was brought in by a man from the 47th Bn. who came over when the 46th retired.

Captain Leane then ordered an attack on the German front line which was entered by means of the communication trench. About 250 yards of this trench was cleared up after the evacuation by the 46th Bn., but owing to the shortage of bombs on the right the 48th Bn. retired on receipt of orders from the O.C. at about 12.30 p.m.

S. McKenzie,
----- 2nd Lieut.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

From Commanding Officer
48th Battalion

To Headquarters
12th Aust. Inf. Bde.

Report on Operations of Tanks April 11th 1917.

The Tanks on the left sector were not in position at 4 a.m., in fact at that time I saw several behind Railway Embankment. All the Tanks did not advance on our front, only two reached Sunken Road near "Jumping Off" Trench. These went forward to about U 28 d 9 l, U 28 d 8 l and opened machine-gun and six pounder fire on the Boche trenches. They did not arrive at this point until after 5 a.m. and remained there for some time firing.

Our advance commenced at 5.16 not 4.45 a.m. as stated by C.O. Tanks, and the men were exposed to heavy flank fire from 5 a.m., at which time barrage lifted off trenches East of BULLECOURT.

The two tanks mentioned only went forward about 100 yards and stopped again about U 28 c 2 5, at this point the Infantry left them and they were not seen again on our front by the attackers. They certainly did not reach the HINDENBURG LINE for the stakes were still standing and the wire strong. In fact my opinion is that they never tried to do so.

The statement that they captured the HINDENBURG LINE front and Support Trench is not correct. They were never near it on the left sector. The only tank to go near his lines was the one that went into the south east corner of BULLECOURT but that was some hours after.

At about 6.30 a.m. I saw a Tank near my Headquarters on Railway Track, and told the officer in charge of it to go to the north east corner of BULLECOURT and assist my Battalion to clear up their left. We were being strongly counter-attacked at this time. It was a male tank and went forward firing its six pounders as it moved. I watched this tank and after going about 300 yards it turned, and returned. When about 20 yards from my Headquarters the crew left it and rushed to the Embankment. I inquired from the N.C.O. why he had left it, and he said they had a direct hit, and I believe one man was slightly wounded by the door blowing in. He said it was going all right and could be driven away but declined to try and the crew left for the rear. The enemy put a heavy fire on to the Tank and about 7.30 a.m. it caught on fire. I believe this tank could have been salvaged had the crew possessed the necessary pluck. They were absolutely panic-stricken when they reached my Headquarters.

What was achieved by this Battalion was in no way due to the assistance given by the Tanks. In fact they were a hindrance, not a help. The men would have gone forward at once under cover of darkness, instead of having to wait in the open from 4 a.m. until 5.16 a.m. by which time it was daylight, for Tanks that never advanced. Had we been able to get forward half the casualties would have been saved.

Why the Tanks stopped and opened fire from the "Jumping Off" Trench perhaps is best known to the O.C. Tanks. It was certainly bad tactics because it promptly brought a barrage right on the men waiting to advance.

I am of the opinion that the Tanks absolutely failed to carry out their part in the attack. I consider had they shown more dash and initiative things would have been better and

perhaps we might have been still holding the line
captured today.

In the Field
19/4/17.

Raymond L. Leane,
----- Lieut.-Col.
Commanding 48th Battalion.

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

1st Anzac Corps, 11th April, 1917.

My dear Leane,

I cannot tell you how extremely grieved I am to have heard of your brother's death. Words cannot express what I felt in the matter. Having lost the one brother, I had hoped that the rest of your family, all of whom have done such magnificent work for the Empire, would be spared to return to Australia, and with all the honour which has been achieved by you all. I know that nothing that I can say can lessen the blow, but I am sure you realise how deeply I sympathise with you, for it is to those who are left comes all the suffering, and I trust it may be some small consolation to know what real brave work your brother put in during his whole time in the A.I.F., and how gallantly he fell.

With my deepest sympathy,

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) W.R. Birdwood,
Lieut.-General,
Commanding 1st Anzac.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

HISTORIAN.

No. 5392.

~~Via QUEANBEYAN, N.S.W.~~

VICTORIA BARRACKS, SYDNEY.

22 January 1930.

Brig.-General R.L. Leane, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O., M.C., V.D.,
 Chief Commissioner of Police,
Adelaide, S.A.

Dear Leane,

I have been writing the narrative of the First Battle of Bullecourt. The records are fairly complete, but there are a few points which puzzle me.

- (1) Regarding the 48th, I think you told me that each man carried four bombs. Lieutenant Challen and another officer after the fight both say that each man carried two bombs. Would your memory today enable you to clear this up?
- (2) I have a note that you had telephone communication to Captain Leane in O.G.2 most of the time. Could you tell me if this was by the same telephone which was used by the 46th, who also, I believe, had communication?
- (3) The 46th left at 11.15, and I have a note that at 12.5 you received "by wire" a message from Captain Leane that the trench was becoming untenable. Could you tell me if the words "by wire" are correct? If so, was the old telephone line still in use after the recovery of O.G.1 by the 48th?
- (4) Captain Leane's message book was brought back after the fight. Can you tell me where it is, as I should very much like to have the exact wording of all his messages.
- (5) Your intelligence officer, Watson, informed you that the Germans were reinforcing from Riencourt. Was this message received from him by telephone after he reached the Hindenburg Line, or was it information obtained by him from the railway before he went? The time of the message also has some importance.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

C. E. W. Leane
Adelaide



HN

REFERENCE NO.

(To be quoted in reply.)

Police Commissioner's Office,

Box 383 E. G.P.O.,

Adelaide,.....28th January,.....1920.

2M-9.28 4302

C. E. W. Bean, Esq.,
Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
SYDNEY.

My Dear Bean,

I beg to acknowledge your communication dated January 22nd relative to incidents in the First Battle of Bullecourt. All messages received should be with Battalion records and the War Diary should contain accurate record of time etc. As you know, very few of the commissioned officers returned from the fight. Both Captain Leane and Lieutenant Watson were killed. Lieutenant Watson did reach Battalion lines but so badly wounded that he died soon after reaching Hospital.

- (1) I made a practice of taking two bombs per man, (carried on the man) when the Battalion went into the Trenches. I knew there would be great difficulty in getting Ammunition and Bombs forward after the attack was launched so gave orders that additional ammunition and four bombs per man would be carried. This should appear in orders. I have referred to Twining who was my adjutant. He confirms this.
- (2) A Telephone line went through with the attack. This line reached O.G.2. I received messages in the early part of the action. One I remember was that German Trench Mortars were giving us trouble from a sunken road at the rear of Bullecourt. I am of the opinion that the line was out of action about 10 a.m. The 46 Battalion used the 48th line for some messages. These were forwarded to the C.O. 46th. The situation was so obscure at 10.30 a.m. that I sent the Intelligence officer, Lieut. Watson forward to reconnoitre. He sent back that owing to the Casualties amongst the officers he would remain in the line.
- (3) The messages I received after about 10 a.m. came back with wounded or Runners. The 46th Battalion retired from O.G.2 at 11.15 a.m. O.G.1 became untenable because the Huns worked along O.G.2 and came in behind the 48th in O.G.1 after the 46th vacated it. The message came by Runner.
- (4) I have no knowledge of Captain Leane's message book

being received. Any messages received during the fight should be with Battalion records.

- (5) The Germans could be plainly seen reinforcing from Riencourt. This message was received prior to Lieut. Watson proceeding to O.G.1. I believe the time was about 10.15 a.m.

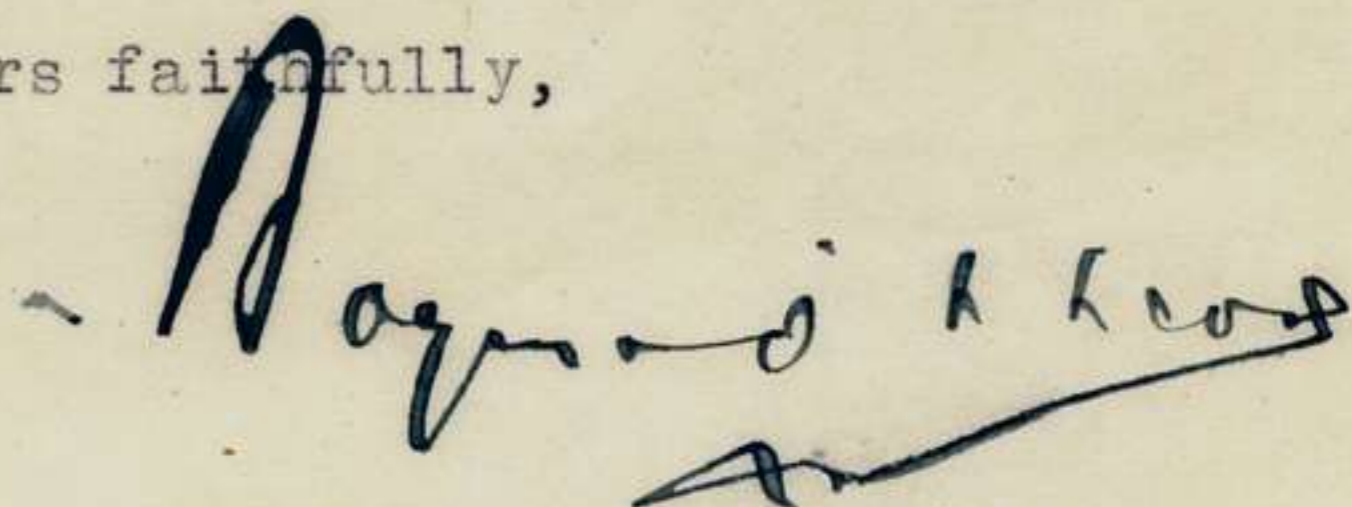
The First Battle of Bullecourt was ill-conceived and badly prepared for. The English who were to attack Bullecourt never advanced. Therefore, we were placed in an impossible position. There was no artillery preparation or support. The Tanks failed dismally. Only one tank ever reached O.G.2, **ONE** apparently lost direction and went into Bullecourt when it was captured. Another turned when just in front of my Headquarters on the Railway line. The crew jumped out of the tank and ^{retired} returned. Fairley, my Signalling Officer, was sniped from Bullecourt endeavouring to shift this Tank.

I have read, with pleasure, your last volume. It is wonderful that you have been able to obtain such a splendid record of the A.I.F. Unfortunately War records were not perhaps as carefully kept as should have been the case and many important documents were lost in transit.

Congratulations! The history when completed will be a great achievement.

With kind regards to Mrs. Bean and yourself,

Yours faithfully,



Commissioner of Police.

St. Francis Island.
Murat Bay
South Australia
Jan¹ 1922.

Mr. Bean

Dear Sir

Capt Twining (Adj 48th Battr) has written to me (an old friend) I am to send you an account of Bullecourt, will do all I can for the honours of the 48th as I have always tried. I can only give you the story from a private in the Battr scouts point of view.

Dates, times etc exact. I forget as I saw over two years as intelligence officer in the 48th after that until the sad day we (Broke up)

At 7 hrs on the Somme we started the Hun on his retreat back to the Gadelberg line.

Next in action along railway line in front of Bullecourt. (Embankments cuttings no rails) Our front was from the main road running into Bullecourt along to the valley running between the above and Rein court (I mean village to the right of Bullecourt) we had a system of posts put out towards the enemy wire.

The night of the take over a patrol of scouts (moontight night) I corporal myself and a other Scout.

(2)

Came to enemy wire where the enemy wire crosses the road running into Bullecourt from the right. (Reincount?) we were at once fired on by an enemy 77 Battery many of the shells burst in their wire. (must have been observed by post on opposite side of road that we found after.)

Made our way along to the road that runs into Bullecourt from our front. Enemy had blown the road up on side of the wire and were consolidating the crater, about 60 men at wiring etc. M.G.s as covering parties. we were right behind them, they ^{were} working hard. were fired on as we were getting away.

Our Intelligence Officer Lt W. Watson of ~~the~~ W.A. (Both he & his brother were killed in the attack.) read a report from G.H.Q. "Believed line to be very lightly held in sector," Sgt Hammond (of W.A.) & 5 picked scouts my self included had to get through Bendalberg line wire and gain all information possible, "had to get through." Another Battr in 12th Brigade & 4th Bde were to all try the same.

(3)

Lieut Watson. made his H.Q. in the road that runs from the right into Bullecourt.

Patrol made for the wire where we knew where 19'2 had blown the wire a bit. Wire was found in about 150 yards did not know our position, so I went to find road on my own.

I found road about 200 yards ^{left of} patrol. (Road from right running into Bellecourt)

at same time fell into enemy out post on side wire dug in top side of road which was sunken. About 6 men in out post all had a shot in the dark, I jumped down in road (about 10 feet) mud, loose wire, they threw bombs harmless in mud, eventually got out, got back to the T.O. & reported. On way back to patrol got into passage that I got going in falling into post. 77' fired from Redcourt, (was snoring) shells nearly all Richshaw so must have been close range, seemed to fire along his wire.

The patrol then started to dig, cut, crawl etc. the big shells did not always cut wire but made big craters so were able to crawl under. About 10 yards through the first belt, a space of about 10 yds, same for the 2nd & third Belts. 3 three of us ~~were~~

(4)

eventually got through badly torn.
The trench was about 30 yards in side, splent-
idly made, men on duty in each bay machine guns
mounted, flares were fired often so we
could see splendidly. seem strongly held
by the talking that was going on and number of
men on duty.

We got out after a good deal of trouble, believe
we were the first to get through the wire (Buckley's
Capt Jacka v.c. I believe caught his own officers & privates out
side main line.

The aeroplanes reported "line very lightly held" we did
not. (We could hear Bing at Vimy) Heavy guns
played on enemy wire all day (after our patrol)
seemed to do good work by the way wooden posts
and wire would be blown up sometimes.

Orders were issued for the attack next morning,
no time was given for preparations
48th Batta H.Q. was then in a sunken road that ran
into Noeail, New Batta H.Q. had to move forward
as soon as start started. Major Ben Lane was

(5)

to take charge forward until the C.O.
(Col R.L. Leung.) moved up.

I was runner (special) to the C.O. we moved forward at Zero, saw the men move forward until they nearly got to the wire, only a little shelling & m.g. fire suddenly they turned about started to come back. I believe the order was taken straight to the Major forward so may guess C.O. was surprised to see the whole Batta come back, front line boys take up old positions, same support and reserve.

The enemy shelled lightly and kept a few m.g.s going no body seemed to take any notice men wandered back to in twos and threes across the level country.

The C.O. remarked "looks like the finish of a football match". Every body seemed to think we could have got through that morning, I believe we would have taken the gun by surprise. Very few casualties as the men kept well spread out.

C.O. made his way along railway to see Coy low anders etc. going from post the old gun gave us a good machine gunning where the railway was level, both tried how we stood in a sprint. I drew the C.O.'s attention to

(6)

a terribly mangled body, he said poor fellow
I wonder who he is. Little did he know it
was his brother (Major Ben Leane.) which he
found out after, one of a very few casualties.
The Battalion had orders to be ready for the
hop over next morning. (We had already
told them we were coming.) (The Dawn)
We scouts laid tapes for the first
and second waves, also flank tapes nearly
to enemy wire, which proved a great
use as the snow was hard to keep
direction in.

All night long our H.E.s pounded the enemy
wire, as was after found with good effect
making a few gaps.

The night before the stunt was a busy one
for every one. Limbers took rations Bomb etc
right up to the railway line.

While we were laying tapes, could hear
the tanks coming up to their positions
in sunken roads quite plainly, so no doubt

(7)

The enemy did also.

The men formed up in two waves (2 lines each) Tanks were late infantry had moved off before any arrived or at least crossed railway (troops formed up in front of railway.) I was special runner to the C.O. all verbal messages I took.

I ran several messages before the boys reached the wire. I noticed as far as the eye could see to the left was the dressing was splendid the two Brigades formed in 4 long lines then Cops in support.

The enemy were shelling - pretty heavy, also kept up a steady MG fire, every body kept cool & calm and carried out the rushes and obeyed - better than on parade.

Every body was very fit Col Leane's afternoon sport did it so we all said.

When a shell burst on the snow made a black splash, generally one or two hit along side, frozen ground, no shell holes, ~~there~~ no cover at all.

The tanks were getting badly treated by enemy 4.5 H.E. several got hit before they

(3)

before they could cross the railway.
The last order I took forward for the C.O. the Coys
were on their final rush for the wire at the time
I had been to the other Company Commanders, just
reached Capt Mott the ^{last} one... gave him the C.O.'s order
"Coys will take no orders from tanks."

The last tank I could see was ~~an~~ at once
blown up by the enemy Art fire.

Capt Mott laughed and carried on through the
m.g. fire. Which by that time was very heavy.

As most know the Capt was severely wounded taken
prisoner, escaped to Holland, eventually came back
to the Battalion and saw service as C.O. after
Col. Perry. (also was with Batten through lost of the stumps).

The Tanks made ~~before~~ a very poor show as far
as we were concerned, I heard that they reached
the wire in one or two places. They took no advantage
of cover what so ever, made no attempt to
get out of range when shelled.

The C.O. asked one tank commander if he could
silence the m.g. that was firing from the outskirts

(9)

of Bullecourt getting our carrying parties I believe one box of bombs in five got through. Tank commander says, "Easily done" The tank went half out to the wire could not see Bullecourt let alone m.g. post, blazing away for a few minutes came back fell down the sunken road and remained there most of the day.

The Cavalry (Badge, skull & cross bones) formed up in a huge square some way in rear in full view of the enemy. They were soon shelled and scattered all over the country.

About thirty black & white troops galloped up to the railway in bankment, dismounted, sent men up the valley to cut the wire.

The enemy m.g. fire was getting worse as time went on it was hard to keep in touch with the Corps, carrying parties were impossible. The wire cutters were hit as soon as they got near the wire. The blacks were brave until they were hit then howled.

We carried them in as fast as they went out. Enemy plane came over registered the artillery on the horses, killed most, scattered rest. The 48th Bn. left flank was naturally always

in the air, the right flank if ever connected was soon in the air, there were no reinforcements so was a rather a hopeless job they could see ~~ballistics~~ Battalions of the enemy in the counter attack, our Artillery were ~~not~~ not very active until too late, heavies fired on our own men I acted as the CO's special observer could see 4th Bde front best.

The 4th Bde were getting hunched together I could see see why they had no bombs, the Hun was at the flanks with plenty. The old jam ~~to~~ stick hand bombs played havoc in the over crowded trenches. They began to surrender, some parties had a run for it, most got hit before they got through the wire, the first & last time I ever saw our men taken prisoners and marched off under a guard. One lot of prisoners about 30 under two guards were just entering Rein court when one of our sharp's killed the two guards in rear the men made a break for it I believe one or two did get back. The enemy bearers began to run about with

huge rolls of linen (white) bandaging
our wounded out to the wire, shells &
m.g. fire were bursting all among
them still they carried on. The
Vickers guns on the railway were
were firing all they could up
towards Peencourt.

I reported to the C.O. when I saw what
was happening. (there must have been
a large number of wounded by the
way the enemy hearers were working)
The C.O. stopped m.g. fire at once, I believe
raised Artillery.

It seemed hours after, when what was
left of the 48th Batta (150 men I should think.)
showed up on the skyline all assisting
the wounded (thought most were left behind)
They did not hurry no one ran, they
were under a sharp m.g. fire all
the time, the equipment they had thrown
away before they had jumped on top.
I believe they were surrounded for some
time only made a hold bid for it & got
back. I believe the 4th Bde could have
done the same if some body had
started them.

I believe shortage of Artillery was the greatest

disadvantage, nothing to keep m.g. fire down, ground
could have been held if there had been plenty of
bombs which could not be got up.
All the afternoon and night men came crawling in
on wire assisted by us. We all went out in
the big stretch between railway & wire, in several
cases we found that the Hun had bandaged our
men and put them out side the wire.
Not a shot was fired by either side that still
and frosty night, it was as if both sides
were worn out after the hard struggle.
Great deeds were done by Cpl Carr (DCM) and
many others the Huns must have suffered
terribly in the big counter attack by what MG
say. We marched back to Bapume that night after being
relieved. Our equipment was all complete before we left line.
I am hoping if this information is of little use it may
help to confirm others. We all owe a lot to our old
CO. Brig Leane his handling of me men was wonderful
which made both our name & his.
If I could help you in any way further I would be very pleased.
Yours faithfully. J.F. Arnold.

10th March, 1922.

Dear Sir,

I have to thank you sincerely for the careful and accurate account which you have sent me of the Battle of Bullecourt. There is only one point as to which I should like to be further informed. You will not be able to tell me of your own observation, but you probably heard it from eye-witnesses - and that is the manner in which the 48th Battalion actually fought from the trenches. All that I know is that the retirement was made in good form under great difficulties, but if you know any of the details of the last orders of Captain Leane and how they were carried out, I should be glad to hear them.

With many thanks I am,

Yours sincerely,

Lieut. T.F. Arnold, M.C., D.C.M., M.M.,
St. Francis Island,
Murat Bay,
S. Australia.



DUNTRON,
FEDERAL TERRITORY.

To Capt Bean

Dear Captain Bean

Enclosed please find
a letter from Harry Dawnes
late Asst Capt 1st Battalion. He
writes this report on Bullecourt, in
which action he served as a Sgt.
His present address is

Harry Dawnes
Shaw brother
Abdelardi

I have written to Farley & Co. who told
them to write to you direct.
Gen. Home sends his regards.
Captain I am sending my volume of the
15th phase of the war to Mr. Bury. to see if

Important.

BULLECOURT.

11/4/1917.

Hist. Notes.

From Sgt H. Downes 48 Bn.

to be copied

As we commenced to advance faint streaks of light in the sky indicated the coming of dawn. On reaching the German wire, which was very thick and wide, we found it in fairly good condition but was able to pass through gaps made by our artillery. From the moment of moving off we were subjected to artillery and machine gun fire.

We passed straight through the German front-line trench, which the 46th. Bn. had just taken and were cleaning up. Heavy casualties were received between the front-line trench and the second (our objective), the German Infantry and Machine-gunners firing till we were actually in the trench. There were several instances of individual hand-to-hand encounters.

The trenches were wide and deep and had not been completed. We immediately cleaned up the trench and set about making it into a defensive position. For about an hour there was heavy fighting at close range. We had a bombing post at either flank and the bombing was very willing. There was plenty of sniping, the enemy in numerous cases showing up within 30 yards of our position.

We were subjected to heavy machine gun and Trench mortar fire from the village of Bullecourt which enfiladed the section of trench in our possession.

Communication with Bn, H.Q. at the Railway Line was established by telephone for a short time but the line was soon cut and could not be repaired.

We quickly got into touch with the 46th. Bn. through a well made communication trench.

At the end of about an hour our supply of grenades was getting low and we learned that the 46th. Bn. was in the same plight. Carrying parties were despatched from the Railway Line with cases of bombs etc. but it was almost an impossible job to get through. Out of one party of 12 only one man reached us with 2 boxes of grenades.

About 10. a.m. a large German working party came out near the Sugar factory and appeared to be putting up wire. One of our Lewis gunners sighted his gun up to 1300 yards and on opening fire caused casualties and dispersed the party. What appeared to be about Two battalions of German Infantry was observed moving up behind the Sugar Factory but our Artillery got on to them and they scattered.

About 11.30 a.m. one of our sentries noticed a German moving in the 46th. Bn. trench and a few moments we noticed a party of the enemy in possession of the trench. This was the first we knew of the 46th. Bn. clearing out. Shortly afterwards a 47th. Bn. man who had been in the 46th. Bn. trench came in to us and told us that the 46th Bn. had vacated the trench. We were surrounded and our garrison immediately opened up with Lewis Guns and rifles. Two bombing parties were organized and moved down the C.T., succeeded in bombing out the enemy and occupied a section of the trench. Several casualties were sustained in doing this. The fighting was very willing, the enemy coming at our bombing parties time after time.

A few Mills and German grenades were found in the trench and served to supplement the small supply in possession of the parties.

The enemy made a vigorous attack on the flanks of our front line trench, - reinforcements coming up a sunken road. It was in

an effort to stop the use of this road, that Segt. Cooper, followed by L/Cpl. Carr, jumped out of the trench with a Lewis Gun. L/Cpl. Carr got on to his hands and knees and Segt. Cooper used his back as a rest for the Lewis Gun. This occurred within 35 yards of the enemy. Sgt. Cooper was killed but L/Cpl. Carr was not hit.

About 11.45 a.m. the German artillery opened up on our position and shortly afterwards our own artillery put down a barrage on us also. S.O.S. were fired up to indicate to our people that we still held the position but were apparently unnoticed. Ground flares were ~~fixed~~ lighted, for the information of one of our planes but were unneeded.

We were now being subjected to artillery fire from both our own and German guns, Trench mortar and machine gun fire enfilading us from the village, rifle and machine gun fire from practically all around and strong bombing attacks from the flanks. The artillery was doing a lot of damage and our casualties were heavy. It was apparent that the position in the front line at least was becoming untenable.

Orders were given for the front line garrison to move along the C.T. and occupy the trench that had been vacated by the 46th. Bn. and which was still being held by our small bombing parties. It was, I understood, the intention to hold this trench till nightfall when we expected to receive assistance. However things became too willing. The enemy occupied the trench we had just left and came in behind us down the C.T. which we had blocked with a bombing party. During the whole of this time the enemy was attacking persistently on the flanks with bombs, - our supply of grenades were just about done. Several enemy parties were observed moving up to the assistance of the attackers and there was only thing to be done if the survivors were to get out.

All our wounded had been attended to and were placed in safety down the entrances to the German dugouts. Capt. A. Leane had been in charge of the whole of the operations from the time we entered the enemy trenches. After arranging for covering parties he gave the order to retire at about 12.30. p.m. We received a lot of casualties getting out of the trench, - the enemy had us at point blank range.

A distance of about 1000 to 1200 yards had to be traversed back to the Railway Line and when walking across this space the troops were brought under heavy artillery and machine gun fire which further reduced our numbers.

A number of those who were left occupied the Railway embankment, others immediately set about the collection of wounded who were strewn from our line to the recently vacated German trenches.

About 2 p.m. firing ~~ceased~~ practically ceased from both sides and both our own and German stretcher-bearers were engaged in collecting wounded. The Germans at the same time set about repairing their damaged wire.

We were relieved about 9.9p.m. by the 45th. Bn.

Sullecourt

Lt Col H. R. Seechey 48 Bn

who was killed at Sullecourt on 10/4/17

was one of eight sons (he was the 7th)

of a Lincolnshire clergyman who

fought in the Great War, five of whom

were killed and a sixth crippled.

TELEPHONE NOS.
F 2597.
F 2598.

HN Bullock
COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
"AUSWARMUSE."

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO
"THE DIRECTOR."

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

No. 12/6/29

"They gave their lives. For that public gift they received a praise which never ages and a tomb most glorious—not so much the tomb in which they lie, but that in which their fame survives, to be remembered for ever when occasion comes for word or deed"

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL,

POST OFFICE BOX 214 D,

EXHIBITION BUILDINGS, MELBOURNE.

14th June, 1928.

Dear Bazley,

I am enclosing a copy of a letter received from Captain T. A. White, 13th Battalion, A.I.F. This letter, together with that from Mr. Bewshea to Captain White, needs no explanation. The information supplied is most interesting and I would be glad if you will keep this office advised of the result of any further enquiries you may make.

Yours sincerely,

W. W. Bazley

Mr. A. W. Bazley,
C/o. Official Historian,
S y d n e y.

COPY.

Inspector of Schools,

Hay.

The Director,
Australian War Memorial,
Melbourne.

Dear Sir,

I received the enclosed letter today. It is very interesting, and perhaps Mr. Bean might like to get in touch with Mr. P. E. Bewshea, the writer.

You may have the letter for records.

Re the 13th Light Horse man :- Lt. George Nugent of 13th Bn. was in the Light Horse before being transferred to the 13th Bn. at Liverpool Camp, and always felt it to be somewhat of a fall, so much so that he wore Light Horse badges, leggings and spurs on every possible occasion. He was a fine chap but persisted in retaining every possible connection with the L.H. and I have no doubt that he would be identified as a L.H. However, I leave the matter of following it up to you.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) Thos. A. White,

Capt. Ex 13th Bn.

*Lt. G. Nugent
in July 1912
died of wounds
recd at Hamel.*

AWM

COPY.

33 Old Bond Street, London.

2nd April, 1928.

Captain T. A. White,
C/o. Tyrrell's Ltd.,
Sydney.

Dear Sir,

I have had the good fortune to read a history of the 13th Australians compiled by you. It was lent me by the Mrs. Pattrick mentioned therein and proved very interesting to me. It struck me after reading the account of Bullecourt in 1917, that you might care to know that in 1918, October 5th to be precise, I found the remains of the men who broke through almost to the flank of Riencourt; they were right up to the Boche wire and I identified them as Aussies by the portions of clothing. I obtained one identification disc but have forgotten the name. I remember, however, that it was of a man who had originally been in the 13th Light Horse, and had no doubt been transferred to the infantry. I handed it to my company commander, who, however, was killed on October 10th.

Whether he handed it in to the proper quarter I do not know.

If these facts prove interesting to you I shall be pleased to give you any other information.

I can only add that these remains puzzled me for some time as we had only just arrived in this sector and were continually advancing. After scouting round I found on enquiry that a village some way back was Bullecourt. It then came to me like a flash that these were the men we had heard rumours of that had broken through Jerry's lines in 1917. It was staggering for a moment to think of this stupendous feat and although at the time I did not think of reporting it to the Australian headquarters, I have always carried it at the back of my head.

Mrs. Pattrick's book brought it back so vividly that I thought I must write.

Yours very truly,

(Sgd.) P. E. Bewshea

late Gordon Highlanders 51st Divn.

3359.

19 June 1928.

P.E. Bewshea, Esq.,
33, Old Bond Street,
London, England.

Dear Sir,

Captain T.A. White, the author of "The Fighting Thirteenth" has sent me a copy of your letter informing him that, on the 5th of October, 1918, you found near Riencourt the remains of Australians. As I shall shortly be writing the account of the Battle of Bullecourt for the Australian Official History, I will be grateful if you could supply me with particulars as to the precise position of these men. In case you have no map, I am enclosing a very rough tracing of the position around Riencourt on which you could mark the situation.

Yours faithfully,

P.S. Could you say, no matter how roughly, how many bodies there were - one, two, four, or more?

TELEGRAMS:
"DRAMA, PICCY, LONDON."
TELEPHONE:
7981 GERRARD. (5 LINES)
4040 MAYFAIR.
4041



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H.N. Bullock

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LONDON, W. 1.

3/8/18

Dear Sir,

I am in receipt of
your letter of 19 June and
have marked x the positions
as far as I can judge
on the map which I am
returning herewith. The remains
I actually saw would be ^{of} about
20 men but I believe other
members of my platoon found
one or two more nears Reencourt.

I have endeavoured to

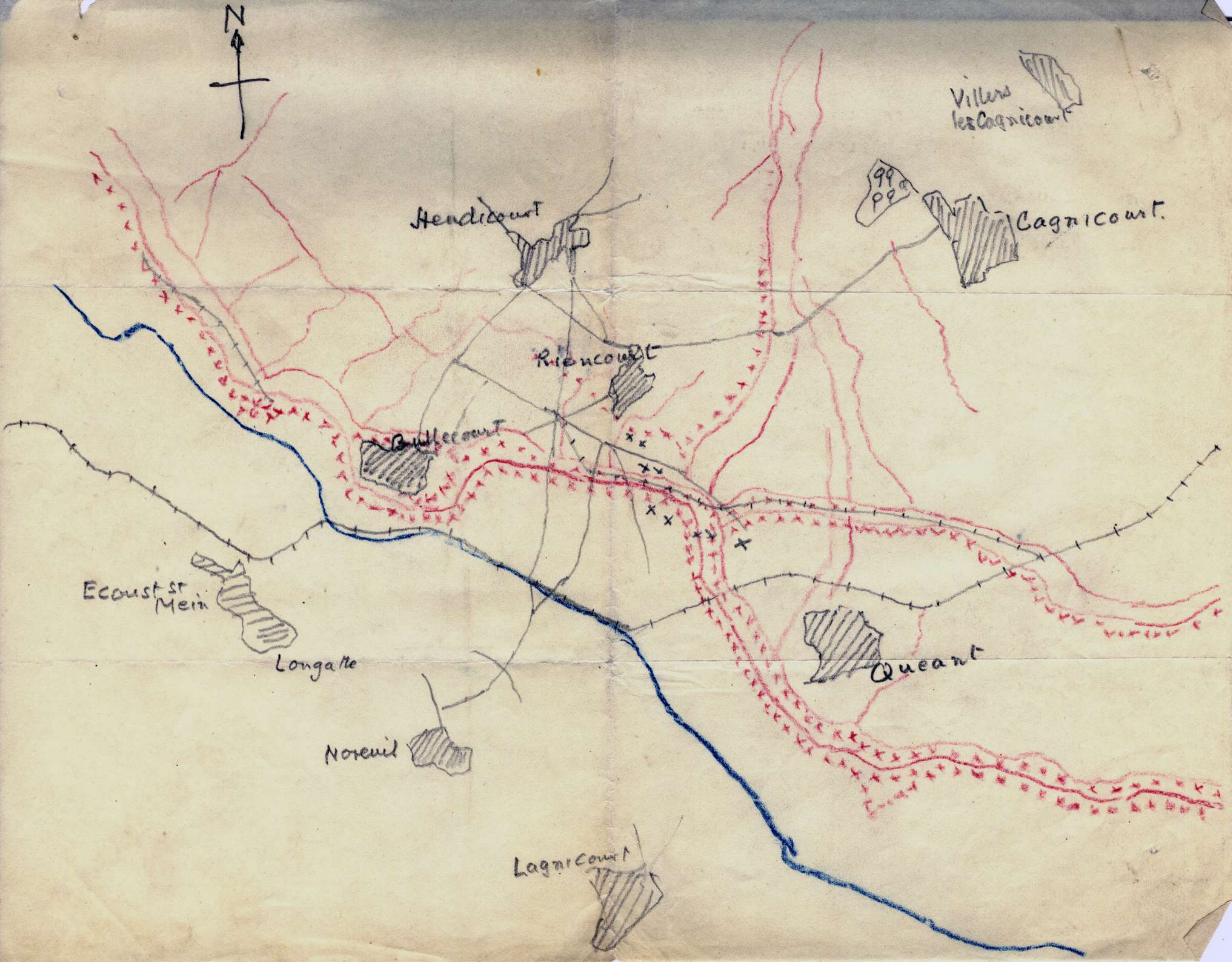
find the exact spot but it
is difficult to judge from
a small map. The trench
system & wire were very
extensive at this point but
about 50 yards to the N.E there
was the road from Reencourt
to Lucant and the line
of bodies roughly crossed it
at an angle of 30° .

Trusting this information
will be of use to you, and
wishing your book every success

I am,

Yours very truly

R. Brewster



Bullecourt

Extracts from the diary of Pte W.D. Gallwey,
47th Battalion A.I.F.

[Pte Gallwey, a youngster who enlisted in the A.I.F. in 1916, had recently arrived in France from Salisbury Plain & joined his battalion.]

The Australian troops have been selected to storm Bullecourt Flanking these will be British troops from selected regiments & from whom much may be expected. The time of attack has not been made known to us as is usual with such battles; but it seems fairly certain that it will only be a matter of hours. We are in complete ignorance of the part we have to take.

It is only a few minutes since we received final orders that we were to proceed to the firing line immediately. The greatest excitement prevailed since such orders were issued. It would be hard to describe our feelings. Little preparation was required as we were all more or less in instant readiness to depart

Every man is now busy getting equipment on for the final route march which cannot be too far. All are talking & discussing future events. That their minds are fully cognisant of the hard times ahead is evident. We reinforcements are ignorant of it all but the older soldiers are a study. All are eager & I have not seen fear amongst them. Like going to some great entertainment, they could not be more enthusiastic.

Iron rations were immediately issued. Water bottles were filled. The parade fell in in quick time & silently headed for the front line. Not a word passed now as we left the old dugouts behind but soon all commenced whistling & singing soldier songs. There was movement everywhere. Officers cast aside the iron discipline of the parade ground and now behaved as men of the rank & file. They were in ordinary attire Passing through the village of Bihucourt, comrades gave us a cheer & wished us good luck. The spirit of camaraderie was excellent.

For about a kilometre we trudged along the road and then abruptly turned off passing over ploughed fields. This latter was the worst marching we had ever experienced. It is not as ~~bad~~ ^{bad} on a hard metalled road under a heavy load but to be on soft ploughed ground, it meant labour at every ~~step~~ step. We sank deep into the earth.

It was still daylight. On our left was a long ridge about 1000 yds away. We could distinctly see German shells bursting on this ridge. In the distance also was observed ~~the~~ a ruined village believed to be Saignies. There were loud explosions and puffs of smoke all along the ridge & over the village. It was a weird and an awe inspiring spectacle The noise began to get deafening as we progressed. So interested were we in this strange sight that the fatigue of the march was forgotten.

Soon there was a shrieking weird noise

that seemed to make direct for us & then there was a loud explosion a few hundred yds away. A stray shell had fallen in the field in which we were crossing. . . . This was too close to be pleasant, yet we laughed at it and there were many funny remarks as to Fritz's straight shot. . . . Not one, but many shells came over with that awful shriek that nearly froze the blood in our veins. . . . all fell harmlessly in the field at a safe distance. . . . Realising the danger we were now ordered to take up shell fire formation. . . . We spread ourselves out and then there was not much danger. . . . of a whole crowd being killed together. . . . Nerves held out well. I did not feel at all nervous even now and thought if I did get knocked over it would be just bad luck. . . .

Fatigue was getting us down & we had to halt. The mud was over the ankles & progress was slow. It was hard to withdraw the foot after each step. Lying down was impossible. so we just had to stand with the rifle supporting the pack. . . .

Our halt was of momentary duration only but sufficient to give great relief. Snow commenced to fall & that was rather an inconvenience. . . . Fortunately we had our overcoats on. . . .

Progressing again we passed some huge guns in emplacement sunk deep into the ground. They were some distance off. All along the line at intervals these were placed and every few minutes there was a roar that nearly broke the drums of our ears. . . . It was getting very dark now & without warning we could see vivid flashes of red flame shoot into the air. . . . We stuck our fingers into our

ears to avoid the deafening roar

Later we observed a huge wire netting cage like a large aviary. Inside this was a 12 inch naval gun. This was not sunk in any pit but was on the surface of the ground. Our eyes were rivetted on this the whole time in passing, expecting a shot to be fired. There was suddenly a flash that illuminated the whole sky & then we nearly fell over with the reverberating roar. It was as though the ground had been shaken by an earthquake. We were fully a thousand yards from the gun, yet it was as if it was at our feet

Smaller guns in close proximity to us were barking, their noise being greatly diminished by that of the bigger guns. These were firing incessantly and occasionally in salvos of half a dozen guns. Things were beginning to get very thrilling now. German shells still continued to fall in close proximity to the guns.

In the fast failing light we were coming in contact with telephone lines from the batteries in the field to administrative HQ in the rear. These lines were just laid on top of the ground and in places where the ground was uneven were suspended a few feet in the air. Each time we came across any of these suspended wires, word was passed back such as "Heads". This was a warning to dodge the wires. Then again when wires trailed the ground we had to ~~step~~ step over them. Occasionally they were dragged yards,

which was rather serious because these batteries were being controlled by this means of communication We tried to avoid damaging them as much as possible it was easy to trip over them.

The snow continued in its intensity & looked as though there was no abating.... We must have marched about 4 kilometres and now came to a squaken road..... a perfect quagmire..... As we slid down the sloping embankment, I became fast in the mud. It was nearly to my knees. I did not know how to get out of it. Being in an exhausted condition I had little strength to extricate myself. Others were waddling across the road in difficulty but I was stuck fast. It seemed that I would have to stay here, but using every possible effort managed to drag myself across like a fly crawling out of a jam dish It absorbed my last remaining strength to get over.

Worn out now I lost my place in the advancing column. It was an impossibility to keep up with them. I was not alone for men began to struggle everywhere. Still we pushed across open fields. Close to here was the remains of the village of Vaulx.....

No discipline seemed to exist now at all. It was little better marching here for there was a well worn track across the fields. ← There was only room

for about two abreast on this track & that is the way they passed along. At intervals dugouts could be observed & men were cozily tucked inside, sitting round smoky fires..... protected from enemy vision. snow began to fall so heavily that although the ground was white we could hardly see each other.

Packs + clothing were covered with it. My pack began to give me great trouble and I was forced to throw off the equipment for a few minutes to make some adjustment to the shoulder straps. I regretted the loss of time for I would be separated from my battalion. Adjusting the equipment I had the greatest difficulty to put it on again unaided. A feeling of depression came over me and I wished that we would defer going into the front line until morning. I was not in fear but felt too exhausted for anything.

I had to pass on alone now and could hear marching troops just on ahead of me. It gave me courage and I pressed on as fast as possible in the snow, which was several inches deep on the ground now. It was not long before I was on their heels for they were moving very slowly. The noise and flash of the guns continued unbroken, and in addition now the sky was at times brilliant with flares.

For over two kilometres we marched since passing the road near Vauke and it was just killing. I carried my rifle in my left hand, just holding it by the sling + trailing the butt through the mud. It was too much energy to carry it any other way. Knees were giving way + I was plodding on like one in a dream. Of what use would I be to fight tonight. My body was in a wretched state of weakness.

At last like sheep huddling together with backs to the blinding snow, the column was closing up and reforming platoons, which were greatly scattered. I dragged myself the last few yards + propped the pack with the rifle. Thirst had dried my mouth until my throat burned. One water bottle was hardly sufficient. I dare not slake my thirst. In front of me was a man

7
whose pack was covered thickly with snow. I was quite close and leaning forward & I licked it from the pack with my tongue. It was refreshing yet I could taste the dust as I sucked

Waiting here for several minutes until the battalion had come together and most of the stragglers were in, we now received orders to make ourselves comfortable for the night. We were on a sunken road and on the side of this there were a few roughly constructed dugouts

A few were fairly complete and offered a little shelter; but it was impossible to house a whole battalion here. All men had to find their own quarters. To the experienced this was fairly easy and in a very short time they were getting well established. A few of us sauntered up and down the road and could not find any shelter whatever. An officer told us to hurry up & get settled for we required all the rest we could get.

Pointing to a small pit on the side of the sunken road that was filled with snow, ^{we} were ordered to lie down there for the night. Such a thing in our minds was impossible. In the first place it was courting death to sleep in the snow and the storm continued unabated. Some covering at least was essential.

~~The~~ Tired and disgusted with the surroundings, I laid on the ground in the soft snow & mud. This was intolerable for long and I finally had to appeal to a comrade to lift me from the ground. He caught me under the arms and wrenched me from the mud & slush. I was hardly strong enough to keep my feet. What a deplorable condition to be going into

battle. It may be the death of me. I could not raise my hand in self defence at this moment. [In the end an obliging sergeant found a tarpaulin for Galloway & four others who could not find any shelter, and under this they camped. They woke long after daybreak, the battalion having apparently moved off about 2.30 am., without them. The discarded packs were all that remained in the old dugouts & shelters along the sunken road.]

Looking along the sunken road now we observed a red cross flag flying in the breeze. We saw a thin straggling line of men passing along. Towards this place. Many were labouring in their progress & were hatless & even coatless, while some had hardly any clothing on at all. White bandages were conspicuous. Again could be seen stretchers borne by stretcher bearers with their burdens. This scene was a shock to us all.

Just now I recognised one of my own battalion amongst the stretcher bearers. Without hesitation I rushed over to glean what information I could. Alas the men coming in here were nearly all members of my own battalion. These stretcher-bearers looked as though they had been in the firing line a week instead of a few hours. They were haggard & looked quite exhausted. Right from the time they went into action. they had been engaged in carrying wounded. There was evidence in their faces of the hard task they had been carrying out. They had little time to even talk to me now as there was very much more work for them to do yet.

There was a silence about all the men coming in here. None spoke unless spoken to & one could not refer too much to their condition. They were in deadly pain & felt little like talking. Stretcher bearers occasionally lowered their stretchers to have a look at their burden. At times they found they were carrying a corpse & without

further ceremony deposited the body on the ground on the side of the road & went back for another wounded man.

Going close to the dressing station, which was a large shellproof dugout. I observed nearly 100 stretchers lying side by side at the entrance. On each of these was a badly wounded man covered only by a blanket. They were completely covered over & one could not see their sad faces happily. Inside this place doctors & A.M.C. men were working their very hardest. Periodically ambulance transport waggons called here & removed the wounded to an ambulance train. On some of the stretchers were bodies long since cold & frozen stiff. These would not enter that dugout. Even now orderlies were digging holes in the ground just about the dugout in which to deposit the dead.

It was now 9 a.m. My one determination was to get away to the firing line as quickly as possible. Returning to our bivouac I came upon my comrades and we set out in a little band together. Not knowing anything about the place at all, we proceeded along the sunken road. My spirits were not too bright but I knew no fear. For about half a kilometre we passed along this road.

Coming to the valley now just below the rise we saw a very busy scene. There were great piles of munitions here absolutely uncovered. Thousands of cases of Mills grenades were in one heap. Shells of all calibres laid indiscriminately about also. A large number of 18 pdr. batteries were in action here. They extended at very short intervals & appeared to be all bunched together. These were covered by wire netting camouflaged with strips of green cloth attached. In places the guns were right in the open. The enemy was shelling these batteries & right in our midst shells were falling.

The 18 pounders were firing in quick succession. We watched the gunners stripped to the waist putting shell after shell into the magazine. Others were busy burying reserve shells.

Looking farther ahead we observed that this road passed through the ruined village of Lagnicourt which was just on top of the hill & not far distant.

In places there were guns silenced being turned upside down & some of their shields were badly twisted. Again we witnessed a shell burst right in one of the gun pits. It was very sudden. The men appeared to be lifted bodily into the air & dropped again lifeless. There was no excitement about the scene. Comrades from a neighbouring gun quietly came to the rescue when the smoke had cleared and attended the wounded, dressing wounds etc.

We now pushed on up the sunken road. Lagnicourt was under violent bombardment, and bricks, trees, etc were being tossed high into the air. We were now just about to ascend the short incline to the top of the ridge. It was just below the village. Here we were shocked to see numbers of our battalion band coming back with instruments in pieces and all badly wounded. Stopping to question these chaps, they told us they had gone over in the charge at the head of the battalion at daybreak this morning & were playing "Australia will be there", when the enemy took offence at their audacity and shelled them with disastrous results.

We were just about to enter the village now. all round were great shellbursts and earth was thrown up like fountains. Clouds of coal black smoke arose from each shellhole after an explosion. The air was filled with the weird shriek of shells. Shrapnel burst it seemed almost over our heads. The pellets now made our steel helmets ring; but were evidently spent for there were no casualties. Life seemed to hang by a thread in this place, yet hundreds of men were all going to & fro, carrying out the various duties assigned to them.

Just at this moment it seemed that a shriek came right at our feet. I noticed all the men about me

lie flat down on the ground. They prostrated themselves everywhere. Like a fool I stood still rooted to the spot until a blinding flame and explosion just about shook me off my feet. I saw nothing but red and then tried to collect my scattered senses. A shell had burst within a couple of yards of where I was standing & blew the battalion cooker to pieces. It was like coming out of a nightmare.

Taking stock of my surroundings I saw men gradually getting on their feet again & thought what a cowardly crowd they were. This false impression I rapidly changed however when I began to realise that it was quite the proper thing to do one escapes flying fragments of shell which otherwise would mean certain death.

Surveying the scene about us now, I was horrified to witness such destruction. The cooks were busy getting hot tea & stew ready for those of the battalion who had survived the battle The two cooks who were attending the cooker were killed instantly. It must have been a direct hit. The two mangled bodies were lying still, their faces blackened & clothing torn to shreds. Others standing not far away at the time received slight wounds in the body.

. It cast a gloom over us who were new to such an experience The bodies would be buried in the same shell hole where the earth was soft.

. We proceeded on our way only a few paces & we heard a shell coming over Without waiting to think, down we went into the mud. There was a deafening crash and getting up we saw two men writhing in agony a little way up the road

Stretcher bearers going back to the front ... promptly dressed their wounds & carried them back.

An officer coming along now, but hardly recognisable as such, ordered us to get a move on & get over the hill as quickly as possible as we were in grave danger of our lives here. We needed no second warning. All along the side of the road were dugouts, but none of our own company appeared yet. As well as shellfire we could hear bullets whistling overhead, probably from some enemy machine gun. As we came to the crest of the ridge. the sight that met our eyes ... was really wonderful. Oblivious of all risk for a few moments we stood spellbound & looked across the battlefield on the other side. It was a great open plain. In the distance abt a kilometre away was the famous village of Bellecourt. Whether it had been taken or not I cannot say. The houses were distinctly visible & shells were bursting over the village exactly as enemy shells were falling over Lognoncourt. There must have been fires in places in the village, for dense columns of smoke were coming away. In the distance men could be seen walking over No Mans Land. Many of these were stretcher bearers and some were walking wounded.

A couple of tanks were lazily crawling along in the vicinity of our front line trenches and were under heavy shellfire. It seemed that the German front line was on this side of the village & ours was a little waver this way fringing a wood that skirted the village. Bellecourt was under violent bombardment at this ~~moment~~ minute.

The noise was terrific. White puffs of smoke hung like balls of cotton over the village. . . . Mountains of earth were thrown high into the air. . . . These tanks looked like giant toads. . . . The noise of the tank engines could be distinctly heard above the din of battle. . . . Several tanks were lying perfectly still. . . .

. . . . We came to another dressing station. Here I saw many men I knew. Some of them were saturated with blood. I saw one man lifted off a stretcher & then the stretcher had to be tipped up as it contained a pool of blood. It was a horrible sight. . . .

While sauntering along here, was surprised to find some of our own company peeping out of dugouts on the side of the road. . . . they told us the company was entrenched here in the support trenches. . . . Room was made for us in one of these dugouts but. . . . an officer came along & allotted so many to each with the result we were put out & had to build one for ourselves. . . . We did not lose much time in digging in. . . .

x x x x x x x x x x

At 1 o'clock this morning the battalion had been pushed on to the support trenches. . . . A company of our battalion. . . . at about 3 am. . . . went over the top. . . . and joined forces with the company in the front line. . . .

The men in the front line being reinforced, preparations were made for the attack at dawn. These men went over the top stealthily and crossed No Mans Land until they were directly in front of the enemy entanglements. Here they could make no further progress until the tanks came up & broke the wire. They laid down in the snow expecting the tanks at any moment. Perhaps one can imagine the suspense of waiting here for an hour or more. Their

nerves were all on edge waiting for a bloody fight which was being delayed indefinitely & when the pitch of excitement to which they had been roused began to wane. This delay was fatal to men about to engage in such an attack. Minutes, seconds dragged by, & the stillness of the early morning was only broken by the whine of machine gun bullets & the shriek of shells passing high above. They could hear each other breathing heavily and feared that such may arouse the suspicions of some prowling patrol

In an incredibly short time these troops in their newly won positions had set things in order & put up a defense in their endeavour to hold the trench

* * * * *

It was about ten o'clock when we had just dug in & got comfortable. Our dugouts were not shell proof but at least gave shelter from the elements. The sunken road was becoming untenable from German shell fire. It seemed only a matter of time when we would be buried alive

When things became unbearable orders were received to proceed to the new support line which was now our old front line. My nerves were in a state of excitement instead of fear. I was thrilled to think I was in action after waiting so long. We all went over the top of the sunken road now at a given signal & advanced in open order towards our old front line. The whole battlefield was an eruption of fire & smoke. Searchlights were duffed over the landscape & were receiving great attention from German artillery. They meant to effect their total destruction. A few were burning fiercely.

We had about 500 yds to cross. There were no saps to negotiate & had to go over the open ground. Shells often fell in our midst & knocked one or two over. Stretcher bearers were passing to & fro quite unconcerned. I noticed four bearers carrying a wounded man

when a shell appeared to burst underneath the stretcher. It was a pitiable sight. All fell over. One of the bearers was wounded & the man on the stretcher was tossed in the air.....

Eventually the trench was reached... and we were down into it like rabbits into a hole..... Water laid in the bottom & the mud was awful..... Bullets clicked the top of the parapet repeatedly & bombs & aerial torpedoes flew over the top, some falling in the trench..... We had to rush into the next bay & await the explosion..... It was thrilling for about an hour..... Many were wounded or killed.....

We had orders now to be prepared for a charge with the bayonet. It was likely that we would have to advance to our front line to support the men there as they were becoming hard pressed..... For another hour we waited; but received no orders to advance. It was a tense period of time & nerves seemed to have reached breaking point. Casualties were still heavy & nothing was worse than to see comrades fall wounded. We assisted each other in turn here & bandaged him temporarily until he could be removed. Some of the wounds were ghastly. I was beginning to feel sick from the sight & smell of fresh blood. To call it a shambles is to mildly describe it.

A fatigue party was now made up of men from our battalion & these had to bring up supplies of bombs to us. Saps had been cut by this time & offered some protection for those coming from the sunken road. The fatigue party passed along these saps & delivered the supplies..... (which) were passed along the trench until everyone of us had a goodly supply at hand.....

While still awaiting further orders..... we received a great shock, when men of our own battalion & A Coy began to drop in upon us from No Mans Land utterly exhausted. They were gasping for breath. In incoherent

words they explained that they had been driven out of the front line by the enemy & had to fall back on us. Many of them had been slaughtered in the retreat & a number taken prisoner

It was our opportunity now. Watching the parapet closely, we expected the enemy to come into view at any moment. We could hardly breathe with excitement.

One of our stretcher bearers saw a few men wounded & lying in a shellhole just across the parapet. They were groaning dreadfully. He was about to go to their aid when an officer pulled him back. He would have died had he put his head over that parapet just now

Our officers behaved splendidly here, & became just like ourselves. All ranks seemed equal although we received orders as usual & carried them out without question.

Our artillery kept up a good barrage on the enemy trenches for some time & then things became quieter The noise of the shells passing overhead was terrific. It was like one continual whirr. Our machineguns were firing incessantly and as each ~~gunner~~ gunner was knocked out another took his place. We were throwing bombs the whole time, being directed by our officers, for some of the enemy had advanced to within yards of our trench & were taking cover in shellholes, when the greater number of them had been wounded. We threw bombs until we were tired; but the attack had been effectually stemmed.

They had sweet Hell from us for a while. I was fighting in earnest for my life now. My nerves were in the highest tension & my blood was in a fever. All round was death & desolation. Before my eyes men were blown to pieces & some were suffering dreadful agony.

. The principal thought now occupying my mind now was my Mother. I thought of her & God also, whom I expected to meet at any minute. For my mother's sake I must not die and I was determined to fight

on orders. Standing in inches of mud bespattered from head to foot in the soft ooze. There was a baden sky but from smoke or rain one cannot say. A great deal of smoke was about from the guns. A continual ~~with~~ ear splitting noise from explosions of shells and the everlasting shriek of shells passing overhead. Machine gun & rifle fire had slackened. For about an hour or two there was a calm in this respect.

It was getting late in the afternoon & we had to make the most of the fast waning light. We now received orders to strengthen our defences before dark. We are wearing sheep skin jerkins and overcoat, also sheep skin gloves, yet are suffering painfully from the cold.

It was just about dusk. The sky was just about the colour that denotes a heavy snow storm & the cold was intense. The ground was frozen hard & pools of water an hour ago were now pools of solid ice. The enemy had not been silent during the last few hours for nothing. We guessed that much. Suddenly enemy artillery opened up a sharp fire and shells rained on our trenches. He had the exact range. some enormous shells fell about our trenches. This (bombardment) gradually grew in intensity until it became an inferno. The trench was being blown all shapes and dugouts broken in. None of our dugouts here were shell proof. We crawled into them for the little protection they did afford & it probably protected us to some extent from shell splinters. Huddled up here so close to earth as possible, we waited in breathless anxiety for the fury of the bombardment to abate. We could hear shells burst with a terrific roar with a few yards of us. Our own dugout trembled with the concussion & following that were groans from some unfortunate

hard to save my life, if it comes to a hand to hand struggle.

Our artillery still increased in activity and I could not resist the temptation to have a peep over the top. Others were doing so. I never beheld such a sight. The enemy had been advancing in waves from the village. Each successive wave was destroyed & they were only stragglers coming in now. One could see them throwing up their arms & falling over; not in isolation but groups of them seemed to fall in one bunch. Our machine guns were doing this work.

We were startled when several Germans appeared above the parapet shouting "Kamerad, Mercy Kamerad", throwing their arms away & themselves surrendering. At first glance my heart nearly stopped beating. I thought my last moment had come as I looked at the awful creatures. In an instant one grasped the situation. These men wanted anything but fight & would have provelled at our feet for their lives to be spared. We were tempted to kill them, but what could one do? being within a yard of us we could not shoot them & to bayonet them would be worse. They jumped into the trench in response to our directions. Have never seen such dejected looking humans. They were like whining dogs. The eldest looked. . . looked about eighteen.

Another shock when a German stood over the trench. I was grasping my rifle tightly ready for any emergency, but released the pressure on my trigger when I looked at the unarmd man above. Others alongside me withheld their fire. So this man was also taken prisoner.

Further along the trench prisoners were coming in. In many cases they were shot dead the moment they appeared at the parapet. Some men have old scores to settle & will show them no mercy whatever.

It was getting so cold & no food for the last 24 hours. Had iron rations & a bottle of water but could not eat or drink in this inferno. There were tense moments & one just held on here, ever on the alert & ready to act

wounded men Snow began to fall & the ground was fast becoming whitened only to be suddenly blackened in places by the burst of a shell.

The bombardment ceased like a shower of rain & then there was a violent burst of machine gun fire. At the first sign of this we were immediately ordered out of our ~~old~~ dugouts & to prepare for an attack by the enemy. This news was anything but cheering. The snow became dense ~~and was now covering the~~ ~~the~~ We had to watch & wait. Suspense was killing. It was now we could survey the devastated trench.

The bombardment had completely wrecked it & killed or wounded many. There was not even time to attend to the wounded. Their groans were pitiful. Bearers of course were busy & the prisoners . . . we had here were made to carry stretchers away from the line

Our machine guns were firing & rapidly from different vantage points, for the enemy was in sight not far from our trenches a determined attack was made on our guns with bombs. They commenced to burst over our trench & things became most unhealthy We had plenty of ammunition & now commenced to use our bombs There were sufficient to throw one after the other. Bullets were hitting the top of the parapet yet occasionally we peeped out to see what was going on. A few fell back shot through the head. Our officers especially were watching operation & issuing orders I could not resist the temptation to look over the parapet & received the shock of my life to see steel helmets only a few yards away in shell holes. They were throwing bombs into our trenches It became dark & snow was falling heavily The blood seemed to freeze in my veins as I imagined I could see the enemy on the parapet in the uncertain light. Could hardly muster sufficient strength to throw another bomb.

For some time past it seemed that our bombs were

not taking effect & realising that something was wrong someone examined the bombs ^{we} were throwing. To our intense surprise & disgust the bombs were . . . not even detonated. The wrong cases had been brought up to the front line

For a long time we held on here but when our ammunition gave out we had nothing but the bayonet. All surplus rifle cartridges had been handed to the machine gunners In places our trench had been entered and our own men were driven out at the point of the bayonet. The situation was ghastly The danger now was our chance of being surrounded. We knew little of what was going on

It seemed an indefinite period of waiting when orders were received to fall back on our old support line trenches. This was terrible news Great excitement prevailed No ammunition to speak of was left behind. Silently we crawled out of the trench & made our way as quickly as possible across the snow covered fields. It was fairly bright & the snow reflected the light of the rising moon. We were guided along a partly dug sap which offered the barest protection from German rifle fire. a number of men received bullet wounds. We could not move very fast & just passed along as though on parade at some camp mile away from the firing line It seemed an age this short passage although in reality we ^{only} had a few hundred yards to go.

It was with a sigh of relief we reached the sunken road near Lagnicourt where our old support trenches were. We had now to get to work & fortify this position for it would be our new front line. Things seemed very serious. Here we were further back now than before the attack this morning. No one was deterred by our recent reverse; but officers were planning to recover the ground we had lost before being relieved. No battalion likes to hand over to another until it has

made up for all reverses. To attempt to regain the ground just now seemed a hopeless task. We were not strong enough & the enemy was offering great pressure. The sunken road was being shelled mercilessly & it was out of the question to get supplies of munitions.....

It came as a great surprise to us for just as we were about to prepare our trenches for the night orders came round that we were to be relieved by the 52nd Infantry. We had only been in action 24 hours & now were being withdrawn. We were downhearted to think we had failed in every phase of the attack.....

We now commenced to vacate our positions, leaving in a straggling column & passing along the sunken road towards the village of Cognicourt. The relief had not arrived as far as we knew but could not have been far away when we were ordered out. The road was under shellfire.....

Quietly walking along it seemed that our army was a rabble today. Nowhere was there a sign of any order such as usually exists..... Of course discipline still existed but there was no need to enforce it, for I have never seen men behave in a better manner. They would do anything.....

Cognicourt was as dangerous now as early this morning. Many shells ~~burst~~^{fell} over the village & burst with a shattering roar almost at our feet. In the gathering darkness, flares began to illuminate the skies.....

So far so good. We were now coming out on the ground where our field guns were replaced. These were still firing incessantly. The snow became heavier & it was still inches deep..... A few men became casualties..... It was good to see our dugouts of the previous evening again.....

Orders were that no time was to be ~~left~~^{lost} here, for we had to get away to some sheltered place for the night. The moon began to rise high now & the snow reflecting it made the place as bright as day. Suddenly shells began to fall on top of the bank just above the dugouts. It was too close to be safe & this made us hurry. I passed a casual remark: "one has only to fall on the side of the bank & there will be some casualties"; for we were all in groups at present which is not allowed. Men are always instructed to be as scattered as possible under shell fire. The words were hardly out of my mouth when I heard a shell coming straight for me. My heart nearly stopped & I came out in a cold perspiration. The sensation was awful. I thought my last moment had come & escape was impossible. It just cleared my head & I landed a few yards further on. There was a terrific roar & when the dense black smoke cleared there was a silence from the crowd of us, except a call of s/bearers from the dressing station close by. Just at the time the shell landed six mules were passing with a couple of limbers going for water. It fell right between the wheels of one & the driver was thrown off his mule, also another man sitting on the limber. The both limbers were broken to matchwood & round a big crater in the centre of the road was lying a terrible mess. Mules were lying dead & some of them that were only wounded were kicking. Many of our men laid there with all their equipment on. Four of them were dead. Those who only had slight wounds walked to the d/station. Some of those lying there were face downwards in the mud; but we turned them over & their faces were hardly recognisable with mud & had a ghastly look. Wounded mules hopped about on two or three legs & were instantly shot. This was what

was termed a "coal box"

----- As shells were still falling here, we had orders to vacate the spot immediately..... The storm was now of blinding fury & one could hardly see a yard ahead..... After what seemed a long time we came to the German cemetery to which we had been directed..... Here we waited & stragglers were coming in for a long time..... A roll call was taken to see how many casualties we had had.....

Standing here in the cold was dreadful..... For two hours we remained here until every available man was collected..... As soon as a place (to bivouac for the night) had been found & they were quiet as regards shell fire we left the cemetery..... ^(and) came to the old sugar mill..... The march, short as it was, was most ~~rest~~ enervating.

On our arrival..... a man issue was brought round..... A fire had been lighted & a group gathered round it to get warm. They sat on beams & anything that could be used to sit on..... They discussed the events of the day mainly & mentioned the fate of many beloved comrades.....

I dropped into a good sleep (in an outhouse)..... Suddenly we were awakened by a terrific explosion quite close to us..... Another violent report followed. While we hastily put on boots & an overcoat preparatory to leaving the place at once, groans could be heard & then many loud voices. Orders were being issued..... & we ran to see what was being done. To our intense horror, when we came upon the scene of the fire, it was a regular shambles that met our gaze. About 20 men were ^{all} lying about the fire dreadfully mutilated & in great pain... ~~Men~~..... We sorted the men out..... The A.M.C. staff & a doctor were immediately on the scene..... The sight was ghastly..... One man, brown,..... was

almost beyond recognition.... His eyes were blown back into his head. He shouted at the top of his voice "Goodbye goodbye Australia, I'm done." Phrases in the extreme were his ~~wild~~ wild exclamations & only too true; for within a quarter of an hour he was lying stiff. The fire was the cause of this tragedy.... When it had been lit, it was over a heap of debris. Unfortunately there were two German bombs here and.... they exploded, accounting for every man that was sitting round the fire.....
