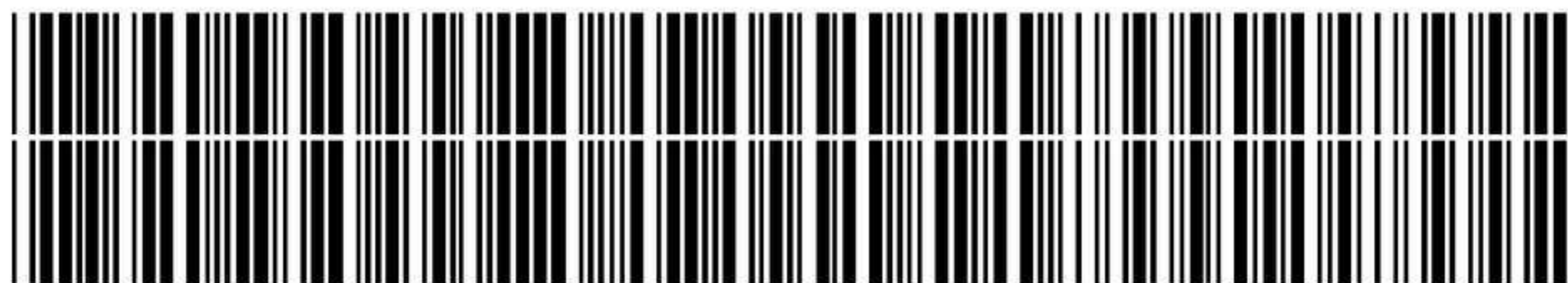


AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/142/1

Title: Notebook, September 1916
Includes references to the 52nd Battalion and
Mouquet Farm.



AWM38-3DRL606/142/1

DIARY NO. 142

3DRL 606 ITEM 142 [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, and 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.

C. E. W. BEAN.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ACCESS STATUS

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142
52 Box
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142
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~~12-18~~

Am. 11.35

Calais 4.3 pm.

Leave Calais 7.20 pm.

Hayeb. 9.40 pm.

9.56 am. Abbeville 11.4.

Signal Office
20 Rue Port de Paris.

Sept 6. Today Duncan Maxwell gave me an account of the fighting as he saw it. [The first question which he, from the thick of the battle, 500 yds from Mouquet Farm, put to me when he saw me yesterday as he rode out was - "tell me - have we got the Farm?"]

The 52nd started about one minute before the barrage ended - Duncan & some others managed to keep their bit of line back - two scraps - but the rest went on - got caught in the ~~barrage~~ bombardment, dropped into shellholes - started back; and so did the left of the line.

As Duncan was trying to organize his part & some of the rest into a line & getting ready to push them forward he saw in the dim light Little leaning heavily on his stick.

"Are you hit Sir?" asked Duncan.

"My boys have gone back on me, Maxwell," he said.

Duncan noticed that there was blood oozing from the torn breeches over his thigh, & he seemed to be hit thro' the chest as well.

"Will get the men along, Sir?"

Q said Duncan - "we have ² part of
the line here all ready - don't worry ²
about that - are you hurt?"

"I'll come along if the boys
will come," he said little.

Then a sergeant seized a stick
& shouted in a big hoarse voice like
Little & waved the stick as little
would have done - to make
them think he was little - & they
line jumped up & followed the sergeant
in to the trench.

The Germans had a post at
P. 280 2-4. with a m.g. in it
& wire in front of it, & the line
had to dodge round this wire into
the trench. When Duncan got in
he found that his left & right were
both out of touch: on his right
was this m.g. firing behind his
men's backs, S. Westward, & the
Germans had bombers behind
the post in shell holes who bombed
into our position whenever
we tried to get up / trench
to bomb the machine gun.
They had stick bombs &
little light bombs & cd

000

②
24

3

9 throw them further. Duncan pushed
two men out into shellholes in front
to bomb these fellows. Capt Swift
Crawled out also in rear of trench
between 1 wire & 1 machine gun post
& creeping along shot the machine
gun crew with his revolver. He
came back "I've shot three of them
Sir," he said. ~~Almost~~ immediately
after he was shot himself.

When we bombed the German
party out of its shellholes we were
able to move up and reach the
gun - & the Germans were found
shot dead right enough.

The men were then able to
move along this trench quickly
& presently they saw Australians
in the trench at 66 well ahead of
them. A big cheer went up - &
Germans who were out in front of
this trench began to cut across
from 36 with their hands up.
About 30 were taken prisoner.

This ~~next~~ joined Duncan up
with the 49th. The next thing was

9 to move along in the other direction & see if they were in touch with the other coys of the 52nd & the 51st. C company was on the left there & it is not quite clear what happened to it. The Coy officer was killed (Smith).

From about 03 (the trench from 03 towards 36 was quite blasted out at this end & it was recognisable) they saw a number of men in a comm. ty or a part of this comm. ty (it was really in the trench 04-79) leaning on their hands & elbows looking out of ty towards him. Every pair of glasses they got put on turned on these men - some of them were Australians - others indicated they were German. Two bombers were put out into crater towards them & were shot at once. This made Duncan pretty certain. He pushed out a Lewis gunner who got suddenly onto the line of them & cut them about - & they could be seen nipping back along the comm. ty to their own rear - so clearly they were Germans. Duncan then built his barricade at 03.

5

a] The wagon was between
03-24 and 01-22, close to
the middle of 01-22. There was
another between this & 03].

Duncan's line was now 03-5 $\frac{1}{2}$
-66, but he thought it was 03-36-66
or 94-03-36. He had no aerial
photo & no proper map.

The Germans were firing with
94-04 pretty thick & looked like
attacking when, at about noon,
Capt. Lovatt of the 13th Canadians
appeared, & brought his company
straight overland from the sunset
road to 03.

D. was going along at this time
with about 8 bombs (it was all
he had) to try & bomb the Germans
back. The Canadians only had
2 men hit coming across the open!
& the sight of them all coming across
got the Germans tails down
again & enormously cheered our
men. It was an extraordinary
bit of luck that they got in where!

9

They did. If they had gone 100 yds to the left they must have tumbled straight in upon 1 perimeter, as it was they just hit the left of the Obstructions.

They were not in (least in I think they were intended for. But when Lovatt consulted w Duncan & they saw by his map (wh by the by was the one I gave him at Bde H.Q.) where they were, he decided to stay there & send back to 7 other ~~com~~ company to go to where he should have gone to.

Duncan filled the Canadians in along post 24 - but they were very packed & he was praying to any extent he could. Then Lovatt got his bombers, & with one or two men whom he got for from Duncan the Canadians bombed along to 04 & put a

5

9

7

Stop in 1 trench there. That's all
at about 3 pm. on Sept 3rd. that they
attacked.

They dug during the night.

By the early light the next morning
a man in 1 trench sd - "look there
are Germans in front of trench."
Duncan looked over to see what make
of it clearly. Then he went along to
man & supported himself on his
shoulders & looked over. The
man pointed excitedly - "there is -
see - there" - at some Germans
in shellholes about 28055 -
& then a bullet caught him thro'
the head & covered Duncan in
blood - the man dropped dead.
Duncan went round to see the
4915 at 66 (36 he thought it
was) & the young officer in
charge there (they noticed the
sap running out from 66 to
36 then) said he was going to
go down that bit of sap

9
 them out. He started -- & he was
 shot dead. But the Germans
 in the ^{crater} ~~top~~ hearing the bombs dropping
 behind them & getting a bomb
 or two from them stood up &
 put their hands up. A sergeant
 in Duncan's trench near 24
 stood up & beckoned to them to
 come over to him - waved &
 waved - ~~until~~ he was hit & killed
 instantly by a bullet from away
 on the left. This made our
 men very bitter - but Duncan
 says the German was not to
 blame; they ^{German on left} couldn't see what
 was happening on the right [any
 way he had a right to shoot].
 Our men at once opened on
 the men who wanted to surrender
 & these ran back - ~~that~~
 such as could - to their own

9

Lunch at 3.6.

9

Early that afternoon the German shelling of the 52nd Bns trench increased very greatly. At first it was all Grey high explosive shrapnel bombs - very nasty but few men hit. Then it changed to heavy high explosive ~~and~~ put in as well. It seemed to be particularly heavy on the 52nd's trench about 24 & rather lighter further back towards the 49th. The losses began to be heavy - Minenwerfer also were being poured in. The trench rapidly became one long line of dead & wounded men - a continuous stream of wounded going up front. ^{Duncan} sent along to the Canadians at 04.15 to tell the Officer there to withdraw, as he was going to

After this Duncan got abt 12
men from his right
scattered them at intervals
along this bit of trench. If
was after this he decided
they wd have to retire a bit.

9

withdrew himself. The officer
said messenger did not know
Duncan's name & simply sd
"an officer". The Canadian,
right, wdnt withdraw on
this. ~~But~~ [The Canadian Sgt
who came ^{from 4} back sd th for 100
yards every man in trench
was dead or dying - out of
action.] Duncan went along
himself & said he found no
one in this trench except dead
& wounded - He left orders
before he went for a stop to
be built about 3.4. when this
was done he & the Canadians
- 3 of them in all - carried in
all the wounded men th they
cd find who were not too
badly hit to be put on a stretcher.

11

There was a slackening for two hours in the bombardment during the afternoon. Then it began again (fair on the barricade?) It had ceased from 4 pm to 6 pm.

the dead & dying they left - put them behind the barricade.

The barricade by 4 p.m. was very solid - 6 foot square & growing in height. Then our Contact aeroplane came over & they had no flares. They searched high & low for them but they had none. They got one damp flare but it wd not light. Then they tried to spread some cloth so that aeroplane wd notice. Immediately after two German planes sailed over & they must have seen the barricade. For they began dropping big stuff round it in salvoes of four - on every side of it. Men were killed & wounded. Duncan only had

Duncan had reported the
minenwerfer were bombarding
him - & this was why other
heavies were put on.

150 men before he retired & he
had less & less from now on.
They sat in a tiny shelter one
man with a periscope watching
1 German who were gathering
in 1 trench 03 & 36. Duncan
tried to get ^{our} artillery fire on them
- first he sent ~~shots~~ up two
red rockets (having nothing
else) but nothing was done.
Then he sent a direct message
direct across country -
but nothing happened. Then
he got the 49th to send a
message & it reached their
H.Q. & green rockets were
sent up from there & the
barrage came on ^{abt 5.30}. But it
came onto the 49th front.
more than the 52nd - naturally.
The 52nd were still

9 losing heavily & Duncan decided that he would have to withdraw further to where the bombardment seemed to end - about 54. He took the med back, warned the 49th that he was leaving their flank in the air. They sd (the officer at 66 did) that if he retired ^{further} they wd prefer him to retire up towards 66, & he arranged to do this.

The German artillery was awfully heavy. Having got the men back D. & 4 others, some Canadians, some Australians, crept back to the barricade; & there they sat under it telling each other how wheat was grown in their various countries, waiting for the barricade & their peggies to be blown in. The shell came at last, (at 6 pm.) which did it - hit one

man across the eyes; killed
another, wounded another -
left only two - Duncan & another.
~~Duncan was wounded & got a
shell & a couple of other things
killed.~~

He had to leave them later
to get something done. I think
it was the placing of 12 scattered
men along the trench. When he
got back there was no trace of
them. He & a corporal went
along the trench calling to them &
searching. Either they had ~~been~~
~~buried~~ ~~in~~ ~~the~~ trench or been
buried or killed, or they had
been ~~able~~ able to drag themselves
out of it. Probably they were
buried - there was no sign of them.

These men ~~had~~ had to
put out in a crates behind
the line by D. A shell dropped

9 into the crates. It killed two; but one man, with a completely broken leg, crawled in dragging himself by his hands & tumbled into their arms over the barbed wire. His leg was twisting & turning all ways as he came.

At dusk when the shelling ceased a good bit D ^{look} some 300 yds ^{over} forward along the sap towards 24 - finding it empty. Our own barrage was on it. At last they got a narrow straight bit where they cd lie. Our shells were falling into the trench about 10 yds to their right, behind them; but 1 narrow 01 trench saved them.

Night came on & with it a very heavy shell began to fall on 1 trench some way

9 Behind them. It made a huge noise coming. Duncan cd hear it - and he wd think that he wd have chloroform - the whizzing seemed just like the banging in the ears which comes ~~comes~~ with chloroform - then he wd lose it altogether - & then the heavy crash wd wake him w a start - so that he wd fall asleep between 1 time he first heard 1 shell, & 1 time when it burst.

Late on in 1 night he received orders to go to 49 Bn H.Q. He went along & reported. Then he ~~was sent back~~ He was told to withdraw his own party & let some Canadians in post. There were no Germans, he told 1 new Officer, in 24-03.

9 The afterwards found head & they had gone down by 5.03 all right (or thereabouts).

He was withdrawn in half hour. Going out, a shell fell between the others & buried one to 1 arm pits & Duncan to 1 knees. He sd to be sd doing out sway a little. He was planted. Even when only his feet was under it was impossible to move it.

Only when they cd cripple them about a bit cd they get the feet of 1 buried man out. (It is difficult to realize this; but think how hard a post with a bed-plate is to move.)

I had just got these details from Duncan (whose battalion had arrived at Warlog) & I was off in a motor ambulance

a

as a passenger, en route to
Amiens, when Duncan bicycled
up. "I want you to keep me out
of it - promise you won't mention
me or my name, ever" he
sd. "You see I told you the story
more fully than I ~~had~~ told it to
anyone - even Arthur - partly because
I wanted to get it off my chest &
partly because I wanted to see
justice done to the Australians"
The Canadians had been killed into
these trenches & took a big part
in the fight - they were now
very tired & one officer came up
to Colonel Buchanan & said "I
can't keep my men in the
trenches, Sir; they will keep
leaking back. I'm at my wits
ends to know what to do."
"You must order them flatly
to stay there" - sd Buchanan.
"That means I'll have to
shoot them" - sd the officer.

9 Our own Australians straggled back a fair amount in this awful fight too. Any troops would do so; many troops ~~and~~ certainly have withdrawn & left trenches empty.

I told Duncan I would certainly not bring him into the story. I was allowed to mention his name anyway.

He said - "I don't want you to mention it ever."

I said: "My dear chap I certainly will not promise that. When it comes to writing the history of the show I will certainly have to mention names & I will do it as fairly as I can all round."

He asked me not to say that our men got into their own barracks (I suppose, because it wd grieve their friends). I sd I should be allowed to say it. But his request did not apply to the eventual history, years after?

"Oh - you can do as you like, then" he said.

I would ~~not~~ have refused to agree anything.

For pages 23-26 — ? list of serial nos of
British Official photos of AIF —
see the end of book

4

26

Courcellette
Sketches Bearings (2)
O.G. Trenches
Mouquet
Chalk Pit
Layout

C 45-2

C 45-3

C 435-

C 408

C 403

C 383..

C 365-

D 122

D 109

D 110

D 111

D 106

D 107

D 108

D 95 ✓

D 96 ✓

D 92-93 ✓

3rd RAA

D 70

D 71

D 72

D 69

D 49 ✓

D 45 ✓

D 1 ✓

C 649. *Therival.*

C 625 ✓ *monquet*

C 620 ✓ *u*

C 623 ✓ *u*

C 619 ✓

~~C~~ C 622 ✓

C 631 ✓

C 632 ✓

C 624 ✓

C 621 ✓

C 626 ✓

9

A 67. A 67a

~~A 252~~

C 495 ✓

C 507 ✓

C 506 ✓

C 508 ✓

C 503 ✓

C 509 ✓

C 493 ✓

C 514 ✓

C 533 ✓

C 534 ✓

C 544 ✓

C. 618

C. 619 ✓

C. 609 ✓

C. 595

C 585

C 584

C 490

C 491

C 488

C 489

~~C 482~~

C 478

C 479

C 475

C 472

C 473

C 470

C 471

C 468

C 469

C 466

C 464

C 465

C 463

C 456

C 457

C 459

C 458

C 454

C 455

* We got, I think, most of
 the negatives afterwards,
 by courtesy of the British
 authorities. (As they
 did not at this time
 let us have a photographer
 & had agreed to lend us
 theirs whenever I
 asked for him.)

B.W.B.
 Sept 1927.

British Photos which were
 taken for us. X

23

Q	C. Series		
	244	208	146
	245	209	147
	246		
	241	205	148
	242		143
	243	206	144
	237	207	145
	238	202	140
	240	201	141
	234	191	142
	235	192	137
	236		138
	233	172	139
	232	173	134
	231	171	135
	226	170	136
	227	169	
	228	168	A 111
	225	167	A 174
	223	166	A 175
	222	164	A 176
	221	165	A 171
	220	163	A 172
	218	161	A 173
	219	162	
	214	149	A 107
	215	150	A 104
	216	151	A 96
	211		
	212		
	213		