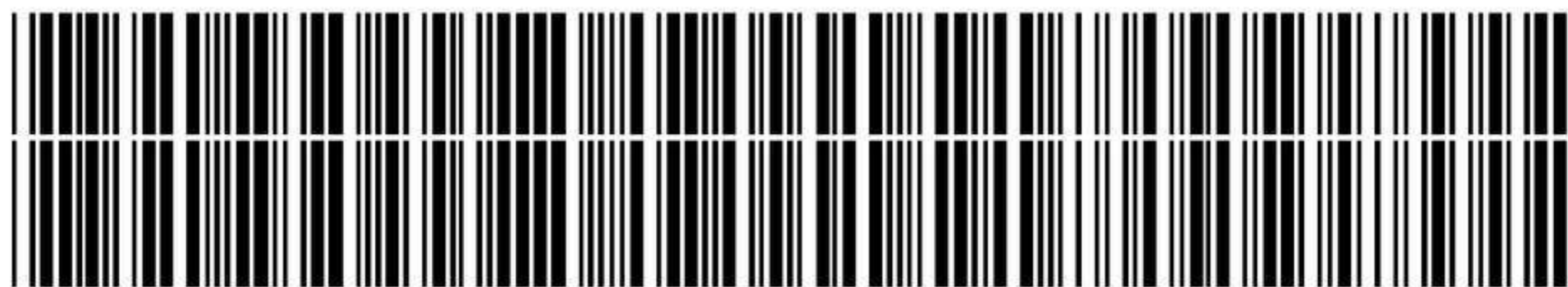


AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/221/1

Title: Folder, July - August 1918
Includes references to the 51st Battalion and
13th Infantry Brigade.



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DIARY NO. 221.

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302L 606 ITEM 221 [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 C. E. W. BEAN.

ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

Bde & 57th Bn.

Aug 8. ^{Dominant} Douvres & ^{Blangy Tronville} Blangy Tronville. marched
spent 11 days here. Aug 9. to Morcourt. Night there.

51 Bn.

Bde ^{verbally} ~~gave~~ orders at 2:30 pm on Aug 10

after a conference with Corps. Bde was at Morcourt. It was an attack for 9:30 pm same night. Bde Int. Offr & Bn I.O.s went over. N of Somme. No one at Div or Corps knew who held Fressaire wood. Bns crossed Somme for first time abt 7pm. The Bde I.O after the orders had been issued ascertained definitely that Americans were holding Fressaire wood. The Americans were up to the X Rds at the NE end of Fressaire wood & the wood N. of this was clear of Germans & was possibly held.

Aug 10.

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The Tanks were to meet Bns. at 1 road bend E of 17 Central. The tanks Bn command came over in 1 after & was told. to his tanks must meet an of 49 Bn there & then the of 49 Bn was to give them 1 tip when to start. They were only to go up & down 1 road & not fire - to make a noise & overawe 1 German. They cd fire a few grape shot down 1 road 1 first trip - 49 Bn was to go along Bray Rd & face ~~between~~ N. & E. 50 Bn to go up thro pressure wood & up 1 road to abt 20 B.L.7. Then wheel right & face E.

They as a matter of fact did a movement opening out fanwise and advanced across 1 open. It was pitch dark.

50 Bn was to send one Coy to ~~form~~ watch NE exits of Etimhem with 4 Vickers & 4 Stokes guns. Lt Linsagson took this Coy out. He followed 50 Bn.

No barrage. It was a night operation w no arty - 4 Dist arty was just pulling in. Some 01 guns were just in position. At 9.35 Louch went outside the Bde H.Q. in Chippilly to listen for 1 rifle fire - & at 10 came in & sd there was no noise at all. At 50 Bn H.Q. no firing cd be heard either, it was dark as pitch - no wd coming back, Everyone outside Louch was to hear - & 1 German

were passing 1 woods. The Bns kept up on 1 high ground on 1 outskirts o 1 wood - 1 top o 1 cliffs - & 49 Bn hit off between 1 woods to 1 central (or thereabouts). 51 Bn followed 1 others in & dug in on the steep slope in 29 A. Another Coy went into dugouts in 29 B on 1 river side o 1 slope. The other Coy followed 50 Bn across, & dug in as required across the rds leading NE out of Etimhem. Finlason trying to get contact w 50 Bn struck a party o Germans who ran. He was trying to find 1 50 Bn on 1 heights due E of Etimhem but they were not so far down. He ~~then~~ saw a ply wh he took for 50 Bn. He called to them & heard someone speak in German & they divided one way & he 1 other.

As day rose this Coy moved down towards Etimhem. The vickers guns & TMs were all in position waiting to get 1 Germans bothd. If 8 Div. had succeeded 1 Germans in Etimhem were completely cut off. Finlasons Coy moved down at dawn to ~~cut them off~~ mop up 1 town & found only one German - anything up to 300 Germans were expected - & this one alone was found. No doubt Germans had got away in 1 dark. There was a partially destroyed bridge

Aug 11.

betw Etinhem & 1 Mercourt spur.

B Coy then dug in betw 1 village & 1
river around S. end of village. They were in
1 trees there very well hidden; And in spite
of shelling of Etinhem they did not lose a

man in 1 two days.

3 Divn had failed.

abt dawn? it was known that
Cpl Coulter the Bde Scout came in & said he had seen
fermans at ~~was seen~~ abt 32

Central - digging in. abt Belis. then & 1 p.m.
there was a continuous argument as to whether
these were fermans or no. Gen. Burgess saw them off
12 & thought they were. At 12:30 Col. Christie went
up & he decided they were fermans.

This was Aug 11.

That after, at once, Col Christie sent to
the Coy (Finlasons) to send out a patrol &
get what informatn he cd. This patrol
made it certain they were fermans. After
the positi was rather anxious at the time
on acct of possibility of an attack
from the NE.

There was a german gun behind the
height in 9 central enfilading them right
up 1 trench. They were also being heavily
shaped from E of Bray (Ceylon wood). That
morning a gun in Cateau wood also was
firing into them - Our batteries had got
on to him & this gun was silenced
by abt 2 p.m. Col. Williams 10 Bde of A.F.A.
was working with the 13th Bde (it was grouped w 11 Bde A.F.A.)
Williams was living w 13th Bde & the liaison

4 good
was very good. One Senior Ofc in liaison is better
than a lot of juniors.

~~Sept 11~~
A shoot was arranged - wh was pretty heavy
- one battery getting right onto 1 ferms w HE &
strapped. By the time 1 ferms had some cover in
their potatoes.

Aug 12.
On the morning of Aug 12 the 3rd Divn (11 Bde)
had attacked & were working (at dawn) thro
Caleau wood. At 11 am. a Conference was held at
11 Bde H Qrs in Chipilly valley & an attack was
planned for the night. It was planned at first
for 11 pm & then postponed to 1^{am} pm. Divn
asked for this as a relief was going on S. of the
Somme & they didnt want it strafed. It
was a pitch black night but fine.

After dark the Coy wh was in dugouts
(C. Coy. Capt Harburn) on 1 cliff side moved
round 1 NE side of Etinhem & then down
woods 1 cemetery. He ~~moved thro~~ ^{found} some
old wire - & decided he wd go out beyond
it & lie up there so as not to be interrupted.
With at zero. They were not shot at
getting thro'. B Co The previous night
D Coy had gone in on B Coys left - & they
moved down & formed on C Coys
left - the road being 1 dividing line.

The barrage, wh had been arranged
w 1 artillery by Bde, was an excellent one.
It was a battle (fighting) of wh was left to 1 brigade

— The order being issued by Bde, & / command only later (at 5 pm.) passing to Liaison Force. This is / sort of fight wh a unit enjoys.

The 2 Coys went over with B Coy in support in their old position. A Coy was still up the sleeve — ^{in Chipilly valley} — in the 3 Bn brigades the keeping of a reserve was a problem. The Coys got to their objective straight. The Germans fought in places but / moment they saw that we were fighting they surrendered. ~~At~~ 184 prisoners were taken.

Of these one batch had been overrun by Bn. At dawn the I.O. Lt Joyce, seeing his rounds saw a Sgt & 2 men ^{under cover} throwing lumps of mud at some Germans in ~~potholes~~ missed by / attack — in order to make / Boche come out. The Germans had their heads down. The I.O. went down & joined base tree with the Scout who was with him — & they arranged to / whole 5 should get up & rush for him together. They did this & / Germans surrendered — 30 of them.

During / night / Germans had connected their potholes in many cases & made a fairly good $\frac{1}{2}$ pln posts. They had also dug holes right down to / river.

The line had gone to / river & cleared / whole spur — they found no one in / old German trenches near / top of / cliff. The total casualties for the 2 Coys were 5 men slightly wd.

6.

The 4th S. how. barrage on the ² steep reentrants looking down on 1 cliff ~~W~~ of Bray (opp. La Newville) had driven 1 fernans there in towards our line. The intention was to block anyone from getting out of Peninsula to Bray or vice versa. ~~The~~ ^{Some} fernans. There were as a matter of fact bottles near 1 fully head & they got in 1 way of the plan of 50 Bn who was going to mop these valleys up & 1 line remained sent back along 1 top of 1 cliff. (They took 4 prisoners & 3 n.s.) Possibly 90 Boche got away here. They seem to have been heavy machine runners.

The following night Americans relieved 57 Bn (13/14) and on night of 14/15 relieved 50 Bn. These Americans relieved 50 Bn by one Coy from Etéhém; but it took all night. When they relieved 57 Bn they had a guide to every post. Another guide took 10 hrs to their Coy Hqs. from the Coy Hqs they were shown over 1 line by an ^{Coy} officer. They then came back to Coy Hqs. The Americans ^{troops} were then brought up by their guides. The Ofcs joined them & went out to their separate posts to their guides. (This is our ordinary procedure but it took much longer).

On 18/16 the 49 Bn was relieved by 34 Bn who had been under 13 Bde. 13 Bde was to have some

7.

in again - but this was cancelled. 2nd Div
was brought across & 13th Bde was sent to
rejoin 4th Div at Harboursieres. An
American 132 Regt had been added to 4th Div;
The Americans were at this time all withdrawn
& so the 13th Bde was sent back as reserve to
4th Div which had 2 Bdes in the line. They
were in reserve all time at Lihou.

July 31

Aug. 1. This night 13th Bde began to take over
from French. By Aug 6 they took over
from Domart ^{Hourges} (S. of the Luce) to V/B.

Bde ^{by 4th Div} ^{31st} knew what was going to
happen. Col. Christie knew ^{the} 1 night of July 31
(and 1 other C.O.s). They were ^{just} told of an attack
was coming off & dispositions for 1 next 4 nights.

The nights of 1st & 2nd Aug everything was all right.

~~the~~ 31/1, & 1/2 57 had one Coy in.

Night of 2/3 57 took over the ~~right~~ line
of 1st Coy of 49 Bn who brought them N of the
Luce, one Coy N, & one S. Up to them I
knew had not shown that they had noticed
any difference. The m.y. Coys saw 3 g.s.
wagons across the horizon but undoubtedly
our men would be more in sight than 1 French.
If 1 French saw you walking in sight in daylight
they would fire a blank cartridge at you - they
fired at Gen Herring & their own sent - a blank

Cartridge to warn them to get off. This was 1 charming old French Colonel Dozac who was showing them round - he had lost an arm at Verdun. "Oh it is nothing - it is just 1 sentry fired a blank cartridge to keep us off road."

On night of 2/3 at 3am. exactly 1 ferns put down a heavy barrage on our front line & on 1 village of Hourges & Domart. He kept it on front line for 2 mins & then lifted it onto Domart for 1/2 hour or more. He had had an unsuccessful silent raid ^{Exactly there} on 1 French just before the BBde took over. He was intending to make sure this time. They attacked the Centre Pln posts of the 1st Coy, S of the Luce. As soon as they got their heads up they found 1 ferns on top of them. They tried to fire their L.G. but the crew was bombed out & 1 other fern jammed. He forced them back & got into Hourges (20 or 30 ruined houses). Then he turned & went back up the Roye road, & came on 1 left Pln of 1st Coy in 1 rear. They had a fight, very confused. Pln Comdr Lieut Fryar was badly wd by a shower of stick bombs & Capt ^{Aurousseau} was slightly wd. He stayed on. It was a very dark night & 1 Pln found afterwards that 5 men were missing. Seryt Acton, ~~one of the~~ platoon Seryt of this pln - a first rate N.C.O. & an intelligent man, was the Seryt. Abt 8 or 9 Germans were found dead there. We had abt 20 casualties - ~~or~~ 4 killed

We got one old German, who died - no identification on him whatever - it was an organism said.

A few Canadian Engineer Officers had been about. The ration parties might have noticed Canadians reconnoitering in the rear areas (a report of 1 Army Command was here next morning - at 1 Bn - asking ^(by our men) if anything had been known). But it was pretty certain our men knew nothing.)

The German did not raid again. We settled down again. For 2 nights the shelling was a little above normal, we thought. But it was the sleepiest time I don't ever see. There were not 10 other casualties in 1 Bde - 57 Bn had no more. The dugouts were splendid. Our trenches & 1 German were on opposite slopes - you could see for miles any movement. The trenches were good. They had a skeleton out ahead & 1 main line of resistance was 3000 yds back. The French programme was to give up 1 front line & put down their coverage on it.

On 1 night of 6/7 a Canadian officer was out peering 1 line was shot. The 13 Bde was then holding over 8000 yds of front w 1600 men & there were saps of several hundred yds. There was a very real danger of visiting officers walking there. There was an outpost line in front (The 2 had been dug by 1 trench).

There were two ticklish nights when the Bde had this huge front. One Divn was now behind each Bn.

2 50
 1 49
 3 51 →

2nd DttQ took over 51 Bns deployment. 4th Divn took over 13th Bde H.Q. deployment.

During these two nights there were 3 Coy in each Bn in 1 line & one in support (wh we ration carrying - all it'd do).

The Canadians were in 1 support line.

On the morning of Aug 8 the 50 Bn was not quite out when 1 barrage came down. 51st was out at 2.50 & 49 between 1 two (3.30 abt).

They had not a casualty. The German was quieter at night than the 3 previous nights. The Canadians worked well w our people.

Totl 4th Aug 13th Bde was under 4 Aust Div.
 On 4-7 under Canadian Corps
 On 8-9 Aust Corps
 On 10-12 4th Aust Div
 " 13-18 Liaison Force
 " 19 onwards 4th Aust Div.

Mouquet Trn is the heaviest fight the 51st Bn was ever in. The shelling was much heavier than at V/B. The sniping on the hill opposite the Quarry was also far more very fierce.