

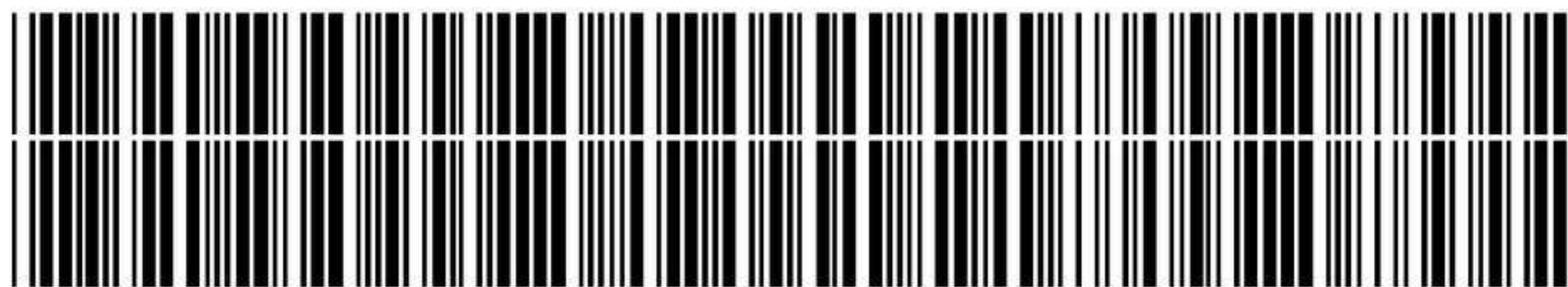
AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/273/1

Title: Folder, 1918 - 1937

Covers fighting at Villers-Bretonneux and Monument Wood, April-July 1918 and includes notes by Bean and A W Bazley, cuttings, note by Brig Gen G W Grogan and comments on the British history by 51st Battalion officers.



AWM38-3DRL606/273/1

GERMAN OFFENSIVE - April - July, 1918. 273. 152
(SOMME) - Part II.
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. ACCESS STATUS

16 Sept., 1946.

C. E. W. BEAN.

Memo from Maj. Jarquhar 8 Flay to CRE 5 D W

~~87~~

21/4/18.

90C 15 Bde anxious that his 1 flank Reserve Line
be secured by a 2 dug present Support Line at
O 20 to 46 (approx) back to road at O 19 d central (approx).
As this wd also act as a C.T. could 6 carried
Pioneers, thus allowing present working parties
Res Bde carry on front line north river. C.O. Pioneers
was with 6 morning when siting 6 work location
proposed 2 +

CRE 5 D W to 8 Flay arrange Pioneers dig the 2 ^{spade} ~~sub~~ of O 20 to 46 back
O 19 d central. I had been communication = 950 (1) re this, this morning.

CRE SDW

Lobe Matter

21/4/18 With OC 8 Coy visited left flank of Aubigny line
to arrange linking up of new area also to consider
defence by embankment cutting. Sheet 62D. ~~02c~~
02c

8 July

Major Farquhar

5/4/18

Arrived Glangy 2.30 pm.

Pontoon bridge erected over Somme Canal at N16 C 82
by 9 pm.

6/4/18

Pontoon bridge erected over Somme at N17 C 63 and
3 small bridges leading to bridge site on S. side of Canal.
Great difficulty in getting equipment to site owing to boggy
state of track.

7-12/4/18

3 sections employed in cutting + splitting local timber +
laying corduroy track leading to above pontoon bridges
[One section (under Lt Isaacs) moved to Bouvray + attached to 13 Tabde.

This section erected three bridges at -
I 29 a 30 Pontoon
I 29 C 88 Trestle
I 29 C 59 (from local timber)

12-13/4/18

Permanent 3 span trestle bridge erected at I 29 a 30 to take place of pontoon

8 Flcy.

(2)

and 09a

13-20/4/18. Div. Reserve line running from 027c to 01b, sited & taped out & system of s/posts dug. These afterwards connected and continuous γ made. Wired along whole front. M.G. positions dug. Trenches dug, 3300 yds.

Switch line running from 014b to 09a sited & work commenced.

17/4/18 Continuation of support line from 08d 05 to Aubigny has been sited & taped out for pioneers.

17/4/18. Section returned from 13 F Abde

18-19/4/18 One section assisting 59 & 60 Bns. digging in 013a

21/4/18 Moved to Vecquemont (Dacours)

Owing to ∇ div's boundary being adjusted, Div. reserve line between 020b 08 and 027d 4b handed over to 2nd Flcy RE (8 Div) at 9 am.

14 F Coy

Major Bachtold

5/4/18

Arrived Blangy 1.50 pm

6/4/18

Moved to Aubigny. Party engaged on erecting
accommodation for 14 Bde HQ

7/4/18

Salvage RE stores at Fouilloy. Accommodation for Bde HQ etc

Reserve Line SP's P. 19868 & P. 19d 09 taped out
Informer 15% digging completed.

8-12/4/18

Commenced preparations for demolition of roads at 029c94,
030c23 & 036a #36 by tunnelling out from adjacent cellars.
Mines on cross roads in V/Bret. completed on 12th.

9/4/18

14 Bde supplied working party of 300 for SP's of Reserve Line.

10-11/4/18

Work on Res. Line continued. 14 Bde supplied 600 men on 12th
300 " " 13th

13

100 Infantrymen attached from 14 Bde - organized in 4 platoons, three out
digging, the fourth constructing dummy bridges.

14th Coy. (2)

14-15/4/18 14 Bde supplied 600 men for reserve line
Res. Bde " " 500 men " " "

18/4/18 Owing to 53 + 54 Bns having large gas casualties, the reserve
bns supplied very few men for work today, + Res. Bde supplied only
300 instead of 600.

Two platoons of the special attached infy party on wiring, & two on dugouts.

19/4/18 Bachtold left as CRE 3rd Div. Capt. ^{SE} Evans 15th Coy takes
Command of 14th Coy.

Res. Bde party only 200 strong — connecting up SP's on support line
Only small working parties available from 14 Bde owing to reliefs

20/4/18 Work in sector as far north as E & W. line through P. 19 central
handed over to 490 Coy RE (boundary between 5th Div & 8th Div) ^{and}
14 Coy takes over from 15 Coy as far north as P 8 central
Sections working in bn. sectors & switch line + on dugouts

14 May

~~between~~
For week ending 6am 13/4/18 14 May dug 952 yds of trenches
connecting SP's to form reserve line.

(see sketch maps in records)

21/4/18 ~~400~~ ~~200~~ Four infy parties ^{each} 100 strong available from 15 Bde

200 on left bn. support line
100 on Reserve line
100 on Res. Switch line

22/4/18 400 men from Res. Bde and 200 from 14 Bde

23/4/18 100 men from Res Bde on ^{Res} Switch line

All deep dugouts going ahead.

6-7.30 pm Bilets in Aubigny heavily bombarded
with Yellow Cross gas.

Moved to La Neuville

14 Flg

24/4/18 Lt Best + 12 sappers detailed for duty with 15 Bde in attack

26/4/18 No 3 section + infy party (50) on Switch Reserve line

THE AUSTRALIAN NAVY

1914-1918

15 Fløy

Map Greenway

5/4/18

Arrived Blangy 3 pm.

7/4/18

~~No. 3 section~~ Moved to La Neuville to work in 15bde sector
Party commenced work on mine under road 018653

8/4/18

Mining roads, 018653, 010d68, 011a51

9/4/18

Work continued in forward area by three sections
fourth section $\frac{1}{2}$ on road-mining

Lts. Marnie + Gilbert reconnoitred Bourzencourt +
ascertained that 5 Dwn merely holds one post 150 yds ... of the
village + not village itself.

10th

On cancellation of projected attack, 15 Fløy resumed normal work
in Reserve Line etc.

11-~~11th~~
20th

Reserve Line work continued ^{also tunnelled dugouts at P7a10}
On a/c of good visibility working parties
changed over from day to night work on 12th.

14th

Switch Reserve, ^{and more} S.P's commenced. Idea is to develop continuous line
from these S/P's

15 May

Period
~~From~~ 8th - 19th April

Engaged in wiring front line, erecting S.P.'s & shelters ^{and wiring}
support line, digging traversed Z.

Front line	—	wiring
Support line	—	S.P.'s & shelters
Reserve line	—	wiring
Traversed Z	—	2600 yds of Z dug 3'9" deep
Switch line	—	wiring
Traversed Z	—	1000 yds dug 3'9"

Dugouts	}
Road mines	
Dummy bombs etc	

15 F. Coy

21-23/4/18

Work on reserve line (digging & wiring)

Take over sector N. of Somme ~ 11 F. Coy on 21st

Dugouts ~ 8 Bae

Wiring in front line

23/4/18

C.T. in left on sector taped out.

15 2604

Works Report 20-26 Apr 1918

Front line - wiring
 Reserve line - Traversed 2 1500 yds. excavated
 140 yds developed to a width of 5 ft
 & depth of 5' 3"
 Wiring
 Switch Line ^{Wiring} Traversed 2
 Duponts etc

18 THE AUSTRALIAN NAVY

of being up an inter... the message such as the one mentioned above on 3. 16. ... was with a ... of the island; and there was always the chance ... least, ... and ... was definite evidence that the ...

XVIII Corps was reld ^{early} ²⁸ by Fr. groupment Mesple. Its arty still covering Fr.

XIX was only Corps of S Army now in line. 9 Aust Bde to Cuchy under it

Rpts from III Corps withdrawn from line a few days coming up to XIX Corps.

Former S Army sectors now represented by:-

Br. S Army XIX Corps.

Fr. 1 Army

Fr. 3 Army

Fr. 6 Army along axis.

By Mar 29 p had ceased to att. Fr. Army. Quiet day on 3 Army also, but p att'd Fr. 1 Army & drove it back & also rd of Br. 5 Army near Demuin.

Mar 30. Att. finished at Fr. Army.

So att'd Fr. 3rd Army (11 Cav & XXXV Corps) & made some pd. Fr. XXXV Corps also made a c/a & found pd.

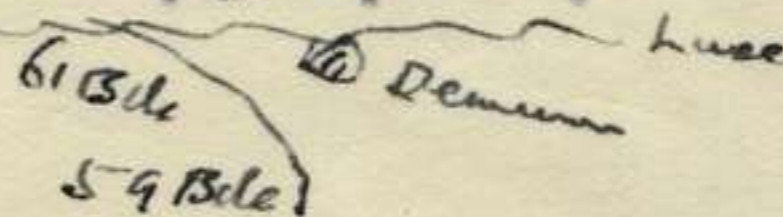
Fr. 1 Army held up for on it but VI Corps & 9th Mtr (this day ^{try over by} became XXXVI Corps under Gen. Nollet)

Fr. apptly driven out of Moreuil but got in again during mg of Mar 31 (town being empty)

Fr. 59, 45 Divs and in 1 Army & 2 Divs Cav Div. But arty still covering pt of Fr.

XIX Corps. Got all along line on Mar 30.

Gs took Moreuil wood from Fr. but Can. Cav Bde in very fine dash ^{retook it w help of} 3 Cav Bde wh arriv later, & held on. Ined 1 of Luce 50x20 Div & Fr 133 Div mixed lost but retook little & Rifle woods. + got t. with Moreuil wood. L. bent back (Br. Demuin tu + Fr adid rd of Luce)



Not Luce

39/ 61

66

Demuin held by 1 Coy of Little's Bn. So drove this out Little's Camp Bn drove back N of Luce. ~~They~~ go who took to Demuin + captured them. Drove to Hangard Little Gd's res. & retook most of village. Then order to pull out to Hangard. Little (Lt Col. WRS Little) did this w diffy.

66 Div was driven back by Enfilade, & 39 Div was involved with withdrawal to Hangard - Bois de H line (in front of those places). There 39 Div sent to N, 66 to S. C/a was org'd by BGen Armytage (17 Bde) abt 1.30, to regain ridge SE of Luce wood. S (attd) well but driven back. Unsu attempt later, also failed. Line now in front of Hangard wood. 66 Div made c/a towards Ambercourt abt 3pm (Br. Gen Williams & mixed body made it - got 1500 t - then driven back). It was known th 4 A1 Bde was to all further N.

Mar 30 (cont). 66 Div + ret'd under bombard only, but line was restored, r. fl refused.
 On 29 39 Div of 9a was holding on w diffy Sgt Lamer Wood, so ~~61 Div~~ 181 Bde (61 Div Reg) sent Bde HQ + a composite Coy to the wood abt 4pm + held on till 9A of 9a 1 Bde came up in evg.

By noon next 10 X Corps showed th 66, 39, + 61 after 10 days fighting were at end of Tatten.
 ∴ at 12.30 order sent thro 61 Div to 9 A 1 Bde to 9a + relate Ambercourt + find lost N of Ambercourt:
 Rossy ord' 33 Bde to do this on 3000' front from Copse W of Mareelease to Ambercourt. 34 Bde + Suppt 33.
 12 Lancas (of 5 Cas Bde wh w 4th Cas Bde sent to Bois l'Abbe' in evg) ord' to ~~support~~ prot. left of 9 A 1 Bde
 12 Lincs went on + Occd L. wood where 183 Bde holds w diffy. Didnt get far, as line too extended, but Est'd front firmly. + moral aspect of quite fresh fcs was considerable.

N. of Maree Cave 49a Div + 228 Div adsd apt 16 + 1 Cas Div + pts of army's force. at 1pm after slow barr. fold by intense. fr repulsed everywhere exc. Hamell + there thrown out of a few y wh they had gained by 4ca by 5 Dg + evgs + 4pm att. from Warbusse' repulsed by 9 Cas Bde + ord.

18 Div had been fighting from Mar 21-25 + moving East since.

Summary:
 N of here. 11 X Corps lost Demuin + pushed back to Hamell. 9a still kept off Cuchy fentelles plateau + 1 B. the swept pts.

S of here
 9s were now across Avre everywhere S of Maree, + held fort. some front ider, Catigny, Aubvillers, Sauvillers, but all positions or mainly. 49a got into Maree but oppy evad it. N 1/2 of Maree wood ret'd by Brit Cav. 30th

XIX Corps this day ordered at 12.20 18 Div (2 Bdes + 61 to take over line from Luce to Hamell + there thrown out of a few y wh they had gained by 4ca by 5 Dg + evgs + 4pm att. from Warbusse' repulsed by 9 Cas Bde + ord.) to take over line from Luce to Hamell + there thrown out of a few y wh they had gained by 4ca by 5 Dg + evgs + 4pm att. from Warbusse' repulsed by 9 Cas Bde + ord.)
 + 61 to take over from Cuchy-Maree. Rd to Villers Bret Warbusse' rd; 1 Cas Div (Suppt'd by 16 Div fcs) to hold from this rd to Somme. Order confirmed at 5.55pm
 At 7.35 61 Div authorized to use 1 Bde of 9 A 1 Bde to assist in taking over its sector. Actly this meant th the Aust Bu took the 61 Div's sector, rest of 61 Div being withdrawn into reserve.
 Therefore a day of stony j. atts all along line of former 5th Army sector except on 6th Army front.

Mar 31. Wg. 18 Div had rd on Hangard (where in touch with 7th Bu prob from 29 7th Div at Boves) + front E of Bois de Hangard + Lamer Wood to Cuchy-Maree. RS 1000' W of maree. From here 35 Aust Bu (rel'd 33 + 34) held line to Warbusse', but relief not complete + 47 warwickshires (61 Div) + 2 Sqns Essex 4co. still w 1 Amsthus in fl.

3rd Bde (574) of 18 Div and on evg 30th at Boves.
 3 + 8 Cas Div also and on 30th S of Ameeus (Sains en Ar) Only 9 A 1 Bde fresh.

1 Cas Div. bit up 2 Cas Bde on rd to rd 9 Cas Bde (wh went to res. at Jucilly. 1st Cas Bde on left in front of Hamell. 16 Bde now held front N of Hamell Cuchy RS. 4 + 5 Cas Bdes (2 Cas Div) in Res in Bois l'Abbe'. 24 Div in rear S of Ameeus held bridge heads over Luce. 39 + 66 Divs and 61 went into reserve. 66 Div Art' sp. covering 61 Div (i.e. Amsthus) 23rd Bde R 9 A + had 16 juns in action (of 25). 1200 in Bois l'Abbe' rest in Blangy-Tronville glazy area.

Account

4

Night 1/2 Apr.

7. 133 Div took over to 300' N of Rd SE from Thennes.
14 Bnd Div but up from S of Amiens to occ.
for 24 hrs line of 2 Cav Div.

8 Div + 2 + 3 Cav Divs retd. also remnants of 50 + 20 Divs
retd. Inf of 8, 20, + 50 left XIX Corps but not army.
N of Luce quiet. 4 4 4

24 Div still held the rear position from Luce to Amiens
- Doumont Rd.
61 Div extended the position from the front to S edge of Bois l'Abbe.

arty of 50 + 66 Divs now 2 gns under 18 Div.
on left (avg. 16 + 1 Cav Divs) arty of 16 + 39 Divs.

XIX Corps had now 102 heavy guns, 77 in action.
1 April quietest day yet since 21 Mar. NO
fwd lost by allies - a little gained

2 + 3 April.

no alt on Fr. 3 + 6 armies exc. little alt on
rt of Fr. 6 Army.

Fr 1 Army - night 2/3 Apr. pos. altered betw. Mouilly
& Moreuil + into Moreuil but Fr. regained nearly all.
on night 3/4 Fr. of all S.E. of Moreuil, held pos. gained.

Night 2/3 Fr. 29 Div retd Bois l'Abbe 14 Div Reffe Wood
to Hayard (w. of Hayard) (i.e. E.S. of Luce R.)
Fr. 2 Divs + Cav Div retd 133 Div north of
Moreuil
Brit still ^{provided FA down to N.} held ~~pos.~~ S. of Moreuil.
Coop Fr 163, 2 Divs, + 29 Divs.

XIX Corps: 1, 2 + 3 Cav Divs, 14, 16, 18, 24, 61 Divs of AIB de.

So did alt on 2 or 3 Apr, but early fire became heavy on 3.

18 Div made a small alt on evg 2 Apr. to get high pos
NW of Autercourt + gain obs. of Vill + Luce Vy.
2 Coy 54 Bde + Bn of 53 Bde to alt. but were seen +
shelled + alt countermanded.

Careys force withdrawn from 1 Cav Div front + ceased to exist.
14 Div went to reserve, Bois de Blangy.

Night 3/4 Apr. 14 Div retd 1 Cav + 16 Divs. 1 Cav Div
withdrawn N of Somme to Bussey, under Cav Corps.
16 Div to Amiens. But 6 Cav Bde (3 Cav Div) which had been
lent to 1 Cav Div on 2 April remained as res. to 14 Div.
One regt at Jouilly, ^{the} other 2 in N pt of Bois l'Abbe.
All 1 Cav Divs mps in pos line stayed there.

6 Cav Bdes of 3 Cav Div at Boves. 2 Cav Divs came under Cav Corps.
a regt of 61 Div remained under 18 Div on new
rear line from Bertheaucourt past Gentelles
to Bois l'Abbe. 24 Div was on Apr 3 on this line
as its respble to garrison it. (also Fr. to S.)
By mng of Apr 4 17 Bde held this, 73 Bde in Bois l'Abbe
ready to count. it to N, 73 Bde in reserve in Bois de Gentelles.

58 Div was held in under III Corps on E side of offce of Mar 21,
had been retd by Fr on Oise + was army in Amiens.

The first 2 bus were lent to 18 Div + on 3/4 Apr.
6 London battal at V/Brd + 7 Lond at Boves.

9 AIB de had 35 in line. on night 2/3 33 sent to V/B.
in suppt. 34 + 36 near Cecchy employed in digging
switched to cover Gentelles. (only to E.)
Same as before.

By mng of 4 Apr. line was held by 2 Divs. 18 + 14.

16, 61, 1 + 2 Cav now withdrawn from XIX Corps.

By end of 1st of April 5 Army became 4 Army. 5 Army ceased to exist.

4 Apr 17. Last German effort apt 5 Army. (Now 13 + 4 B Army). 14 Divs into an 21 mile front from Vof Cantigny (4 m WNW of Montdidier) to Somme at Bouzencourt. It held 13 1/2 Divs. Brit 7 1/2.

Br XIX
Fr.
XXXVI
XXXXIX

G. obj in hills E of the Noye, to gain Ober a hill road ramp on Amiens - Paris rly, & high rd at Cauchy & V/B to see Amiens. Brit Gp, S & N:

- 48
- 228
- 79
- 25
- 54
- 14
- 2 Bas
- 53 Res
- 80 Res
- 6
- 5
- 14
- 52

Reserve
204
26
243
199
24 Res
9 Bas
1st

Is pushed back Fr 1-2 m. near Moreuil. Didnt push back IX. XIX Bict. advd 1-2 miles but didnt get high rd. Rainy night, misty morning. Rain fell during day & clogged rifles.

Fr 3 + 6 Amiens not att. Fr Army. G. bombt at 5 am & att 8 am. Pt Div of XXXVI (133) was driven back to Bois de l'Arriere Cour where, after Gp by 59 Div, it held on. (Att by 80 Res. + 53 Res Divs) agst 2 Divs of Cas Div. 2 Bas Div took Bois de Senecal but only held E edge. didnt take Rouvrel. G. 54 Div (advd thro 243 Div) took Moreuil wood & Castel but not Hailles & Thennes. 25 Div didnt take Rifle wood (29 Fr Div)

At night Fr line ran behind Cantigny, in front of Gouvaux & Bois de Monfival, thro Bois de l'Arriere Cour, in front of Rouvrel, along W edge of Bois de Senecal, S of Haille & Thennes & in front of Rifle wood & Hamel. At 6 pm. Gen Robillot of Fr II Cav. Corps took over 2 left divs of XXXVI Corps. (2 Divs of Cas. Div, & 29 Div) Bdy just N of Rouvrel.

Brit.
Brit. Div
Res 14
64
24
Gard
Reserve
18

G. progress in our zone set by att to be on 4th 5.15 am. bombt by G. heavy on fl & arty pointer 6.30 am G. inf advd. 18 Div. repulsed everywhere. 1. Gd Div. Div tried to adv. 3 times but caught by so heavy fire it didnt get beyond J.O.L. 14 Div didnt repulse it. 2289 Div N. of war piece broke into 2 of 8 Rifle Bde (41 Bde) Turned fl. of other Bde. They fell back 500 yds. 8 K.R.R. sent up to att. at Marcelan & Hamel Rd, but at 10 am whole of 1 Bde ret'd to W of Bois de Vaire. 4 G. Gd Div sent one rpt to follow fl. of 2289 Div & then turn N thro Bois Tailloux & B. d'Auroche while 2 others att'd in front. 500 yds Bucks LI was driven thro Hamel to rd W of Hamel. 9 Rifle Bde on ext. left had to retire

first flying back fl., then ret'd w. of Hamel where whole 42 Bde reformed. Bde stayed in Hamel & was capt'd but k. by inf. pers. Bde major hid & escaped at night. (Bdrfen 9 NB Forster, 42) 41 & 42 Bdes.

Gs also wkd S. & atd left of 35 Bn wh at 9.30 fell back to posn 1500' E of V/B. Retirement well covered. L of 7 Buffs sawy back too. One Coy of 6 Lond sent up from V/B. to ensure touch betw 7 Buffs & 35; 33 sent up from V/B to extend left of 35 & close gap betw 18 & 14 Divs.

Summary: 14 Div had to be driven back 1 1/2 m. & 18 Div w fl. entirely turned had to conform.

Meanwhile 43 Bde sent up from Hamel to high ground NE of V/B. Dug in w one bn on W edge of Bois de Vaire. Then, 9 Scot Rifles, sent one Coy to top of Bois de Vaire. It got 500' further E, but 41 Bde would not return & Coy had to fall back.

43 Bde was going to top & had actually begun when its coming on in Str. & it was consid advisable to ~~leave~~ retrace returning to former new line SW of Bois de Vaire.

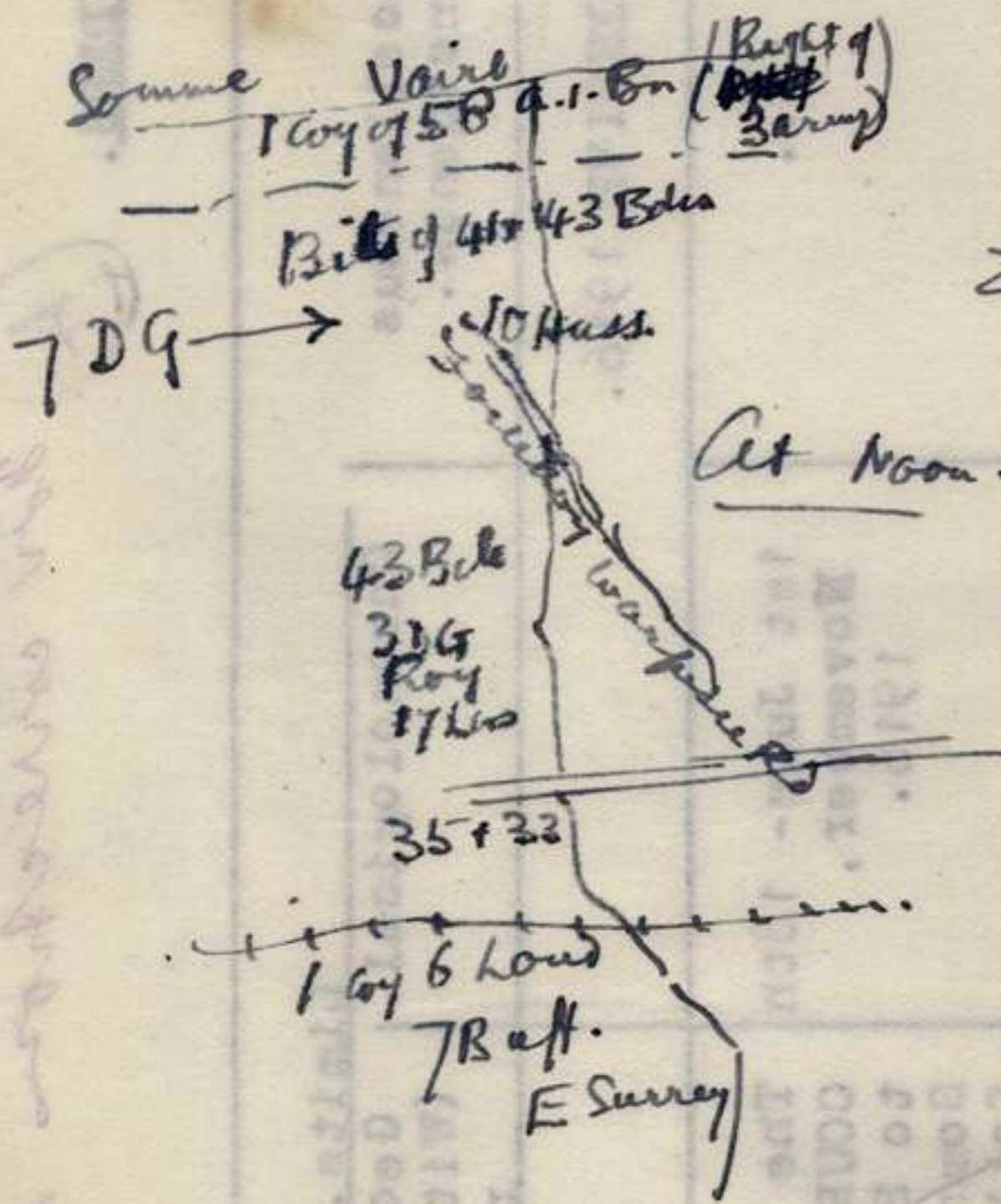
At 6.50 6 Cav Bde or'd to send its 3 regts 10 Huss. → 43 Bde
3090 Royals → V/B
10 Hussars arriv W of Hamel 9.30 am.
Cdr got E edge of Bois de Hamel.
So filled gap in inf. line on Vaire-V/B rd w 43 Bde on rt & pt of 41 on left.
Other 2 regts arriv N of V/B at 9.30 just in time to close gap betw. 43 Bde & 9 A-1 Bde.

All reserves of 14 Div thus used but XIX Corps or'd Compd Res (rest of 3 Cav Div) to send up 7 Bde to 1 mile N of V/B. to support 6 Cav Bde. It arriv at 11 am & sent 17 Lancers & 10 Hussars & 7 D G to top of 10 Hussars. Cav. Cav. Bde at Bois de Boves was ready to move but it went.

24 Div was or'd to occupy Res line at Gentelles & extend left to N, & 7 London (58 Div) at Boves was su it for this extension. At Noon. French at Hamard & rt of 18 had repulsed att. But from left Bdy of E Surrey, due W. of Maraccae, line bent back to rd from E end of V/B to Vaire.

N of Peronne Rd this was held for rest of day; for tried to adv. from Bois de Vaire & Hamel but some of 177 & 180 Bdes (16 Div. arty) bn to erect w open sights stopped this.

S. of Rd at 3pm shelling increased & at 4pm. 19 & 22 D G Divs atd. 55 Bde, hampered by mud, saw way & ret'd. 7 RW Kent (53 Bde) was turned on N by four lanes wood & fell back to Bois de Hamard & then to V/B-Bois de H. Rd. 8 B. Berkshire N of Bde H. also driven back to this rd, after a time, & 54 Bde also, to S. contin of same rd B. de H-H. (W end of Hamard). 53 & 54 held out here aft further atts. Further N, 55 Bde 2 fl. bus of 55 Bde returned to & across the V/B-Bois de H Rd. 35 and 13n was still in W, but now 35 found gap on rt side. For 2nd time it tried to fill gap. but cdnt, & fell back on V/B top. w rt of 33. L of 33 nr rd had Dm. 36 reas toed situ. 6 Lond fold in second line.



- 5 London put into gap on rt.
 7 Queens led by Brig Gen Wood joined in on rt.
 N. of rd by 33 Bn went forward again. Squ of 17 hrs galloped
 up & stopped S. adv on l of 33. ^a Can. motor m g bly sent
 up by 9 Corps div road wk apt 9 sep.
 A gap on rt of 33 was filled by 34. (first ord to W of V/S)
 6 London extended its rt & eventually got touch w
 8 R. Berks; 7 Queens were rel.
 11 R. Fus. ^(54 Bde) ^a but up to fill gap on rd of 8 R. Berks
 & got back w 7 R W Kent on rt, (w rel'd during night
 by 10 Essex).
 During night whole 55 Bde coll'd at Gentelles &
 53 Bde took over whole line betw 54 & 9 A1 Bdes.
 (incl'd 11 R. Fus w & 6 Lond).
 34 & 35 Bns adv at 1 am. Ap 5 in dark to old
 line of 35. (33 without cas., 34 had stiff fighting but both
 succeeded).

14 Div was repts to be not in contact of both line. Accordingly at
 5 pm XIX Corps ord ⁹⁰⁰ 3 Cas Div to take over from 14 Div -
 from Rd to Somme w 3 Cas Div, 15 A1 Bde (from 3rd
 Army) & any lps of 14 Div he wished to retain &
 m of 1 Cas. Div. He decided to retain 43 Bde,
 11 Kings (Pn) & 14 Inf Bn. 6 Cas Bde w alt'd lps of
 7 Cas Bde to hold from main rd to Foulloy-Warbusic Rd,
 & 15 Bde thence to Somme. 43 Bde rel'd by 6 Cas Bde
 & ~~the~~ dig line 1000x behind fl.
 58 came in & adv line ~~500~~ at 3 am 5th to 500x W of Bouzard.

At 12.45 pm. JHQ had info 3 Army H Q of XIX Corps had been
 pushed back & 5 Bde (2 Aust Div) due to arr. at Bussy les D.
 at 4 pm was to be made available to 4 Army if wanted.
 Meanwhile Comresp (VII Corps) had rec'd appeal from 4 Army
 for help & in response had ord that 2 res. bus of 15 A1 Bde
 in Bonny shid X Somme & 2 lps 4 Army.
 At 3.30 pm 3 Army by order of GHO put whole 5th Aust
 Div under 4 Army. Rest of 15 Aust Bde then ord to join. Bde
 Sol moved as soon as rel'd by Bde of 35 Div. ^{V/S}
 14 Bde arrived next day (Ap 5) & 8 Bde at ~~Cachy~~ ^{Vermon} during
 night - it was sent to Bois de Gentelles as res. for XIX Corps.
 (arr. 9 am 5 April).
 5 Bde reached Bussy in am & sent to Blangy Trouville
 where at 7.30 it was put under 14 Div to hold Reserve line.
 18 Bn took over this line N of Bois l'Abbe between
 24 & 14 Divs. 17 Bn in Bois l'Abbe.
 12 Eng. 4 Bde RFA, 47, 330 & 331 Bdes RFA had to retire from near
 V/S to near Bois d'Aqueenne & Cachy-Foulloy Rd.
 250 Bde RFA maintained positn near Gentelles. 86 Bde RFA
 from 1 m. E of Cachy withdrew to Gentelles. On 14 Div front
 fisherby 9 16 & 39 Divs didn't retire & sent up some puns to crest.

8

H. Arty had to withdraw - 21 Bde ^{RGA} from S of Fouillelog
 + 23 Bde RGA (advd bdes) W of U/B. That night
 21, 22, 68, 23 Bdes ^{RGA} ordered back or N. of Somme.
 76 Bde RGA to stay where it was.
 21 - to go N of Somme.
 22 + 68 " " W of Avrel.
 23 to main rd S of Bl. Fromville. If there was further
 retirement only 2 bdes of HA had still to cross rivers.

Let at reached obsvtn position but so close as to give
 much anxiety to allied command. Also if once
 reached high ground a retirement over Avrel - Somme
~~was~~ would be difficult.

But for rfts still coming up; + 4 fresh another
 bdes had arrived or were arriving in Brit sector.

Apr. 5. ~~G. attack~~

1 Fr. Army C/atts. 45 Div
 127 + 166 Divs
 17 Div + 2 Divs + 5 Divs.

To be launched quickly - ^{each} as soon as poss., without
 waiting for others.

IX Corps first at 11.30 to 166 Div, didn't keep
 much but retook Bois de l'Arriere Cour.
 2pm 127 Div, ^{only} slight gain in end

VI Corps 45 Div 3pm. no percent gain
 17 Div. 4.30pm. + 150 of 2 Divs. Cas. Div
 gained some ground.
 Sp gain a little ground at Hanjard by
 Small attack, but Fr + Brit of a reputation at
 French claims to moral effect of it.

On Evg. of Apr 5 G. Command ord^r to hold ground won.
 More Fr rfts arrivg. 65 Div to XXXVI Corps.
 + 60, 64 Divs + 4 + 5 Cas Divs now
 in Laruyres. Brit rly still advg. Fr.

Comments by Australian officers

draft of
on British history.

1931.

COMMENTS BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL L.J. MORSHEAD, 33rd Battalion.

Counter-attack by 33rd Battalion, A.I.F., and 12th Lancers,
30th March 1918.

Despite the 9th Brigade report the only instructions given me, and these were verbal, were to capture a line from the copse immediately south of the first C in Marcelcave to Aubercourt, to capture Aubercourt then held by the enemy, and if possible to extend to Demuin. When I asked for support the 34th Battalion was made available to be used only if absolutely necessary. No artillery support was available. While giving verbal orders to my company commanders at Bois D'Aquenne where the battalion was in readiness, Captain Barron of the 12th Lancers reported to me and stated that he was to be Liaison officer. This was the first and only intimation I had that the Lancers were to co-operate with us. Nothing definite could be told me of the disposition of the troops holding the line. This lack of orders and of information aptly illustrates the state of affairs then existing.

Although the force engaged was a small one the attack was really important from the point of view of morale. It was a particularly fine effort of which we are very proud, and I do think that it merits a much fuller story than is given in the draft.

The approach march was an unusual sight. There we were, headed by the 12th Lancers mounted, our advance guard, marching across the open, in daylight and in full view of the enemy - a lone body going into the blue, and meeting and passing large numbers of stragglers gave us small prospects of support. Yet we attacked as if everything was favourable.

The situation map for 30th March seems to me to show our line east of Lancer Wood too advanced. I realised though that the time was dawn, so that likely there was some falling back between that time and when we made our attack. The enemy however made no advance during that day. Again the situation map of 31st March appears incorrect to me. We were further ahead than is shown. The 33rd was held up 200 yards east of Lancer Wood but later at night with the 34th we advanced a further 250 yards. A map was attached to my report and I suggest that this be referred to.

We were relieved by the 10th Essex and the Royal West Surreys on the morning of 31st March, and during that day they lost the ground taken by us.

The British account rather suggests that the 34th was employed at the outset. This was not so, as the first company called on did not move to reinforce our left flank until 8 p.m. The remaining three companies were employed three to four hours later.

An important point is that we were well forward of any one else, and were thus uncomfortably isolated. On our left the nearest troops were 600^x in rear and to the left, and the gap on our right was even greater - from memory, 1,000 yards.

We were much impressed with the Lancers and I would refer you to the remarks in my report, which will also give you the necessary data for a fuller story of the action. It is interesting to see that the name Lancer Wood given by us out of compliment to the 12th Lancers has been retained. Our maps showed this wood unnamed, but in later maps it was shown as Bois de Morguemont.

COMMENTS BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL L.J. MORSHEAD, 33rd Battalion.

Villers-Bretonneux, 4th April 1918.

If information were available that the enemy intended attacking on 4th April, it is somewhat surprising that this was not passed on to the line units. We certainly were in blissful ignorance.

The interesting point about the bombardment was the sparing of the chateaux along the Villers-Bretonneux--Amiens road, the idea doubtless being to have good accommodation for themselves when they occupied the town, as the chateaux would have been marked on their maps. Villers-Bretonneux was more severely bombarded than the front line.

The 14th Division fell back in the morning and the 18th Division in the afternoon. Any retrograde movement by the 9th Australian Brigade was forced on them as a result of these two considerable ~~movements~~ retirements.

The cavalry, to whom greater credit than is given is due, took over the area vacated by the 14th Division with remarkable promptness. The British ~~impression~~ report gives an impression of glossing over the 14th and 18th Divisions' withdrawals, and the credit ~~merited~~ merited by the cavalry is consequently belittled. These withdrawals were much more rapid and much less orderly than described.

In my opinion the 9th Brigade's report is very fair and gives the true story.

COMMENTS BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL H.A. Goddard, then commanding 35 Bn.

Fifth Army, 30th March 1918.

Page 20. - XIX Corps orders. The actual orders received by 35th Battalion were to relieve 61st Division, which went into reserve at Gentilles.

Page 20 - dispositions north of the Luce on morning of 31st. The 33rd and 34th Battalions were relieved by the 18th Division. See attached copy of 9th Aust. Infantry Brigade order, which was received by 35th Battalion about 10 p.m. 30 March.

Fourth Army, 4th April 1918.

Page 17, lines 12 to end of paragraph. The subaltern in charge of right flank company finding this flank open and the enemy advancing on it detached part of his company in an endeavour to hold them. Unfortunately some men of the 35th mixed with some of the 33rd seeing these move to their rear took it for a retirement and came back on the town. These with the exception of a few ~~men~~ were rallied and went forward again. The 35th Battalion less 291 battle casualties remained in line throughout operations until relieved on 5 April.

Page 20, 4th line - should read 33rd, 34th, and 35th Battalions.

Page 18, 2nd paragraph, line 2 - after "33rd Battalion" read "35th Battalion".

Cavalry. I am sure every Australian engaged in these operations would appreciate special mention being made of the very fine work of the British cavalry. Their opportune arrival on our left on the morning of the 4th relieved us of a great anxiety regarding that flank.

6th Londons. The eagerness to co-operate from all ranks and particularly their C.O. was most helpful. Their exchange of clean Lewis guns for our mud-choked weapons was greatly appreciated.

FOURTH ARMY, 6th to 23rd April 1918.

Comment by Major W.J.R. Scott, 20th Battalion.

Page 2, line 4. -"43 prisoners". Was not the number captured nearer 60? Two machine-guns were also taken.

Comments by Captain P.V. Storkey, V.C., 19th Battalion.

Page 2. As regards the figures dealing with prisoners, I am speaking entirely from an unaided recollection, but I fancy the approximate strength of the German party was computed to be between 80 and 100. Of these it was computed that about 30 were killed or wounded, and the prisoners taken were 3 officers, 50 men, and a machine-gun. This comment affects the figure "43" in the fourth line, and may in consequence necessarily affect the figure "56" in the fourth line from the bottom of the same page.

Before the "hop-over" on 7th April the official information received was to the effect that the "wood" was lightly held, and that when we reached the objective at the eastern edge of the wood we would find a clear field of fire of about 400 yards. Instead of this latter, the saplings were chest high. The "wood" was anything but lightly held, and the space between the eastern edge ran down hill in a gentle slope to the foot of a spur along which the Hun was well entrenched.

? beyond

COMMENTS BY LIEUTENANT-GENERAL SIR TALBOT HOBBS, 5th Australian Division.

So far as my memory serves me and with the aid of the copy of the war diary and other documents in my possession, the events as recorded are correct, at all events as far as the troops under my command at the time are concerned, with the following exceptions in connection with the events dealing with the period 24th-27th April 1918 -

Page 19, line 9.- "The 5th Australian Division had at that time only the two reserve battalions of the 14th Australian Brigade immediately available." As a matter of fact in addition to the two battalions mentioned I had at my disposal the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade in reserve near Aubigny. They had been warned by Div HQ very early in the morning of the 24th that an attack by the enemy was very probable and to hold themselves in readiness to move at very short notice. As soon as I became aware of the seriousness of the attack I got in touch with 8th Div. H.Q. and offered to assist in restoring the situation - that would have been before 10 a.m. on the morning of the 24th. After that I repeated my readiness and desire to render assistance, but understood from 8th D.H.Q. that the division was quite able to deal with the situation themselves.

Brigadier-General H.E. Elliott received his orders and had made his plans so far as it was possible very early in the day, and was very upset because he was not allowed to take part in the fighting.

No mention is made of the enemy attack against the 8th Aust. Infantry Brigade north of the Somme in J.35.C (on the left of the 14th Brigade). At 4.33 a.m. the enemy, three to four hundred strong, attacked the right post of the 29th Battalion. The attack was repulsed by machine-gun and rifle fire, the enemy re-formed and repeated the attempt, but was so badly repulsed that he withdrew in disorder - his casualties were known to be very ~~heavy~~ severe. No doubt this attack was intended for a diversion.

On page 27, line 4, "200 prisoners". ~~Nearly 400~~ Nearly 400 were taken, according to my records.

COMMENTS BY BRIGADIER-GENERAL J.C. STEWART, 14th Aust. Infantry Brigade.

Fourth Army, 24th to 27th April 1918.

Page 10. It is stated that the 2nd Royal Berkshire and the 2nd Rifle Brigade formed a defensive flank on the right of the 14th Brigade. Whilst I cannot say that such is not the case, I suggest that further inquiry be made to establish the accuracy of the statement. My diary and all reports show that there was no line in front of that of the 54th and 56th Battalions, but that stragglers of the two forward companies and of the 2nd Royal Berkshire were incorporated in this line. The line established remained until the counter-attack by the 15th Australian Brigade on night of 24/25 April.

FOURTH ARMY, 24th to 27th April 1918.

Comments by Major-General Hon. Sir T.W. Glasgow.

Page 19, line 11. "Major-General Heneker did not consider.....
and was in accordance with the views of Fourth Army".

This is quite wrong. After the details of the counter-attack had been finalised, I asked General Heneker what time he desired the attack to take place. He replied - "8 o'clock". I pressed for 10.30 p.m., as it would not be dark until that time. After considerable discussion between General Heneker and myself, and General Heneker and the corps commander over the telephone, the time was finally fixed at 10 p.m. Colonel Armitage, the G.S.O.1, and Major Wicke, G.S.O. 2, of 8th Division were present during the discussion and will be able to give the facts as to what happened.

It does not appear to me that the 15th Aust. Brigade has been given the credit due to it for the part it played in the mopping-up of Villers-Bretonneux. Before General Elliott issued his orders I discussed with him the disposition of his attacking troops. The supporting battalion was placed behind the right front-line battalion not only because he considered they would be more useful there in the attack, but because, when he reached his objective, they would be more readily available to mop up Villers-Bretonneux from the north-east. We both considered the enemy would more easily surrender if he found our troops cutting off his only avenue of retirement.

Fourth Army, 24th to 27th April 1918.

Pages 2 & 3. Vide last paragraph of the German plan of attack which states:-

"The attack, as far as the British front is concerned, fell almost entirely on the III Corps. Only the right company of the Australian Corps was involved."

The 5th Australian Division account of the German attack states that enemy artillery preparation commenced 3.45 a.m. on 24.4.18 with heavy shelling of front held by division. (See also III Corps report on page 6 of draft history) Enemy heavily attacked 54th Australian Battalion, but did not penetrate. Main sector of attack from Hengard on south to right half of 14th Aust. Inf. Brigade on north. Also north of River Somme heavy infantry attack made on 8th Aust. Infantry Brigade front (position held by 29th Battalion), but was repulsed with severe losses. 5th Aust. Division state this was evidently a "diversion" to main operation.

Page 4. Dispositions of 8th Division: 23rd Brigade on right and 25th Brigade on left.

"25th Brigade had two battalions in front line and one (2nd/Royal Berkshire) north of village as counter-attack battalion."

5th Aust. Division account states that when 25th Inf. Bde took over sector on 20 April (approx. 1 mile of 5 Aust. Div. front immediately east of Villers-Bretonneux) the Australian battalion maintained by reserve brigade as counter-attack battalion was relieved by a single platoon. It states that commander of 15th Aust. Brigade (Elliott) drew attention to grave danger of divisions right flank if action not taken to maintain stronger force for counter-attack, but was informed that III Corps was aware of dispositions of 25 Inf Bde and had approved.

The situation map (sketch referred to in first sentence of "Dispositions of III Corps on morning 24th April" - page 3 of draft) shows the 25th Infantry Brigade counter-attack battalion (2/Berks) with two companies astride the Aubigny--Villers-Bretonneux road just north-west of the latter town, and two ~~companies~~ forward companies on north-east corner of town. 5th Aust. Div account may therefore be correct in the statement that only one platoon relieved their battalion, as the battalion mentioned in previous sentence was the counter-attack unit for 25th Brigade. The contention of 5th Aust. Div. (and 15th Aust. Infantry Brigade) was that a separate battalion from reserve brigade was essential. The battalions of the 8th Division reserve brigade (24th), vide sketch and page 4 of draft history, are not disposed for counter-attack from north-west. It must be remembered that brigades of 8th Division contained three battalions only, whilst Australian brigades still retained four battalions at this date.

Page 11. "Only extreme right company of 14th Australian Infantry Brigade had been attacked by infantry." (See previous comment - No. 1 - as to 5th Div. account.)

"When 2/Rifle Brigade formed a defensive flank the 54 Aust. Bn brought up its support company to fill any gap between the two battalions and for additional security 56 Aust. Bn placed two companies across road behind 2/Berks."

The 5th Australian Division account states regarding attack on 14th Infantry Brigade front that the line did not yield; but that the support companies of 54th Bn were placed along right flank boundary, facing south, and the reserve battalion (56th) soon afterwards prolonged this defensive flank westwards. No mention is made of 2/Royal Berkshire in front of this line.

Page 19. Regarding instructions by III Corps to 8th Division for arrangements for a combined counter-attack by 8th Division and 5th Australian Division, the statement which reads -

"Major-General Heneker did not consider that an attack across the open in daylight would succeed and suggested to III Corps an organised counter-attack by moonlight"

does not state whether this proposal was made after G.O.C's 8th and 5th Aust. Divisions had discussed the arrangements to be made.

Page 20. It is stated that - "At 3.10 p.m. 5th Australian Division was placed under III Corps."

5th Aust. Div. history in referring to these arrangements also mentions that offers to provide troops for the counter-attack already planned in advance had been unofficially made and the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade had been standing by in readiness since early morning. 5th Aust. Division were informed at 9.55 a.m. by III Corps that no external action was required at present and no definite information could be obtained from 8th Division as to proposed action to restore situation. The history further states: "At 3.10 p.m. definite action was finally announced when 5th Aust. Division was placed under command G.O.C. III Corps who told General Hobbs that he required a brigade for counter-attack."

"The G.O.C. III Corps consulted General Hobbs regarding best means of recovering the position. He at once suggested a converging attack by the 15th Brigade from the north-west and by another brigade from the south-west to meet at a point east of Villers-Bretonneux and thus 'pinch out' the village."

"The G.O.C. III Corps agreed, and the plan was forthwith adopted."

These comments have been made for several reasons, as follows:-

On page 19 it is stated - "This suggestion (i.e., suggestion by Maj.-General Heneker) was approved by III Corps and was in accordance with the views of Fourth Army."

Also to show that the plans for the counter-attack prepared by 5th Aust. Division (and 15th Infantry Brigade) prior to receipt of official orders by III Corps and 8th Division for the counter-attack might have been in a sense responsible for the difference in the objectives laid down in III Corps orders and those issued by 15th Infantry Brigade (See footnote 1 on page 25 of draft history).

Pages 21-22. The statement that it was a full moon on night 24/25 April and that although the moon was partly obscured by clouds the light was good enough for troops to find their way across country fairly well is correct, but misleading. The moon was so obscured between 8 p.m. and 10 p.m. that troops moving to forming-up places on the south edge of the woods were in absolute darkness, and it was difficult for units to maintain connection. After zero, and clearing the Cacy Switch, considerable aid to direction was obtained by glare from burning buildings in Villers-Bretonneux, but it is desired to emphasize that the moonlight was only fitful and the periodic gleams of light only served to accentuate the more frequent periods of darkness.

(For information of historian, it is mentioned that the H.Q. personnel of 52nd Battalion had been "dumped" within 50 yards of the tape line with a runner to maintain connection between C.O. and the Signal Officer who was in charge of H.Q. personnel. C.O's 51 and 52 Battalions had proposed to each advance on the inner flanks of their respective battalions and about 40 yards in

rear of their front line companies. C.O. 51 Bn went to his left flank company, which had been delayed in getting on to tape line, and sent word to C.O. 52 Bn by his adjutant that he would be a little late in starting (it had been mutually agreed to delay advance till 10.10 p.m. to ensure all moving together). Adjutant of 51 Bn could not locate C.O. and adjutant of 52nd - mainly owing to darkness. Also the 52 Bn H.Q. runner - not a recruit or reinforcement - was quite unable to locate the H.Q. personnel to give them the message to advance. C.O. and adjutant 52 Bn and the adjutant 51 Bn advanced together to the dip or "donga" which had been selected by the brigadier for the joint H.Q. of attacking battalions of 13th Brigade, but, as related in official diaries, this was a spot brightly illumined by Bosch flares and full of gas, so they dropped back to Cachy Switch area where they were later found by C.O. 51 Bn and the "lost" personnel of 52 Bn HQ. So much for the statement that "it was good enough light for the troops to find their way across country fairly well.")

173rd and 54th Brigades.

Page 22. The following remarks on the composition of the brigade which attacked on the south or right flank of 13th Aust. Infantry Brigade might appear to be of an "If" or "what-might-have-been" nature, but it is hoped that such criticism is not out of place and that one is permitted to comment on the wisdom of the decision to utilise a brigade which had only one of its three battalions available.

It is practically certain that better results would have been achieved on the Hangard-MonumentWood sector had a complete brigade been detailed to attack on the right flank of the centre (13th Australian) brigade. If the commander of the right flank brigade had been at Glisy (H.Q., 8th Division) with his battalion commanders - as was done in the case of 13th Aust. Brigade - when 8th Division operation order for the attack was issued it would have been practicable to arrange for effective liaison with flank units.

The 54th Brigade (18th Division) had been at disposal of 58th Division since 8.35 a.m. that day and had one battalion in Cachy Switch, one near Bois de Gentelles, and the third south of Cachy. The statement that only one battalion was available seems open to question. The battalion in Cachy Switch (6/N.Hants) was not in front line - the sketch (No. 50) shows in support facing S.E. - and the reserve battalion (at Bois de Gentelles) was within easy distance of the assembly area east of Cachy. All three battalions had facilities for reconnaissance such as had not been available for battalions of 13th Aust. Infantry Brigade.

Instead, however, of a complete brigade of battalions accustomed to work together, a ~~composite~~ composite brigade⁺ was employed, and it is submitted that cohesion in the attack was sacrificed before the attack commenced.

+	{ 7 Belfords	54 Inf Bde.)	18 Div.
	{ 7 R.W.Kents	53 Inf Bde.)	
	{ 9 London	174 Inf Bde.)	58 Div.
		temply under 173 Bde. }	

If, however, the fact that 54th Infantry Brigade was too closely in touch with front line units to permit of its being employed as a complete brigade, there seems to have been no reason for not utilising 53 Inf Brigade, which is recorded (page 16 of draft history) as being available near Glisy and Blangy-Tronville.

The question of liaison prior to the attack and for arrangements for its continuance during and after the attack is so important that it is desired to stress this point even though it may not be of value for the present comments.

With the limited time available after plan for counter-attack of III Corps had been notified to divisions, it is obvious that detailed arrangements for co-operation between commanding officers of the attacking battalions were practically impossible. (Maps issued with 13th Aust. Infantry Brigade order for counter-attack indicated positions where liaison would be established, but this proved to be a "paper transaction". The flank platoons of 54 Brigade (7 Bedford) and 13th Aust. Infantry Brigade (52 Bn.) only met for a brief moment at the assembly area at zero hour; no discussion between C.O's of battalions was practicable.)

The lack of effective co-operation was very evident at the conclusion of the counter-attack; battalions had no information of positions reached by flank units, and huge gaps (mentioned on pp. 22 and 23 of draft history) existed between units of right brigade.

Page 23. The ~~message~~ reference to message received from enemy by 7/Bedfords demanding the surrender of front line of battalion is also dealt with in 13th Aust. Infantry Brigade report of the Villers-Bretonneux fighting of 24/25 April, and will be mentioned later - see comments re page 25.

Page 23. It is considered that the preliminary difficulties of the 13th Australian Infantry Brigade might have been mentioned by the historian. He has referred to the arrival of three battalions at Bois de Blangy at 4 p.m. (see p. 17), and the next reference is under this account of the attack, when it is said "the advance began at 10.10 p.m."

Verbal orders for the counter-attack were issued by Brigade commander to battalion commanders between 6 and 7 p.m. at Glisy; the written orders and marked maps being made available at 7 p.m. Barely half an hour was available for battalions to issue orders before the advance of approximately 2,500 yards to assembly position commenced at 8 p.m. The start line for the attack had to be withdrawn 300 yards from the position originally intended on account of enemy opposition from Bois d'Aquenne. Despite this the majority of the brigade was deployed ready for the attack before ~~zero~~ zero and the delay of 10 minutes was only due to casualties in left company. At 10 p.m. the 7/Bedfords on right flank of 52nd Battalion reported they were ready to advance, but their right flank unit (R.W. Kents) was not then in position.

The approximate distance from start line to objective for 13th Australian Brigade averaged from 3,000 to 4,000 yards.

The last sentence on page 23 disposes briefly of action of 52nd Battalion in the attack. There is no doubt that 51st Battalion had a more difficult task, but the opposition encountered by 52nd was rather more than stated in this sentence. The enemy outpost-line encountered just after clearing Cachy Switch was easily disposed of, but intense machine-gun fire from the front and right flank was experienced. The fact that advance was not so delayed as that of 51st Battalion, which encountered enemy posts and fire from southern edge of woods, did not mean that no opposition was met with, but the formation of the country permitted effective action to be taken to deal with enemy posts.

The 52nd Battalion advanced further than the position it finally consolidated - the 2/Bedfords on right flank, however, were in difficulties and had withdrawn, and it was essential for 52nd

Battalion to maintain connection with this unit. The 52nd Battalion left flank - which, had the final objective been obtained, would have been considerably further east than the right flank (due to the original front-line salient east of Monument Wood) - had actually reached Monument Wood, and one platoon of the left company under Lieutenant Henderson entered the wood. Owing to the left flank being then unsupported by 51st Battalion, the position had to be consolidated approximately on the line of the Bois de Hangard--Villers-Bretonneux road.

Page 27. The delay in receipt of orders by 2nd Northamptonshire for its co-operation with 13th Australian Brigade seems difficult to understand. Although the 8th Division Operation order (No. 287 of 24th April) is timed as issued 8 p.m., details of the plan for counter-attack were available to brigades before this hour, and this regiment was within half-a-mile of its brigade which was in touch with 8th Division by telephone.

(Personal note for Historian. The confusion existing at the joint H.Q. of 23rd and 24th Infantry Brigades was probably the cause of late receipt of orders by the 2/Northants. I had seen the C.O. (Lt-Colonel Latham) about 4 or 5 p.m. - before we knew that a counter-attack was to take place. Although C.O.'s 13th Australian Brigade were informed before 7 p.m. at 8 Div. H.Q. that the 2/Northants were to "mop up" we saw no one from that unit HQ until early hours of 25th April, when Major Forster reported to our H.Q. and asked us to get a message to his brigade: he told us his C.O. was missing - believed killed. As the 2/Northants reported that they could get no closer to Villers-Bretonneux than their then location - on left flank rear of our Brigade front line - we agreed to Forster's proposal that he should form a "defensive flank", although we did not strictly feel the necessity for such protection.)

Page 32. Regarding operations of 25th April. Although a comparatively small incident, it is thought that the following account of the action of three or four "Whippet" tanks during the afternoon of 25 April, to the S.E. of Cachy, might be included in the Historian's account of operations on 25 April.

As the affair of the whippet tanks occurred mainly on the sector south of 8th Division boundary (i.e., the front presumably held by 58th Division), no mention was made in Australian war-diaries and reports other than in the special report submitted by G.O.C., 13th Australian Infantry Brigade direct to H.Q. Fourth Army at the request by Fourth Army for particulars regarding a "flag of truce" incident.

In this report it was stated that between 8 and 9 a.m. on 25 April movements of troops had been visible on the brigade's right flank front, but that it was not possible to distinguish whether these were enemy or troops of 58th Division. The troops were approximately in area between N.E. corner of Hangard Wood and moving towards Cachy. This had been reported to 13th Aust. Infantry Brigade HQ by telephone to enable inquiry to be made from H.Q. of 54th Brigade on the right. It appeared to C.O.'s 51st and 52nd Battalions that enemy troops had advanced into the area supposed to be occupied by troops of 54th Brigade and were being permitted to dig in without opposition, and if this was so it was a distinct menace to our flank. (The messages received from the German bearers of messages to surrender rather confirmed this belief.)

Some hours later - during the afternoon of 25th - when the C.O. 52nd Battalion was discussing with C.O. ~~51st Battalion~~ 50th Battalion in his trench in Cachy Switch the plan for 50th to move forward between Monument Wood and Villers-Bretonneux, they had the joy of seeing three or four Whippet tanks come up from somewhere west of Cachy, the leading tank trailing dead and live telephone lines which it had, like Autolycus, picked up in its travels. The young officer in charge asked for and was given

direction of the reported enemy. He promptly wheeled his tank half right or S.E. and made direct for the trench followed by rest of detachment. In less than 15 minutes the "reconnaissance in force" was over, and the enemy had fallen back in very quick time. It was not only the joy of seeing the enemy turned out which pleased us, but the satisfaction of proof of correctness of our morning reports that enemy was in a certain area in which he was not supposed to be, and which had been denied by the brigade responsible for that sector.

In the above statement of action on 25th April, vide page 32 of history, it will be seen that reference is made to a flag of truce. This it is thought connects with the Historian's statement on page 23, that an enemy message was received by 7/Bedfords summoning their front line to surrender.

The flag of truce carried by two gunners came to H.Q. of 51st and 52nd Battalions in a roundabout way. At an inquiry and court-martial held by Fourth Army early in May 1918, it was established that two Germans had reached a trench occupied by men of 7/Bedfords and demanded surrender of front line. A subaltern officer of this regiment - apparently the only officer left in forward area - dispatched the two Germans in charge of an N.C.O. with instructions to proceed to unit H.Q.

The party did not reach the destination intended, but the next news was when two Germans, blindfolded and carrying a small white flag, stumbled into a trench occupied by 2/Northants on extreme left flank of 13th Australian Brigade; an officer of 2/Northants brought them to Australian battalions headquarters - where the C.O. Northants was also - and after interrogation by C.O. 52nd Battalion the Germans were sent to 24th Infantry Bde H.Q. A statement made by these Germans, when delivering their commanders verbal invitation or demand for surrender, was that the Germans were in superior force and surrounded the English on three sides. This statement rather confirmed doubts held at Australian battalions H.Q. as to whether 54th Brigade units were not considerably further short of their objectives than was reported, and whether, apart from a series of posts occupied by 7th Bedfords which formed a defensive right flank to 13th Australian Brigade, there was much to prevent the enemy from reoccupying the ground he had gained on 24th April between Hangard and Cachy.

A further written demand for surrender reached the Australian battalions H.Q. about 10 a.m., but the bearer of the chit was despatched to the rear and rejoiced in the fact that he had been made a prisoner.

Page 30, lines 1 and 2. - "left flank exposed to heavy enfilade fire..."

Right flank was also exposed to heavy machine-gun fire from ~~xxx~~ south-east and as soon as movement ceased in the advance fire from B. de Monument was very heavy.

COMMENTS BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL A.G. SALISBURY, 50th Battalion, A.I.F.

Fourth Army, 24th to 27th April 1918.

Page 23. On the left of the 54th Brigade.

On the morning of the 25th April the right flank of the 13th Australian Brigade was exposed to German rifle-fire from the ground in the gap which occurred between the 7/Bedfords and the Royal West Kents on the night of the 24th. The Germans were close enough for us to distinguish their steel helmets and top boots, and they were digging in. A defensive flank was formed by 50th Battalion headquarters, some men of the 2/Devons, and two Vickers guns of the 13th Aust. Machine Gun Company (these were 2 of 8 guns under Lieutenant W.M.B. Cory "standing by" for brigade orders, but I requested him to fire on the German infantry provided he also was satisfied that they were Germans, which he did). An English artillery subaltern with two 18-pounders which had been placed well forward for anti-tank work also fired shrapnel on these Germans.

The reports concerning German infantry on this ground were rather doubted by the higher formations, and on the afternoon of 25th three light tanks were sent out to reconnoitre and were received by heavy rifle-fire from the enemy. The Germans were driven off this ground by the Moroccan Div. on the morning of 26th April.

Pages 23 & 24. 13th Australian Brigade.

The 51st and 50th Battalions forming up for the counter-attack on the night of 24th April N.N.E. of Cachy, near the Cachy-Fouilly road, were heavily enfiladed by German machine-gun fire from the Bois d'Aquenne, these guns firing tracer bullets in a proportion of about 1 in 10, and even after the 51st had gone forward the 50th advancing in support after it was fired into heavily all the way along the edge of the wood. The casualties for the night could be obtained from the records. They were approximately - 51st Battalion, 300; 50th Battalion, 250; 52nd Battalion, 200.

COMMENTS BY CAPTAIN H.R. GOLIAN (then Brigade Major, 15th Australian Infantry Brigade.)

Fourth Army, 24th to 27th April 1918.

I do not think that the historian has made sufficient use of the fact that, during the counter-attack by the 15th A.I. Brigade, the men came into hand to hand conflict with the enemy and did remarkably effective work with the bayonet. We were told at the time that this was one of the most brilliant expositions of bayonet work during the war, but you can take that statement for what it is worth. I, of course, realise that participants in an action such as this are prone to regard their own part as the most important. However, the fact that the bayonet was used should, I think, be recorded. Further details can, of course, be obtained in the war diaries of the 15th Infantry Brigade.

The historian is correct in saying that the 15th Brigade were late in commencing to attack from the staff line. The attack was to have commenced at 10 p.m., but the assembly of the 15th Brigade was considerably delayed by gas, which was put over by the enemy, and lay in the low country in which the 15th Brigade units were assembling. The 13th Brigade, south of the Amiens--Villers-Bretonneux road, attacked approximately as ordered, and thus came in for the full attention of the enemy occupying the township. They were so occupied when the 15th Brigade attacked on the northern side, with the result that their opposition was somewhat lighter than would otherwise have been the case (see page 24).

Page 19. - "Major-General Henneker did not consider that an attack across the open in daylight would succeed." ~~Major-General Henneker~~ General Elliott was very keen on this and issued preliminary orders to his battalions to be ready to undertake this action at short notice. Copies of the orders were sent to division, and Gen. Elliott claimed afterwards that it was his idea which was taken by III Corps and carried out as a night operation.

I think that insufficient mention is given to the part that Australians played in the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux. I realise of course that here again the individual viewpoint comes forward, and that in a general description of operations all units must be mentioned. Units are mentioned in the official historian's account which we never heard of or saw during the operation, though of course they may have been there and contributing their part to the general result.

I am attaching hereto a series of maps which were prepared soon after the operations.

COMMENTS BY LIEUTENANT-COLONEL J.J. SCANLAN, 59th Battalion, A.I.F.

Fourth Army, 24th to 27th April 1918.

In reviewing the events described in this draft it should be noted that when the Villers-Bretonneux sector was taken over by the III Corps from the Australian Corps the 59th Battalion, then in support in Aubigny Line, was relieved by one platoon of 22nd D.L.I. I refused to hand over such an important position to so weak a force, and by telephone reported the situation to B.G.C. 15th A.I. Brigade, who approved my action and who made protest to 8th Division. However I was ordered to hand over.

Subsequent events on April 24 showed that a battalion available at that point would no doubt have changed the situation considerably. It would appear to me that this incident should be published as one having considerable bearing on the action of 24/25 April. The 22nd D.L.I. are not detailed in disposition of 8th Division, pages 3 and 4, though sketch 49 bears out my statement.

Page 23 - the reference to objectives. I attended a conference about 5.30 p.m. at brigade headquarters, Blangy Tronville. There were present General Glasgow, General Elliott, and C.O's 57, 58, 59, and 60 Bns. We received verbal orders and starting time. Only by using "private" cars left by French inhabitants was it possible for unit commanders to make Blangy and return before nightfall to their commands.

Advance from the Somme embankment was through the Aubigny Line and the heavy wiring caused considerable delay, for though the moon was up it was heavily screened by clouds. We did reach the objective as given us verbally at brigade ~~headquarters~~ conference.

Pages 34-5. It is difficult to reconcile this with an incident which occurred after daybreak. A party of 20 Germans, unarmed and drawing a light cart, emerged from the village to draw rations at Warfusee Abancourt. This party was captured by 59th Battalion post at Hamel-Warfusee cross-roads. These Germans were unaware of the presence of British troops!

An incident which occurred on April 24 about 10 a.m.: - An English field battery galloped out of the fog and came into action about 20 yards from the position of 59 and 60 Battalions, on the Somme embankment. Visibility was about 200^x. The O.C. Battery had no information for us; he had retired about 2,500^x and was preparing again to open fire. I had previously sent two officer patrols forward to obtain information of the situation. It was with great difficulty and only after definite threats by C.O. 60th and myself that this officer was dissuaded from firing into what we knew would be 14th A.I. Brigade troops as well as other British troops.

It seems to me that personal narrative should accompany these histories if the subject matter contained therein is to be of practical value to students of military history. Generally the account of events in so far as 59th and 60th Battalions were concerned is true and correct.

A prisoner of the 3rd Bavarian Ersatz Infantry Regiment was brought back yesterday (21/4/18) by a private of the 56th Battalion under rather peculiar circumstances. A report on the interrogation of the prisoner is attached.

The Australian private concerned is a signaller attached to Battalion H.Q. He is 39 years of age, and in civilian life had been 3 years in the mercantile marine service and 5 years in the U.S. Marine Corps. He described himself as being of a nervous temperament. The story he told is given below, approximately in his own words. The essential details of it have been confirmed.

"I only came up from the Nucleus on the evening of the 19th. Last night (20th) we were relieved. I left the party I was with and went back for a souvenir (a bit of chalk I had been carving) which I had forgotten. Coming away again I missed the party and must have turned left instead of right in the village. At any rate I got on a road and went forward until I struck some Tommies who were guarding the road (Apparently the road in P.31.c. and d.). The men belonged to *THE SHERWOOD FORESTERS* I asked the Tommies to let me go through, and said I might not come back but I wanted to get somebody as a "souvenir". I didn't tell them, but really I knew that prisoners were valuable at present because the Boche was going to attack on the 21st, and this was the night of the 20th you see. I went on and kept to the road on the right hand side. Then I noticed a working party on the left of the road in a hole. At least I thought they might be a working party, or it might be a machine gun posse. I could only make out a few. I let out a yell and charged. The Germans yelled too and more came up. I ordered them back into their dugout as I only wanted one. I don't know what language I used, it must have been English I suppose, but I was excited at the time and may be there was a little French mixed up with it. (The question of language caused the narrator some thought on later reflection he decided he might have used some Dutch also which he had picked up in the States - specimen words were given). I also called out was there an Officer's servant there. You know how batmen pick up things from everywhere and anywhere. A batman once took some things from me and I thought I would get one back on them.

Continuing the narrative, the private said:- Of course I gave a bayonet demonstration when I called out. They must have understood because they ran off. I caught the last man and ordered him back with the bayonet behind him.

When we got to the wire I stumbled and cut my hand a bit. The prisoner got over alright and the Tommies looked after him. We went on and got into the village again. We came across two Australian Officers here. They suggested I should hand over the prisoner, but I said there were a lot more further forward and I would go back with them for one. The officers gave the prisoner some white bread, It was good bread. I then tried to find the road back to the

Brigade, but must have taken the wrong one. A fellow pointed out a truck where we could sleep. We buttoned our overcoats together and slept there. (apparently in O.28.d.)

We got up early because it was cold and walked along the main road till we were picked up by an A.S.C. lorry. The lorry stopped for breakfast and the boy had cups of tea and a slice of bread dipped in bacon fat. I had the same but only one cup of tea.

We went on in the lorry until I saw a notice STRAGGLERS POST. As I was a straggler I asked to be put down here, but I couldn't find the post. We walked on into a village named CANON. I reported to the Town Major to ask for the direction of the main road to CORBIE because I thought our Brigade had gone there.

We got a lift again in an A.S.C. lorry and then in a French lorry until I saw an old prisoners cage I knew and so I got my bearings. We got down at DAOURS and asked some 15th Brigade men where our Brigade was. They told us and we walked on to the village. We reported here first to the Cookers and had two cups of tea, some bully beef and bread and biscuits (small ones). The boy was feeling bad and couldn't eat most of his so the cook wrapped it up in paper and he has it now. He had had a lot and evacuated when he got to the village.

I then found Lieut. Blackpool. He told me to take the prisoner to the Brigade Office, and they sent us on here.

The prisoner was very tired and couldn't eat the hot dinner they set down."

The Australian had evidently looked after the prisoner well, and was loath to hand him over to the Guard. They parted with a very warm handshake and mutual expressions of regret.

EXTRACTS FROM THE DIARY OF 2880 Private J.S. Bartley,
30th Battalion, A.I.F.

Back to the mud and slush of 1916-1917 again! So after a long term in the line at Messines the battalion moved out to Wulverghem, and occupied one night in huts, and the next day saw them en route for the Somme. After marching for three days a train was boarded, the engine of which was mounted with machine-guns in order to deal with the Hun planes, who made attempts to drop bombs and place machinegun fire on the trains. Several engines were riddled with bullets, and the ruins lying about and around the various stations bore every evidence of the destructive power of the bombs.....

A ride in the trucks was anything but pleasant, and No. 2880 and 2929 say that the men were packed like sardines in a tin, though not laid out in such a regular manner. From 35 to 40 men, plus rifles and full equipment, and food necessary for the journey, were packed in, and a man was exceedingly fortunate if he could stretch out at all. Usually a man had to occupy a cramped position for many hours, sometimes days. A soldier had to watch his gear very carefully too, else it would never be seen again, for someone else would fancy it. Perhaps some gentleman who had discarded his own, owing to a long ~~journey~~ carry, and who upon arrival at the end of the journey had the cheek and audacity to walk off with another man's gear..... All along the route the usual crowd of civilians called out for bully beef, for souvenirs, as they said. Eventually the Somme was reached.....the troops were able to salvage much food and tons of potatoes which came in handy, as the means of transport were none too good in those days. Much wine lay in the cellars. Wherever this was known, a guard was placed, and the law about looting was often read to the men.....

A stay was made for one night at the deserted village of (?) Vaux-Chelles. Now about midnight No. 2880 was awakened by the unusual rattle of bottles, and beheld Pte. Reg Kelly bending over him, saying "Get this into you, sport".....Kelly and several others had been out souveniring and had hit on a large white chateau (deserted) and there had found immense quantities of cider, wine,

and champagne, stored away in the cellars. When they brought the news back, naturally there was a great run on the chateau, and as a result many were missing from the muster parade the next morning, and a large guard had to be called up to round up the stragglers, who all appeared before Capt. Thompson and were dealt with accordingly.

After a further long march on water and biscuits the men found themselves in Gentile Wood, being very close to the French, and covered by the French batteries of 75's. The wood was very thick. Several villages lay handy, and Fritz was busy dropping shells into them. In this wood was found what Fritz had left of a Tommy regiment- the Sherwood Foresters. Their greeting was "Jerry's a-coming", although Fritz was four kilometres away in front. It is a fact that, while these men had spent a couple of nights in this wood, yet they had made no attempt to make any kind of shelter. The first thing the Aussies did was to dig in. No. 2880 and Private Weeden decided to dig a hole large enough for both to crawl into, and while they wandered a few yards away to get some bushes for the roof, the chums "got down" on No. 2880's gear, and made off with his rifle, overcoat and gas helmet. But he was quite an old soldier now, and very quietly after dark he made a round of the Tommies' part of the wood, and returned with what he set out for, namely, a rifle, etc.

A couple of days were spent in this wood. Rations were small. The hard biscuits averaged $1\frac{1}{2}$ per man per day. Now that ration did not at all satisfy Jim Falconer, who was a large man with a big appetite. So in company with a couple of others he managed to souvenir all the colonel's rations one night, and lo and behold there was bread to be had. What they could not eat they buried, and unearthed it the following night and had another feast.

Fritz dropped many bombs in the wood. A couple of planes came over bearing the Allies colours and dropped bombs, before anybody was aware of the deception. A couple of cows were shot, and were being cut up when the colonel interfered, and quoted "loot". However he apportioned to the officers the best of the meat, and distributed the balance among the whole battalion.....

A shift was made to a new sector, and the Tommies were relieved, not far from Aubigny. It was the dead of night, and the trenches lay in a flat, with a wood in front, and the shell-fire there was heavy and constant. The very first night in was a "hair-raiser", and it fair put the wind up many.....No. 2880 was allotted to a post with Sergt. Bradshaw, Jack Bisset being in the post, also were Joe Lansdowne and Fred Bowyer. All had an anxious time there, facing the artillery....and having no chance of raising a little finger in return. Every morning Fritz laid down an awful bombardment. On the 9th April a shell came in and killed four men.....

After a day or so a move was made forward and a position was taken up on a rise. The country was very chalky, which made digging in a long job, as all the excavated chalk on the parapet, etc., had to be covered in order to avoid detection. Directly in front lay a valley, and about 1200 yards away lay the Hun line directly in front of a wood, and not far from Hamel. Whilst in these outposts No. 2880 had charge of a section of No. 14 Platoon. The post was a double one and Corp. Smith (safety-Catch) was in charge. Hun artillery fell heavily and had the range too, which made things unpleasant.....

Everyone heard rumours of a big stunt, and Fritz was hourly expected to attempt a further advance. The British guns peppered the wood and placed heavy bombardments on his line at dawn and dusk. From the trenches one could see the shells bursting right on the Hun line. The next thing to be done was to get to work and get the wiring parties busy, and get the patrols out.....

After a couple of days a change over was made with No. 13 Platoon's post. This post was low lying and lay about 200 yards from the hun front line. The night the change was made turned out cold and wet, and No. 2880 had the usual job of placing out the listening posts. Each hour a couple of men were taken out and lay in No-Man's Land, silently watching for what information could be gleaned. When one had good and reliable men for the job it meant a lot to the men in the posts, but on this occasion, unfortunately,

there were a few windy chaps who had to do the job, as men were scarce then. For instance, a certain couple of them would, in fear, crawl in and lay but a few yards off their own trench. Mr. F----- threatened to shoot them for cowardice, and one of them said that it would save Fritz the job. There were two others who always told No. 2880 that if Fritz came over they would clear out, and Mr. F----- ~~instructed~~ instructed him to shoot them if they gave any trouble, and on more than one occasion he had to threaten them with this, with more bluff than any real intention. But it was a trying time with such men as that.

The first night in was very miserable. Sergeant Gooding, in charge of the post, wandered off early in the night to go back to company headquarters for the rum, and he made it his business to remain away till a little before dawn, leaving all the responsibility on the corporal (Peter Holder). Moreover the sergeant returned without any rum; said that he had spilt it. Neither did he have any rations. As the men were wet through and shivering after the duties of the past night, this was anything but a pleasing prospect, and Cpl. Smith volunteered to go to the Quarry and get some food for the men. He came back just before daylight and thus saved the situation. It was a noticeable fact that the same sergeant made it a regular habit of remaining away from the post as often as he did fancy that there was danger about, as Fritz was hourly expected.

All went well till the third night. As No. 2880 had ^{Bartley} instructions from Corporal Holder to place the post out earlier than usual (it not being dark enough at the time for safety) he proceeded to do so, much against his will, and he set forth in the pouring rain with two men, Harry Stone and Jimmy Bogan, and a pioneer sergeant, who was going out to examine the wire. When nearing the post a surprise awaited them, for the Huns suddenly put a burst of machine-gun fire into them. Jimmy Bogan and No. 2880 dropped, whilst Harry Stone turned and fled, more frightened than hurt, for he was not hit. Bullets flew around and ploughed up the ground. Jimmy was badly hit, and they took off his leg afterwards. No. 2880 was shot in the thigh, and managed to get across to Blighty. There were four bullets hit the

5.

rifle (which) he was carrying at the trail. A stretcher was sent out for Jimmy and he was carried out to the dressing station, and both he and No. 2880 were taken out by stretcher-bearers Dan Lynne and Jack Brisbane, and Bob Mather....~~The incident~~ the above incident happened on Sunday night, the 13th of April.....

From Lieut J. G. Ridley
53 Bn

RESUME OF EXPERIENCES ON THE WESTERN FRONT

from February 1918 to September 1918.

Dear Ones:-

On my return to France after my last leave, I was left at our Battalion Details Camp just this side of Lindenhoeck in Belgium. The Battalion was then in the line at Messines - Wytchate Sector.

I made several applications to get up with the remainder of the Headquarters, but the Colonel would not allow me to go. About the end of February the Colonel went to England on leave and my old comrade-in-arms, Major Murray, M.C. assumed command of the Battalion. Soon after he took over, one of our posts was raided and the Lewis Gun on it failed to work. This reflected discredit on my Department, and I applied again to go forward so that I could personally supervise the guns. As a new system of Anti-Aircraft Defence came in about this time, and I was the one to manage it, Major Murray brought me forward. I lived with Battalion Headquarters in a Pill-Box called "Onraet Farm" and from this place visited the boys at Denny's Wood (Reserve), Rose Wood and Ravine (Supports) and the Line. The latter place had to be visited in darkness or under cover of fog and I had some exciting trips round. But the gunners were always glad to see me, and I felt far happier watching over them myself. This front livened up a great deal as the Spring

drew nigh and there was a lot of gas shelling indulged in by both parties. The Major and I were caught in it one night and I was nearly suffocated.

On the morning of March 21st., there was great activity along the whole front, and we expected Fritz to attack. Our guns opened with a roar and were ably assisted by a hurricane Machine Gun Barrage, but apart from a few isolated raids there was no decided enemy action. We did not know till afterwards that it was really a sympathy bombardment to assist his mighty attack down South. A couple of days later we were drawn back to supports, around the ruins of Wytchate.

On the Saturday night I went to A. Company for the evening meal; after it was over we yarned for a while in the dug-out, when suddenly an urgent message came for Captain Smith "Wanted at Headquarters." I went along with him; all the Company Commanders were there and the Colonel who had just returned. He apologised for calling us so suddenly, but added, "It's war gentlemen! serious war." He explained that things were going hardly down South and the Germans everywhere pressing us back. He told us our Division was to be relieved the next night and we would proceed South as G.H.Q. Reserve.

All was bustle the next day and at dusk we moved off to a Camp some distance back, near a place called Vierstraat. Here we were alongside the 1st Battalion, and I had a talk with Price and Len McArthur.

The following morning we proceeded by light railway to Wiffenhoek, where we spent the afternoon and evening. Here we

received the startling news that the enemy was near Albert, and it seemed as though the Empire was shattering like a pack of cards. The next day we entrained at Wiffenhoek Siding and proceeded to Douillons, where we detrained at midnight. No one seemed to know anything; confusion was rampant. At last we moved off with an advance guard out as protection. We marched for hours, till the dawn broke and the sun rose, and at last we halted at the village of Luvencourt. We stayed there a day, still without any definite orders. I can well remember receiving my Bible which had been posted from England, and wondering how long I would be able to read it.

We reconnoitred the front from here, and next day marched to Harponville, where we stayed for about three days in reserve. This respite was not for long. A sudden order flashed through, and our Battalion moved out of Harponville in the dark hours of an early morning. We had a long, cruel, forced march of several hours to a place called Acheaux, where we were put on buses and driven for miles through Amiens and away out to Dacours, where we alighted. Alarming rumours awaited us here. The 15th Australian Infantry Brigade ~~were~~^{was} fighting hard and we would possibly go right into it. One English Officer came up to me and said "My word we are glad to see you, its awful here. Your fellows cut them up yesterday with Lewis Guns." After a wait of sometime, we marched on to Aubiney where we were billeted. I will long remember the sight of that village - absolutely plundered, houses ransacked, clothes and furniture in all directions, civilians gone, meals (half eaten) left on the tables. A state of things existing in several villages which I was to see

later. We set to work and cleaned out as well as we could and had a meal. That night, a part of the Battalion moved forward, to relieve some cavalry which had galloped into action the day before and formed some sort of a line. I was left with several others in Aubiney (much to my disgust, though still feeling very tired I scarcely complained). We soon set to work in the village and secured supplies of foodstuffs which had been left behind - chiefly flour and potatoes.

Meanwhile, the other part of the Battalion had dug a line in front of Villers-Bretonneux. Captain Pearson and I went up the next afternoon and saw the Headquarters which was in the cellar of an isolated house. They expected an attack from the enemy that afternoon, but it did not eventuate. At that time we had only about one battery (6 guns) of field artillery behind us. Villers-Bretonneux was another scene of desolation and ruin. Plenty of food, clothes, fowls, wines etc. in the town. These were all made good use of by our troops who lived like lords in those early days. Our headquarters moved into a stately chateau in the town, and there drank from costly glass and china, had records on the gramophone, selections on the piano, played billiards and sat in easy chairs and slept in sheets with beautiful eider-down quilts over them. Several sent souvenirs away, but somehow I didn't like to take anything unless it was necessary, such as food. The officers had one big dinner, and I believe it was a fine affair - poultry, soup, puddings, wines, etc..

Meanwhile, our line had been advanced about 700 yards on the second night, and Fritz awoke to the fact next morning

with a start. His little game of easy advancing had come to a stop - he met Australia on the slopes around Villers-Bretonneux.

On the morning of 17th April the enemy drenched the town with gas. The bombardment lasted for several hours. Although every precaution was taken, the fumes so saturated the soldiers clothes that the whole of headquarters (forward), and almost an entire company, were evacuated that night. Our Battalion was disorganised and things were in a bad state. The 56th relieved us that night, and the next morning I went forward and reported to Major Roberts, D.S.O. who had taken command. From that date (18th April) I was with forward Headquarters continually.

Major Stutsbury, M.C. took command now, and after about three days for reorganisation, we moved to the left, spent one night at the village of Fouilloy, and then next night occupied the line north of Villers-Bretonneux (now taken over by English troops) and the line opposite "Bois de Viere."

I had plenty to do here, both as Lewis Gun, and Works Officer. Many a night I was out on the wire, or digging trenches for hours, and my sleep was snatched in the morning.

All this time the enemy was massing again, and one night about the end of April, we received word that he would attack next morning on Villers-Bretonneux. Precisely at the time appointed, his barrage opened, the whole country lit up with bursting shells; I felt sure we would fight and fall this time, so shook hands with Hibbard, saying, "Well, we know Christ said, 'they that believe on me have everlasting life, and we do believe.'" Many of our number were wounded that morning, but there was no attack on our front.

However, later in the day, we learnt that the enemy had driven the English troops out of Villers-Bretonneux and were holding that important, commanding position. Things were serious, but that night the 15th and 13th Australian Infantry Brigades attacked silently. The 54th Battalion on our right, held the exposed flank, and between the two, the enemy was hurled out of the town and high ground. This was one of the most brilliant counter attacks ever executed, and again Amiens was saved.

After 12 days in "Viere" Sector, we were moved to the Terraces just in a support position. Here I lost my old Pal Goodwin who was hit by ^a shell. Then we went back to "Viere" and shortly after, to the Terraces again.

Our next move was further to the left, right down into the Somme Valley, where we occupied a strong line, with Battalion Headquarters in the little, shell-wrecked village of Hamelet. By this time we had greatly improved our position and had a good quantity of Artillery behind us, yet we waited ever ready for a tremendous offensive.

I was still doing Lewis Gun and Works and was kept busy.

Colonel Holland had charge at this time and he was a great, easy-going ~~Commanding~~ ^{Company Officer} and so our life at this spot was very happy.

Spring was at her best, all nature was speaking, the river was a good bath house, and we were strong in men and machine guns. But the wily German wouldn't attack the Australians although they were continually raided and hampered by him.

After twelve days in the Hamelet Sector, we moved back to the Terraces, and from there were relieved at last by the 4th Australian Division. We moved back by stages, and then to the left,

to Corps Reserve and dug in near a town called Quirrieu.

For 10 days we had a little respite from warfare. We were still in good shell range but were rarely troubled. We had plenty of sports etc, and also did some Lewis Gun Training. Shearwood and I had a day together in Abbeyville which we rather enjoyed. There was a big Brigade sports meeting by the River, and also several cricket matches, some of which I took part in.

After our rest we were in Divisional Reserve in a trench system near Franvilliers. Here, we were shelled several times and spent one night running up and down the trench. We held some good Bible Circle meetings in an old house in the village and so made the most of existing conditions. After 10 days here we occupied the line just South of Morlancourt. The night we went in we were bombed and had two wounded. This was a fair sector, the trenches were all named after Australian streets, towns etc., such as Bourke, King, George, Bega, Cootamundra. While in this place, a big advance was made by the 4th Division on our right, and the 15th Brigade on our left, against Hamel. The attack was very successful and many prisoners and much material ^{were} ~~was~~ captured. After a long interval of about 18 days here, we were relieved and occupied a support position just on the right or southern side of the Bray - Corbie Road. Six days here, then into the line for two days, then back to Reserve for six days. Then on the night of 28th July in very bad weather our Battalion with the 8th Brigade on the left, attacked and captured several hundred yards of German territory. This was a very successful attack and we received a good deal of praise for it. In this affair I was at Forward Headquarters, and saw some nasty sights

which I fear I will never forget. I was with the loved and lamented George Gane just before he died, and next day attended his funeral at No. 2, Military Cemetery, Heilly. Two nights after we were relieved by Imperial Troops and went back by Motor buses to a village called Vaux, beyond Amiens. We only spent a few days here and did a practise attack with Tanks, and were suddenly ordered off for the big offensive. We left Vaux at dusk one evening and had a long march to our old camp near Quirrieux^u, where we arrived about 2 a.m. Remained here for a day or two and then on the night of August 7th marched to a position outside Daours, where as Reserve Brigade of the Division, we were to follow the attack. It was a very misty morning, and we waited in the cool air for the outburst of guns which came about 5-50 a.m. The whole battle-line lit up in flashes and the big advance had commenced. We followed up the leading brigades of our Division (8th and 15th). It was a wonderful sight - some guns roaring away, others being rushed forward, horses and waggons going up, aeroplanes flying over us and men streaming on. We halted near our old position at Villers-Bretonneux, and here I engaged an enemy aeroplane with Lewis Gun fire, but was unsuccessful.

Our next move was to the Cerisy Valley. On the way we passed crowds of prisoners and many captured guns and also a few of our own wounded. We stayed in Cerisy Valley for a while, had an hour's sleep in a German dug-out, then pushed on at evening to a little redoubt near Bayonvilliers (met Sam Rixon at this place, two days later). Stayed here for sometime, were shelled a little

and had danger from bombs, but nothing to speak of.

We next moved back to Fouilloy and stayed for three days in an old chateau. Had some fine open-air services here.

Another sudden move followed. We advanced by march route to Kaix and were under orders to attack and capture Chaulnes. We were "standing by" for two nights, then orders were cancelled and we moved north through Rosieres to a valley near Morcourt. Spent a day in the valley, then relieved an English Division in front, and to the south of Proyart. We held this line for about four days, then the first Australian Division made a good advance through us. We kept our position till the Germans began to retire, then we followed up. Long, weary marches, was the order of the day. We captured a young German who was wandering about in Assevilliers, lost. Our next proposed action was to cross the "Somme." We moved forward and spent a miserable night in the open under rain and shell fire, and then orders were cancelled. We occupied a trench line for a day and night, then were ordered to move north across the "Somme" at Cleary, and attack Peronne. We moved at once, and made a dangerous flank march under observation, and were shelled. Crossed the Somme marshes and canal south of Cleary, and pushed forward to a ravine some 1,000^x_{ydo} from the retreating Germans who shelled us heavily. I received some Home mail here and while reading it was hit in the back by a piece of shell which did not cut my clothes. We lost several fellows, McArdle (one of my gunners) being among them. Had a little sleep but had to move to our battle position in the early hours of the morning. I led our Details on headquarters

round the ravine and along a railway line. We were shelled and I doubled my men through the 56th to shelter.

It was a horrible morning, one which I will long remember, full of sad events and pain and death for many. I went to the 23rd Battalion Headquarters to try and find Shearwood who had come on before, and while enquiring, a shell burst right at the mouth of the dug-out. I was covered with flying bits of sand and dirt, the candles went out and the place was filled with sickening fumes. Many were wounded by the explosion and some killed, among the later was poor Shearwood who was found a little later.

During the morning, wounded kept coming back and also news of the hard fight forward. We were shelled a good deal and had one runner killed and another wounded.

Our Companies had to go over the top again at 4 p.m. and were very badly cut up. They then formed a chain of posts under Major Murray and at 12-30 a.m. next morning, I took up a party from Headquarters and carried two big loads of ammunition forward.

The place was soaked in gas and my eyes were running and nose smarting. By God's grace we returned safely about 3 a.m. Next day we all moved up to a position just at rear of the line, and about 5 minutes from Peronne itself. We were established in an old German dug-out. There was a dead German in one part which made it rather unhealthy. However, we were relieved that evening by the 15th Brigade, and went back to our old Headquarters.

The next morning we marched back over the "Somme" to some dug-outs. The old Battalion looked very thin and worn out. Captain

Pearson had cocoa ready. I slept for two or three hours, then had lunch and proceeded once more to the battlefield with a party, to collect captured guns etc. I was not feeling well, but orders had to be obeyed, and for some hours I was on the battlefield. We gathered two field guns, one transport waggon, 5 machine guns, one Lewis Gun and several magazines. Relieved about 7-30. Could not sleep that night, but joy came in the morning - my leave pass arrived, and I left at 5 p.m. for England and rest.

So you have the brief resumé of my wanderings since February. Through them all, one thing stands forth - the love, protection and mercy of our Heavenly Father who has granted me light in darkness, strength in weakness, courage in danger, hope in despair, joy in sorrow, and Christ in all.

To His Gracious Name, I raise all thankfulness and praise, and humbly pray that I may not have to roam out here much longer, but, if it be His will, see those who are dearer than life to me - yourselves.

Your own loving,

JOHN.

(J.G. Ridley)
Late Lieut
53rd Bn.

COPY.

Awsm No 12/5/87

"Wilga",
Bromborough Road,
Roseville.

17th August, 1927.

The Director,
Australian War Memorial,
Melbourne.

Dear Sir,

In compliance with the request in your letter of 2nd August, 12/5/87, I am preparing statements regarding the incidents selected by you from references in letters written by me to Australia whilst on active service with the A.I.F., for that purpose. You will, of course, have an official record of the movements of the 56th Bn. so I have confined my statements chiefly to personal recollections and experiences. The first instalment is forwarded herewith and I should be glad to learn whether the matter set out therein is what you require.

Yours faithfully,

(Sgd.) W. T. TURNER.

TWO SPIES CAUGHT BY THE 56th BATTALION ON 29/3/18.

This incident occurred at Louvencourt. The 56th Battalion was in the line on the Kemmel Sector, Belgium, at the end of March, 1918, when Fritz made his big advance on the Somme front. The 5th Division was one of the Australian Divisions ordered south to fill the breach and the 56th Battalion was relieved by a 1st Division Bn. and after a day or two entrained near Reninghoulst. The Bn. detrained at Mondicourt, after a journey lasting from about 1 a.m. to 6 p.m., in pouring rain, and waited about an hour till the road cleared a little of Tommy transport moving back, before moving off to Louvencourt. The train journey was made in trucks in which mules had recently been carried and as our entraining was done in the pitch darkness near midnight there was no opportunity of cleaning them out. I might here mention that we travelled full marching order with but a couple of biscuits to eat, and had a most uncomfortable and tiring journey. That day was one of the very few that I went without at least one hot meal during the twelve months of my line service - a tribute to the A.I.F. organisation and the cooks. The march from Mondicourt to Louvencourt (about 12 kilos, I think) in the pouring rain and, in parts, knee deep in mud was a most mberable affair. However, the main body duly arrived at the latter village about 1 a.m. on Good Friday morning and the stragglers were coming in for an hour or two later. My section of number 2 platoon, "A" Company, was billeted in a stable well covered with straw and we lay down, sodden as we were, and were soon asleep. A Tommy adrift from his unit was occupying the stable when we arrived, but he was gone when we awoke in the morning to find ourselves thoroughly lousy with lice from the straw,

which were, if anything, hungrier than ourselves. We had been practically free of "Cuthberts" for some time previously but we had a lively two or three days before we got ourselves comparatively clean again. We were paraded on Good Friday morning and were told to be very suspicious of any stray "Tommys" as it was thought that some might be enemy spies in Tommy uniform. In fact we were instructed to arrest any stray Tommys and hand them over to Bn. H.Q. and were promised leave to Blighty (i.e. the individual who effected the arrest) if any so arrested turned out to be spies. We were also told to be very careful regarding the civilians who had not evacuated. A day or two later we were informed on parade that two spies dressed as Tommy Officers had been arrested but we never learned any details. During the week^x we were in Louvencourt we took it in turns (i.e. the companies of the 56th) to man trenches to the east of the village. At dawn one morning whilst on this stunt, a mate and I were on guard a fair distance from the rest of the platoon when a Tommy captain with a batman in tow approached us from a nearby wood where they had apparently spent the night. The captain, a rather elderly man, enquired of us for his battalion (a labour battalion) but of course we could not give him any information but gave him a good "once over" with questions (having in view the Blighty leave) and he was rather "hurt" I think when he left us in the direction of the village. The batman, who had not spoken a word turned around several times and scowled at us and afterwards we kicked ourselves, metaphorically speaking, for not running the pair up to the Officer in charge (Lieut. Threlkeld) (I can't just say whether I have remembered this name aright but I can remember that that officer was held in high esteem by all of us). Early in April (4th or 5th, I

x Every night this week Fritz shelled Louvencourt with high velocity long-range shells but luckily they were practically 100% duds.

think) we enbussed at Louvencourt for Aubigny, near Corbie, where we spent the night some of us in beds, boots and all - the civilians having hurried off a few days previously. We went in the line the next day, Saturday, and were not out of the forward area again until after the Estrees stunt (Hindenburg line) early in October.

IN A "STUNT" ABOUT END OF APRIL 1918.

This was Fritz' hopover on Villers-Bretonneux on the night of April 24th/25th. The night, or perhaps two, before we had been relieved by Tommies (most were very young and in for the first time) from the front line to the left of the village and were in supports on the hill between the left of the village and the Somme River - the road from Corbie to Villers-Bretonneux being immediately on our right. On the evening of the 24th starting at about 5 p.m. Fritz drenched the Somme Valley behind us with gas by means of shells, and by morning the gas had risen to us and we were forced to don our masks (4 a.m. to about 9 a.m.). At dawn he heavily shelled our position, with others on the sector, using everything up to 11". A few bullets were in evidence, too, but after dawn a heavy fog enshrouded the landscape and things quietened down. In the meantime nobody knew what was doing but soon after nine when the fog lifted we came under heavy machine gun fire from our right front at about 600 yards. We had a few casualties and were hurriedly moved across the road closer to and right opposite where Fritz had broken through - digging in and absorbing the Tommies who had got away from the front line. The Tommies stayed with us a day or two till they were re-organised. In the meantime the 54th Bn. well to the left of

the village sent to the 56th for stretcher bearers and being a little on the "hefty" side I was one of four sent up from "A" Company although I had not had any experience in that department. The party comprised Tom Maher, Charlie Knights, myself, and I think the fourth chap was named McNamara. The first day was fairly quiet although we were heavily shelled but I had a few thrills carrying messages from the 54th to the 56th. On one such message after darkness had set in although Hell was loose everywhere thereabouts I was actually handed a parcel of cakes which had arrived for me from a great-aunt in England. The four of us on my return to the 54th and two Tommies (a sergeant and a private) who had been taken prisoners by Fritz in the morning and had escaped, soon fixed up the cakes. Half-an-hour after Tom Maher was killed. The four of us were taking a chap who had just died from wounds to a road to the left of the village to be picked up by a limber and taken back for burial. When on the road Fritz opened on it with salvos of whizz-bangs and five-nines and we took shelter - two of us on each side of the road in ploughed ground. When the shoot ceased we came together again on the road and were about to take up the body where we had placed it at the side of the road when we heard another single shell coming. We took the prone on the road and the shell burst at our feet - Tom Maher getting the lot and the rest of us although only a few feet away escaping unhurt. Tom never spoke and died in a few seconds. After completing our job of unfortunately having to deliver two bodies instead of one we returned to the 54th Bn. H.Q. and were told that the 15th Brigade was coming up to deliver a counter-attack on Fritz to the right of the village and as we knew the country, having been in the vicinity about

three weeks - we were detailed as guides for portion of the counter-attacking force. We had a "wild and woolly" night and met some of our own battalion, at one stage, on similar duty to ourselves. Just as we met Lieut. Watt became a casualty with a bullet in his foot. The success of the stunt is a matter of history but perhaps there is one unrecorded incident which should not be let pass. During the whole of the day of the 25th an 18-pounder manned by Tommies and on the right flank of the 56th shelled the Fritz machine gun positions with shrapnel at point blank range (about 400 yards). When we were over the ground the next day we saw what terrible execution it had done. In one pit alone we counted about a dozen bodies all with their heads and faces battered in. One big Fritz, I remember well, died in a sitting position. He had previously been wounded in the upper left arm and had taken his shirt off, and was bandaging his wound - one end of the bandage being in his mouth and the other in his right hand. His death wound came from the 18-pounder. That gun saved our infantry many casualties as it kept Fritz down. The gun crew had a charmed existence as Fritz tried all day to blow it out with his guns, but as far as we could see there were no casualties on the gun and it certainly was effective right to the close of the day. Some of us went along next day to have a chat with the gunners but the gun had been moved in the night and all that remained was a battered limber. An incident which occurred the day after the counter-attack and which is perhaps unrecorded, is worth mentioning as an example of the irony of fate. A batch of 22 Fritz prisoners was being brought back under escort when a Fritz 11" shell landed in their midst and wiped out the whole lot. All but one were buried in the shell-hole. That one, disembowelled, ran forward a score or so of yards dropped into one of our posts and, of course, died.

Speaking of this latter happening reminds me of a somewhat similar incident that came under my notice in the following July on the Morlancourt Sector. Everyone that was on that sector will remember "Mad-minute" Gully. This gully was a mile or so behind the front line trenches and had received its name from the fact that over an extended period Fritz bombarded it for a minute or so with light and medium shells in salvos at irregular intervals (usually about every half-hour) throughout the day and night. On rejoining the 56th after the few days stretcher-bearing with the 54th at Villers-Bretonneux I had been detailed as a stretcher-bearer for "A" Company but was still attached to No.2 platoon. During the 14 days (on end) we were in the line on this sector we had a good number of casualties and worked hard, the Regimental Aid Post being about two miles from the line over rough and heavily wired country. All our carrying was done at night as when, once, we attempted a daylight trip Fritz sniped until we were forced to take cover. With all that preamble now for the incident referred to. One night as usual as was our custom we rested on the approach to Mad-Minute Gully till after a strafe (believing that one live soldier is worth a few hundred dead ones) our intention being to hurry through directly the strafe ceased knowing that there would be half-an-hour or so of comparative safety. On this particular night as we hurried through after a strafe we came across a stretcher-bearer party from the 55th Battalion which had been caught in it. Three bearers and the casualty were dead in a heap and we made a search for the fourth bearer thinking that we might be able to help him. We found him dead 30 yards or so away. The whole of his chest-wall was blown away and the stumps of his ribs and his organs were exposed. In a superhuman effort he had attempted to reach a Vickers post which was on the rise ahead. There was a sap through the gully which we were very glad to use on the return journeys (usually carrying rations or ammunition) but

it was impossible to carry a stretcher-case in it - hence the overland trips. There were of course casualties in the sap occasionally but it was cut through hard lime or chalk-stone country and a shell had to land right in it to do much harm. Another strange happening occurred on this sector. One night we delivered a casualty (bomb wound in foot) to the R.A.P. and handed him over to the A.M.C. bearers. We afterwards learned that when the A.M.C. bearers arrived at the ambulance about a mile further back the patient was dead. Examination showed that a bullet fired at a fairly high trajectory had got him on the stretcher unknown to the bearers and he had bled to death. I cannot recollect his name but he had only rejoined the battalion the day before after an absence of about twelve months consequent on a previous wound.

Received piece of shrapnel through "tin hat" about 16/5/1918. Did not touch head.

Strange as it might seem this was a "friendly" piece of shrapnel. We (No. 2 platoon "A" Coy.) with Lieut. Souter in charge were in the line on the Villers-Bretonneux Sector opposite Vaire Wood - a chalk pit occupied on and off by the enemy being directly to our left front alongside the road. One night, every half-hour, to the tick, from 10.30 p.m. to 3.30 a.m. we were subjected to a bombardment from an 18-pounder battery (shrapnel and H.E.) with an occasional 60-pdr. thrown in. In all about 60 shells were fired each shoot and it was during the first of these bombardments that the incident happened. There was a little gas about and word was passed down the trench that gas-masks were to be donned. Before

donning mine I started to walk to the next bay to warn my neighbour (George Holt, I remember) and was promptly knocked flat with a tremendous thud. On collecting myself I could feel no harm and picked up my tin hat to find that a shrapnel pellet had entered from the rear, torn a large hole around the side above the inside lining and away again. I often wondered afterwards what would have happened had I taken the hat off to fix my gas-mask before starting to warn George Holt. To return to the "shoot". After the first couple of salvos we took the matter seriously and word was sent back to Company H.Q.s. and from there to Bn. H.Q.'s. to have the shoot stopped. It appears, however, that the Artillery Officer in charge of the guns on the sector could not locate the battery that had picked on us and the firing continued till the night's programme ended at 3.30 a.m. Fortunately we had no casualties although the signal wires to the listening post in front were cut on two occasions and a sixty-pounder landed right in the trench. We, of course, watched the clock and listened for the report of the guns [which we could pick out from all the other guns on the sector after the first couple of shoots] and directly we heard it took cover in the bottom of the trench against the parapet. Just before one shoot was due early in the morning the O.C., "A" Company (Capt. Dalkeith - he afterwards lost an ear at Peronne when his batman was killed alongside him) and a runner came down and tried to cheer us up by saying that the shells were only a few falling short. Just then we heard the boom of the guns and skittled, the Captain amongst us, for cover. The Captain changed his views about "a few falling short" before he left. In the morning we found hundreds of shrapnel pellets on the parapet and in the trench and some equipment that had been left on top of the parapet

was torn to ribbons. We afterwards learnt that on the maps issued to the Artillery the enemy positions were marked in red and ours in blue, and that on the particular map held by the offending battery our position had by some mischance been marked in red. We had some fine sniping from this position as until Fritz dropped to us he exposed himself a good deal in the early mornings. Especially was this so with his ration parties to his front line as they did not appear to get finished before dawn. We accounted for a few and one morning when we opened on a ration party it took shelter behind a stook of hay - the only object available. We put a few bursts from the Lewis gun into the stook and about half-an-hour afterwards we saw the stretcher-bearers make a couple of trips there. About this time was my only experience in the army (except on transports) of any restriction on water. All our water had to be carried (in petrol tins) to the line from some distance back and during the short nights (it was getting on for mid-summer) there were very few, with all the other work to be done, available for the job.

(Sgd.) W. T. Turner,

17th August, 1927.

South of CEMETERY COPSE and had to retire.

A carrying party, under orders sent back by Lieut. Frewin carried S.A.A. 9000, &c and some shovels to the Copse.

The success signal was reported about 3'22 a.m. from the Copse, but so many different coloured flares were being fired by the enemy that it was impossible to distinguish our own.

At 4'20 a.m. Capt. Cadle reported that Lieut. Thompson had been wounded and that heavy fighting was in progress at the Cross roads U.23.a. and U.23.b. He moved forward to reconnoitre. At 4'25 a.m. Lieut. Maxwell who was standing by in rear of the Copse in U.29.a. was ordered forward to Copse where he found Lieut. Frewin wounded.

Lieut. Frewin has not been seen since. Lieut. Cascoigne-Roy who was of the party, was severely wounded in the Copse and later was evacuated through the French.

At 4'42 a.m. Sgt. De Saxe reported that he was being strongly counter attacked at cross roads in U.23.d. The enemy had been encountered in large numbers at both cross roads in U.23.c. and d. and had previously been driven in the direction of the BOIS de HANGARD but had reorganised in gully in U.23.b. and advanced again. Heavy casualties were inflicted upon him but our men were driven in and the huss swung down from cross roads at U.23.d. and attacked our men in the Copse. Had the post at U.23.c. (cross roads) been established, this attack would have possibly been broken. As it was an attack came from the direction of U.30.a.50.50. and the garrison practically surrounded.

By 7 a.m. the troops were back on their own line with the exception of the posts at U.22.b.70.65 and U.29.b.95.15. which are still held.

In the attack on the cross roads Lieut. Thompson's party got to the south of the road and entered a sunken road about 15 yards east of a row of poplars. (approx. U.23.c.40.35.) and found it heavily manned; three machine guns were seen there. Later, three stretcher bearers counted 78 enemy dead around cross roads in U.23.c.

Our casualties definitely ascertained at 7 p.m. to-day are -

<u>Officers:-</u>	1	Died of Wounds.	<u>O.R.:-</u>	7	Killed in action.
	1	Wounded & Missing.		38	Wounded.
	3	Wounded.		33	Unaccounted for.

probably some in front line.

Battn. H.Q.
8 p.m.

Geo. E. Murphy
Lieut.-Colonel
Commanding 18th. Battalion, A.I.F.

*The bn was withdrawn from the line about midnight.
19 of the 33 "unaccounted for" above were found when the bn paraded in billets*

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EIGHTEENTH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION.

16
17
Battalion Headquarters,
16th April, 1918.

Headquarters,
5th A. I. Brigade.

In continuation of my report of operation of 15th inst.

The party at Cross Road in U.23.c. held out under Sgt. De Saxe until daybreak. Most of the enemy were asleep when our men entered the sunken road, and their shelters were bombed and the enemy fell back towards BOIS DE HANGARD. At about 4.15 a.m. a strong force moved down from the direction of the white house. One officer with a very commanding voice was heard giving orders. Our men, originally 1 officer (D.O.F.) and 20 O.R. held out here until daylight when the N.C.O. in charge found he was being surrounded by increasing odds, withdrew his men in good order, bringing in his wounded. It was in this spot that 78 dead Huns were counted. It is certain that the enemy's casualties here were particularly heavy since no count could be made of dead in the road itself. The N.C.O. is of the opinion that he could have hung on had the post been dug in. As it was he had to depend on the road for cover from machine gun fire and could not command any approaches overland.

The party for Cross Road in U.23.d. came under heavy machine gun fire at some 25 yards range. The rifle section of 8 men lost 5 killed and 1 wounded and of the party - of total strength 1 Officer 30 O.R. - the Officer was wounded and there were 22 other casualties. One rifleman was out all day and part of the night of the 15th shamming dead. He was within 15 yards of the Hun post, and states that at daylight he counted 50 Huns come up the sunken Road into the post. Our party appears to have been discovered owing to a flare falling into their midst. From that on the enemy fired flares along the ground in their direction, and subjected them to grazing fire from 5 light machine guns. The Lewis Gun Section were knocked out except one man. The enemy managed to get a gun well down on our left flank, and enfilade fire from it inflicted most of the casualties.

The position of the party at the copse is still obscure. Two officers and 50 O.R. attacked here in two waves and were followed by the carrying party. They appear to have met two lines of the enemy - the first line about 200 yards on our side of Cemetery Copse and the second about 70 yards in advance of copse. The carrying party found a number of Huns shamming dead behind a hedge with two machine guns. These Huns were mopped up. The troops passed through the Copse and began to dig in beyond as ordered. Lieut. Gascoigne-Roy was severely wounded about 4.45 a.m. and brought in later on. Lieut. Frewin took some of the carrying party to assist him. The Copse is not in view from our lines, but he appears to have hung on until about 6.25 a.m. when the Hun was heard shouting and charging. Lieut. Frewin had been wounded severely early in the morning but refused to leave his post. A party tried to get forward but were driven back by heavy machine gun fire from the left flank. The Hun appears to have enveloped the Copse at about 6.20 a.m.

Of the 2 Officers and 50 O.R. the 2 Officers were wounded - one missing - , and with the carrying party of 40 and reinforcing party of approximately 35 our casualties here were,-

3 O.R. Killed.
22 O.R. Wounded.
29 O.R. Missing.

A board is still sitting and it is certain that 8 were killed.

I do not think that many were captured but that most of the missing were killed by machine gun fire, fighting to the last.

The board has not finished taking evidence yet.

A patrol on the night of the 16th inst found the Hun strongly dug in about 200 yards in advance of copse.

Two guns were brought in. Lieut. Walters saw five in action near the Copse during the morning. N.C.O.s with the carrying party saw six light machine guns and two Lewis Guns knocked out apparently by

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(2)

the Stokes Mortar bombardment. This was confirmed by Lieut. Maxwell, M.C., D.C.M.

Our force engaged was,-

- ② Lieut. Thompson and 20 O.R.
- ③ Lieut. McLaren, M.M. and 30 O.R.
- ④ Lieut. Frewin)
- ⑤ Lieut. Gascoigne-Roy) and 50 O.R.
- Lieut. Duncan and 40 O.R. as carrying party.

In addition 35 O.R. under an officer were used for counter attack.

Our casualties were,-

Officers ② . One D.O.W. 3 Wounded (one missing).

(In addition Capt. Lowther was wounded whilst organizing the right party.)

Other Ranks. Three K.I.A. One D.O.W. 35 Wounded.
and 31 Missing. (Of these 8 are now known to be K.I.A.)

The enemy losses were undoubtedly heavier for large numbers of dead were seen.

Geo. J. Murphy

Lieut.-Col.
Commanding 18th Battalion, A. I. F.

EIGHTEENTH AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BATTALION.

EXTRACT FROM LETTER from BATTN. HEADQUARTERS
dated 19th April, 1918.

.....

.....

The BOIS de HANGARD is fairly open timber with brushwood of average height from 4 to 5 ft. and is not dense. A terrace of some 4 ft. high runs from U.22.b.40.80. for 100 yards along the South edge of wood. The wood is not so far as we could ascertain wired.

The enemy holds the wood mainly by machine gun fire. Movement and concentration of troops have been reported in Copse U.23.a.40.80. and U.23.b.20.80. For this area see aeroplane photo 35 AE.B.816 and for enemy's works in U.23.a. see photo 52 AE.A.317, which will well repay study.

The ground in U.17.a. consists of ploughed fields, under close observation by the enemy from the wood.

The re-entrant in U.23.a. is best commanded from post in vicinity of U.23.b.40.80.- The ground dips away rapidly from U.23.a.90.40. and the ground between this point and U.24.a.80.00. is not visible from anywhere except from post at U.29.b.25.60 and even from this spot numerous hedges mask the view. It is from this ground in U.23.b. and d. and U.24.a. and c. that his main counter attack was delivered. The ground along the grid line between squares U.23 and 24 cannot be effectively dealt with by 18 pdrs; howitzers are very necessary. The ground along U.22.d. has for its highest point the cross roads in U.22.d.50.65. sloping away more rapidly to the North, a fairly gradual slope towards HANGARD with road through 23.c. and d. running along the ridge. Our posts here are back on the CACHY-HANGARD Road and the field of fire is here about 250 yards. The cross roads in U.23.c.45.60. are not visible but the road running south from this spot is marked by a line of poplar trees. From the cross roads this road running North and South is sunken and when our men entered it was heavily manned, five machine guns were in action in the Poplars and a trench mortar behind a turnip heap in about U.23.c.60.60. The enemy retired towards U.23. central, reorganised, and counter attacked from there.

The ground in front of our posts in U.29.a. and B. rises slightly for 200 yards, and then falls away towards CEMETERY COPSE and the tops of the trees there can be seen. Very little of the ground is under observation between U.29.d. central to road in U.24.d.20.00 to Copse about U.24.d.00.70. along which line a fair amount of movement is seen, and it is thought that a large quarry or depression exists in Copse at U.24.central. Fairly large parties of the enemy have been seen there.

.....

The enemy has observation over right sector as far as road running through U.22.d.23.c. and d. from this position on hill south of HANGARD in C.10.b. (Sheet 66 E.). On our positions in C.22.b. and d. from U.24.b. and on the left of our sector from the BOIS de HANGARD.

Our experience was that he did practically no patrolling but sent individual men out some 150 to 200 yards to fire Very lights

He held his forward posts in strength with the garrison dug in along hedges. The garrison was protected from shrapnel by deep narrow pot holes. His machine guns were very active at night and numerous with a predominance of light guns. The many hedges etc. make "mopping up" a very difficult matter. His infantry will not wait for a charge; his counter attacks are delivered only after thorough searching with machine guns.

Between 4.30 a.m. and 5 p.m. he puts down a barrage along line of road VILLIERS BRETTONEUX-HANGARD particularly in squares 22 b. and d. (to cross roads) He concentrates his fire on U.22.b.20.90. road from U.22.b.00.90 to U.22.d.55.60. Copse at U.22.c.50.00 and U.29.a.50.90.

(Continued).

-2-

On the morning of the 15th. inst. he put a barrage down along line U.23.a.00.50., U.23.c.00.50 to Copse U.29.a.80/90. and searched area back to U.22.a.80.00 to U.28.a.95.95., twice up and down. The barrage was mainly 4'2 s. The searching was done mainly by 77 s. and gas-shells.

Enemy machine guns -

In poplars along road south of cross roads
in U.23.c.45.65.
U.17.c.70.20.
U.17.c.20.60.
U.23.a.20.90.
U.23.a.20.60.
U.23.a.25.50.
U.23.a.40.80.
Upper storey of KITE HOUSE in
BOIS de HANGARD.

Aeroplane photos worth careful study:-

35 AE.B.850.
35 AE.B.816
52 AE.A.326
52 AE.A.313
52 AE.A.314
52 AE.A.315
52 AE.A.316
52 AE.A.317

(sgd) GEO.F.MURPHY.

Lieut.Col.
Commanding 18th Battalion A.I.F.

18th Bn.
Haugard wood
April 1918.

Bazley

THE SYDNEY MAIL, WEDNESDAY, JULY 17, 1918.

Portrait
Gunner N. Lipscomb
Killed.

Portrait
Lieut. F. Lipscomb, M.C.,
Twice Wounded

Portrait
Pte. E.J. Lipscomb,
Killed.

THE LIPSCOMBS, OF NORMANHURST, N.S.W.

They are sons of Mr. and Mrs. W.J. Lipscomb, of Pennant Hills-road. Gunner Neville Lipscomb enlisted in the 1st Light Horse Field Ambulance in September, 1914, and served for some time on hospital ships carrying wounded from Gallipoli to Alexandria, then proceeding with his brigade to the Peninsula. After the evacuation he transferred to the artillery, and continued on active service in France until April, 1917, when he was killed in action. Private Eric Lipscomb sailed from Sydney in September, 1916. After a long and eventful voyage he landed in England in January, 1917, where he continued his training until May. Crossing to Belgium, he was in action only a few days when he made the supreme sacrifice. Lieut. Fred Lipscomb enlisted as a private in 1915, gained his commission after being wounded at Pozieres; was last April reported wounded a second time, and has now been awarded the Military Cross. The action that won him the decoration also gained the V.C. for his superior officer (Lieut. P.V. Storkey), the incident being thus officially reported:- "Lieut. Storkey commanded an attacking platoon which emerged from a wood, and observed eighty or a hundred of the enemy with several machine-guns holding up the advance of troops on his right. Lieut. Storkey had only six men. Lieut. Lipscomb and four men joined Lieut. Storkey, who decided to attack the enemy on the flank and the rear. The two officers and ten men charged with bayonets, with Storkey leading. They expelled the enemy, killed and wounded 30, and captured three officers and 50 men with some machine-guns. Their courage, promptness, and skilful attack removed a dangerous obstacle to the advance."

H. N.

19th Battalion, Hangard Wood.

From Capt. P. V. Storkie.

The officers of the attacking company were told that the wood was lightly heald and that on getting through the wood they would find the objective a good road, with a/clear field of fire of 400 yards, and and lay down

They lined out/in the open just northeast of the western wood. Storkey went to sleep, and the opening of the barrage did not wake him. It was evident to everyone that "some thing was wrong with the barrage." It was very thin and ragged. Storkey did not wake until ~~xxx~~ his men had gone 70 yards or so, when he hurried on after them. It was just daylight and they ~~xxxx~~ had some 300 Wards of open space to cross before reaching the wood. From ~~sh~~ewhere in the wood on the right front came extremely heavy machinegun fire. Capt. Wallack was hit through both knees. Lieut. McDonald was killed. Before reaching the other side a large part of the company had been hit. But the survivors reached the wood and ~~xxxxxxxx~~ climbed through a wire fence into it. It was entirely young growth, mostly about head high, with taller saplings here and there. As Storkey, now commanding the company, with Lieutenant Lipscombe and their men made their way through it they were caught every now and then ~~by~~ in part of the maze of ~~xxx~~ telephone lines that had been laid through it. As they pressed on, trying to get in rear of the force - whatever it was - that had been firing on them when in the open, the bush thinned a little/ ~~suddenly~~ ~~xxxxxxxxxxxx~~ to the ~~xxxx~~ east and south they suddenly came out on an opening, ~~perhaps seventyfive yards in length,~~

through a wire

a clearing, lying to the south and rather behind them; and along the western side of it, in half a dozen short trenches - each apparently a machinegun post - were nearly 100 Germans, the riflemen and half a dozen machine-gun crews, ~~fixing~~ with their backs to Storkey's party, ~~but~~ firing for all they were worth at ~~the~~ such remnants of the company as were still attempting to cross the open, and, possibly at elements of the ^{Battalion} 20th/which may have been observed by them to the south west.

Storkey had only six men with him, and Lieut. Lipscombe, who just then came up, had only four. ~~Six~~ They were all of the company that, after its heavy casualties, could be expected to arrive, but Storkey's mind was instantly made up. Shouting to his men as if the whole battalion was arriving he ~~led~~ led an immediate charge upon the rear of the Germans. Before these could recover from their surprise a number were shot through the head at close quarters. ~~at once~~ at once put up their hands. They had

Most of the rest ~~only~~ only to swing

round one of their machineguns and the Australians would have annihilated Storkey's confident manner gave the impression been ~~that~~ that many others were behind, and on the first sign of hesitation to obey his order to climb out of their trenches he shot three with his revolver (which then jammed), and his men rolled ~~in~~ a couple of bombs into the saps and then ducked while they exploded. Thirty Germans were thus killed, and the rest - three officers and 50 men - surrendered and were at once sent to the rear under a small escort.

Storkey and Lipscombe and the handful of men who remained with them then pushed on through the wood ~~xxxxxx~~ in search of their objective and its "good field of fire". ~~But~~ They found a road, but the scrub continued ~~xxxxxx~~ to the very foot of chest high ~~xxxxxx~~ the gentle slope beyond it, and only ended in the bottom of a valley. Beyond ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{this} rose a bare knuckle on the crest of which, 400 yards from Storkey and Lipscombe, at least a battalion of Germans could be seen hurriedly assembling along a reserve trench, almost certainly with the intention of counterattacking, if that step should be necessary to restore the position. To dig a trench ~~xxxxxx~~ in the bush, with a field of fire of a few yards and dead ^{close} ground/ahead would be absurd, and to dig in at the foot of the bare slope would be equally so. After hunting round vainly for some site with any field of fire, Storkey and Lipscombe ^{a blunder had been made in the plans;} decided that/no place there was defensible and they ~~xxxxxx~~ only reasonable course was to withdraw their men to the nearest tenable position - the jumping off line for the attack. Fortunately since seizing the German outpost line they had met no fire worth mentioning, and they only came under moderate fire ~~xxxxxx~~ when withdrawing across the open west of the wood.

~~xxxxxx~~ On reporting to the battalion commander that he was back at his starting point, Storkey was ordered immediately to ~~xxxxxx~~ ^{take his company back to the objective.} ~~xxxxxx~~ He answered that the objective was an impossible one and anyway there was very little company to take. He would go if necessary himself; but before he went he would

see the brigadier and make sure that he knew the conditions
 arrival
 at the far side of the wood. The ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ at that moment
 of his fifty prisoners and their officers ~~XXXXXXXXXX~~ gave a
 more pleasant turn to the interview, and Storkey afterwards
 had his interview with Brig. Gen Smith, who appreciated
 his information.^x

x
 helping to
 Storkey who spent the afternoon in going forward and/bringing in
 numerous of the wounded men of his company from the open in front of
 the Jumling Off Line, was awarded the Victoria Cross

9250.

4 June 1935.

F.N. Lipscomb, M.C.,
"Weston",
Prince Street,
Goulburn, N.S.W.

Dear Mr. Lipscomb,

I have been writing the story of the fighting on 7 April 1918 at Hangard Wood, but have been much troubled by lack of detail in the records, which are very bare. I should be most grateful if you would give me the benefit of your recollection particularly concerning the following points -

- (1) Did you meet any parties of the 20th Battalion in the wood? The official report says that you and Captain Storkey conferred with one of their officers, but Storkey does not remember this.
- (2) How was the attack on the German company, which you captured, made?
other
Any/details that you can give me from your memory would be useful.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

24/6/18.

Storky says: 1 m.g. only was brought back - the
 two men took back (rears) & could only take one of
 the guns. No course before attack on post - they sent
 away 1 prisoner & then went on to far edge of wood.

"Weston"

Prince Street
Youlburn

17/6/35

C. R. W. Bean Esq
 Official Historian
 Victoria Barracks
 Paddington

No 9250

Dear Mr Bean:

Acknowledging receipt of your letter of
 the 4th ult. in which you desire information regarding
 the "Hangard Wood" episode.

Firstly, I do not remember meeting any
 members of the 20th Battalion in the wood

Secondly, the story of the episode as far as my
 memory serves me is as follows:-

The 19th Battalion, in company with other
 battalions of the 5th Brigade, was hurried down from
 around Messines to the Villers Bretonnais sector,
 at the time the 5th Army fell back ^{before} the
 German offensive. - we passed through the
 villages of Blangy, Ironville and Coisy, -
 deserted by the villagers, but occupied by
 large numbers of disguised Tommies: -

Eventually we came to an open field where
 we were halted and orders given to dig in.

Some little distance in front of us
 could be seen a wood - Hangard Wood -
 and beyond it to the left, a Church spire,
 marking the location of some town - probably
 Villers Bretonnais. We could see no

sign of the Germans, all was quiet
 except for an occasional shell going well
 over, and a steady drizzle had set in.

B. Coy of the 19th Battalion had just got well

begin when a runner came from Battalion Headquarters — which was located in a haystack some little distance back — with instructions for Company Commanders to report to Major ~~Anderson~~ ^{Walker} who was then Acting Colonel in charge of the Bn. Captain Wallace was Company Commander of B. Coy. at the time: — On his return he told us that we had to go ahead through the wood and dig in on the far side under cover of darkness, and the following night we would be consolidated by the other three Companies. Zero hour was 4.30.

We were to be assisted by an artillery barrage preceding our advance and we were told that aeroplanes had made a reconnaissance and had reported that we would meet no opposition until we got through the wood, but that the Germans were strongly entrenched on the other side.

At Zero hour we started off, but the barrage did not eventuate, and when about 50 yds from the wood we encountered heavy machine gun fire from an outpost that was established on the near edge of the wood and was camouflaged by branches of trees, so that the aeroplanes apparently did not notice it.

Our chaps fell like nuns in the face of the machine gun fire and I found myself in the wood with 6 men, and shortly afterwards came across Lieut. Horkey with 4 men.

We then held a council of war, and realising it was useless to go on, we decided the best thing to do was to try and clean up the German outpost and get back to our line. Horkey took one flank of the 10 men and I the other and with much shouting we dashed back at the outpost

and get us getting in quickly with bombs, bayonet and revolver. before they had time to realise just how weak we were in numbers; - there were more than 80 Germans in the post and we killed about 30. and the remainder "Kameraded", we quickly disarmed them and marched them back to battalion headquarters together with their machine gun. which to-day is mounted in the Australian War Museum.

Dawn was by then just breaking, and as we returned with our prisoners, a party of Germans from their front line beyond the wood came through after us and began to fire, consequently we were forced to leave most of our own wounded. I picked up one chap on the way. - a 20th Bn sergeant - I fancy his name is Ross. He was badly wounded in the chest and although Fritz fired at us several times I managed to get him in with the assistance of one of B. Coy few men, named Lewis. I heard afterwards that the sergeant had recovered from his wounds.

This is the only occasion that I personally came in contact with any member of the 20th Bn.

After reporting to Bn Headquarters I returned to the trench we had vacated a few hours previously and finding Horky already there we spread out a waterproof sheet and stretched out for a rest, with Signaller Barclay sitting on an ammunition box a couple of yards away. I had just said to Horky "Sweet dreams Perc", when a shell burst on the top of the shallow trench, above us, bumping

the three of us. :- when we were dug out. we found
 Storky was shaken up but unwounded. The
 Signaller was killed and I was wounded in
 the knee & thigh. I was carried out and
 after passing through hospitals at Rouen and
 Wandsworth. returned to Australia on the hospital
 ship "Kallio" in October 1918.

Lieut Storky was 2nd in command of
 B. Coy. at the time. He was awarded
 the Victoria Cross and 2 the Military Cross under
 Army Orders of General Sir H.S. Rawlinson
 commanding the Fourth Army. dated June 3rd 1918.

We lost some very fine men in that stunt
 including Capt. "Doss" Wallack.

The following ^{is} a letter from General Birdwood
 which may be of some use to you in writing up
 the episode.

Headquarters
 A. I. F.
 France.
 22/6/18

"Dear Lipscomb:

I write to convey to you my hearty congratulations
 on the award of the Military Cross, which you have
 thoroughly well earned by your good and gallant
 service. During ~~your~~ ^{our} attack at Bois de Hangard
 you displayed marked courage and initiative when
 with Lieut Storky and ten other ranks, you attacked
 an enemy party of about 80 to 100 strong, and
 dislodged them from their position. Killing about
 30 and capturing the remainder of them and a
 machine gun. Thank you so much for
 your fine conduct, and with good wishes "

Yours sincerely
 W. H. Birdwood

I trust the foregoing details may be of some
 help to you.

Yours sincerely
 F. N. Lipscomb

Wetton
Prince Street
Youlburn
20/6/35

C. E. W. Bean Esq.
Victoria Barracks
Sydney

Dear Mr Bean:

Further to my letter of the 17th inst.
giving details of the Margaret Wood episode.

I find on looking over copy of the letter, that
I have made a mistake in the name of the officer
who was commanding the battalion at the time :-
it was Major Walker, not Major Harrison.

Yours faithfully
F. W. Lipscomb

89

Headquarters,
58th Division.
April 19th, 1918.

75
A

Dear Smythe,

The 5th Australian Brigade are leaving us today. I want to tell how very much we appreciated having them. All the fighting and work they did here was splendid; one and all from their Brigadier Gen. Smith downwards were all out to help and we found them all first class to work with. I am afraid they had a none too good a time in this bad weather but they were all wonderfully cheery and willing. I have never had the good luck to be with the Australians this war, but I think I can safely say they are quite one of the best fighting units I have come across.

Will you please convey to Brigadier Genl. Smith and the 5th Australian Brigade our very deep appreciation of their services whilst they were with us.

Yours very sincerely,

(sed) A.B.E. CATOR.

The climax is, perhaps, the saddest part of this grim drama. The surgeon involved, who was both young and ambitious, wrote an enthusiastic account to the *Lancet*, under a heading of "Remarkable Tonsillar Catastrophe." The account was featured and subsequently referred to in all medical records as the R.T.C. Case.

There seems to be no limit, does there? The point is that there are many people in the world called Robinson, who can only be inter-distinguished by adding prefixes to their surname, e.g., Jack, Swiss Family, Revolving, etc. In the same way, if we persist, will we soon become known under some such redundant soubriquet as the "Tanks R.T.C.?"

Sir, I have said enough; I feel that your support, and that of your public, is already won.

When my blood has cooled I hope again to use your columns to inveigh against the slack and anachronistic habit of some of my colleagues, who, when asked their Regiment, say that they are in the "Tank Corps." Well, words fail me (as they fail them). Was it for nothing that But, I digress; some other time perhaps, when you're not too busy.

With pride, I have the honour to be,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,
R. D. AYPHE,
Lieut., R. Tanks.

~*~*~

ANOTHER PROTEST

The Editor, *The Royal Tank Corps Journal*.

Sir,

You have asked me to protest against (sorry! I should have said "reply to") the protest of Mr. R. D. Ache (again I must apologise—the word should read "Ayche"). But there does seem to be an ache somewhere! In fact, an "R.T.C." "ache."

I understand that the Editorial staff wish to ask pardon for their and their contributors' sins of omission (the omissions of these controversial letters "oyal ank orps") in the past. They, the Editorial staff, admit they have on all too numerous (apparently) occasions used that (seemingly) most reprehensible abbreviation "R.T.C." But they say they laboured under the delusion (as it now appears to be) that by "R.T.C." was meant "The Royal Tank Corps," and not any other or more obscure collection of words, as, for instance, the Rural Transport Company.

You will realise how difficult a situation it is. These letters "R.T.C." will so easily flow from the pen.

Yet—what about, say, the abbreviation "R.A."? Do these two simple and easily written letters really mean "The Royal Artillery"? When we read that Major X.Y.Z. has been appointed to the staff of the R.A., what are we to understand? There, indeed, is an obscure association—one might even say a rare association—of letters. Are we to hasten to the nearest post office and telegraph our congratulations to X.Y.Z. upon his appointment as a Royal Academician? Truly a difficult situation!

Again, in time of war, say in the middle of an advance when bullets, shells, bombs, aerial darts, gas, liquid fire—aye, even Tanks—are whizzing round one's head, are we to stay our progress and consider the question of how we should address the Company or Battalion commander on our flank? We may have been told, in Battle Orders, that we are to maintain touch with "B" Coy., 2nd Bn.

A.B.C.L.I. (for Mr. Ayche's sake we had better explain that the last two letters, "L.I.", actually mean "Light Infantry," and *not*, for example, "Liberal Imbibers" or any other combination whatsoever) on our left flank. Now we have an important message to send to O.C. "B" Coy., A.B.C.L.I. Are we to sit down and consult with our Company or platoon commanders as to the proper method of addressing the commander of "B" Coy., A.B.C.L.I.? And, in the meantime, do not let us forget these bullets, shells, bombs, aerial darts, gas, liquid fire—and Tanks. They make such pleasant companions! To "B" (A.B.C.L.I.), or not to "B" (A.B.C.L.I.)—that is the question.

Was there ever devised such a problem? (Don't forget these bullets, shells, bombs, aerial darts, gas, liquid fire—and tanks!)

Are we to sit down and indite some message similar to the following:—

"From: (here follows our (probably very incorrectly written) designation).

To: The Officer Commanding "Bee" Company, First Battalion, The Absolutely Bored County Light Infantry.

I have to inform you that SHELL FIRE and MACHINE GUN FIRE is becoming VERY MUCH HEAVIER on our RIGHT FLANK ack ack ack Will you please inform me how many FULL tins of JAM (Pickler's ALUM AND PAPPLE for preference) you have in your COMPANY ack ack ack

Z.Y.X. Cholmondeley-Snorter,

Captain,

Commanding ACK COMPANY,

Second Battalion THE BLANKSHIRE AND DASHSHIRE REGIMENT.

(DUKE OF PLAZATORO'S OWN).

Now, Mr. Editor, have we said enough? Have we most amply and humbly apologised for *your* past sins? We do not particularly care for the job of apologising for *other people's* sins—but we have done our best in the trying circumstances.

Remember, remember—no, *not* the Fifth of November—but that too utterly utter abbreviation—"R.T.C."

(May I mention, in confidence, that my fee for this contribution to your columns is Fifty Guineas—and I hope I get 'em!).

Yours, more in sorrow than in anger,

ARR TEE CEE.

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July 1935

THE GERMAN TANK ATTACK

April 24th, 1918

By MAJOR-GENERAL J. F. C. FULLER, C.B., C.B.E., D.S.O.

SOME time ago there was published an account of the action of British tanks on April 24th, 1918. Since writing it I have obtained what appears to be a fairly accurate summary of what the German tanks accomplished on that day. And as this was the first occasion upon which tank met tank, I think it may be of interest to readers of the *Royal Tank Corps Journal*.

On the evening of 21st April a detachment of thirteen German tanks was detrained at Guillaucourt, where one, due to a cracked cylinder head, was left, and the remaining twelve moved to Wiencourt, their second line transport remaining at the detraining station. Whilst they were being detrained they were bombed by aircraft but suffered no inconvenience, neither did the hostile aircraft discover the nature of their target.

On the 22nd the detachment was organised into three groups and their leaders were given their instructions; the situation and objectives were explained and detailed descriptions were given of the routes to be taken to the starting line. Touch was also obtained with the infantry to be supported by the tanks, and the plans and execution of the attack was discussed with them. Further, a munition and fuel depot was established at Guillaucourt. If the attack proved successful each group was to be supplied by two lorries, one with ammunition and the other with petrol, which were to advance at first as far as Wiencourt, and later as far as Marcelcave. Any further advance of these supply lorries was to be left to the discretion of the group leaders.

On the 23rd April the tasks for the "Scopnik" group (attached 228th Infantry Division) and for the Uihlein group (attached 4th Guards Infantry Division) were outlined as follows:—

(1) The "Scopnik" group, after the penetration of Villers-Bretonneux by the infantry, was to support the advance north of this village, and to return to the rendezvous as soon as the 228th Infantry Division reached its first day's objective north of Villers-Bretonneux.

(2) The Uihlein group was to support the advance of the infantry into Bois d'Aquenne after Villers-Bretonneux had been taken, and to return to the rendezvous after the infantry had penetrated the wood.

Besides these orders, instructions were given to all groups to hold themselves ready to act on their own initiative in the case of enemy counter-attacks.

At 4.45 a.m. on the 24th April all the tanks began the advance to their starting lines, which were reached punctually. As these positions were close behind the German front line the advance began after the preliminary bombardment opened, in order to prevent the enemy from hearing the noise of the engines.

The early stages of the attack took place in thick fog, which began to clear at about 11 a.m. The condition of the ground was extremely favourable for the tanks, because the country to be traversed consisted mainly of dry cultivated land and grass and was almost entirely free from obstacles such as trenches and shell holes.

The "Scopnik" group left its starting line at 6.50 a.m.,

crossed the German front line at 7 a.m., and the enemy front line shortly afterwards. The enemy front-line troops, we are informed, defended their position obstinately, the concealed machine-gun nests being difficult to recognise in the thick fog. A heavy fire was open on the tanks. After a short but violent fight, the enemy infantry occupying the front-line trench and the garrisons of the machine-gun nests surrendered. The prisoners were driven into the arms of the German infantry who were following the tanks.

Tank No. 3 (Overleutenant Skopnik) proceeded under heavy enemy rifle and artillery fire parallel to the railway to within a hundred metres or so from the eastern outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux. As the infantry did not follow, and because by this time they had entirely lost touch with them, the tank proceeded to return, destroyed four machine-gun nests which had attacked it in the rear, and then accompanied the infantry, who by this time had caught it up, to the eastern outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux close by the railway embankment. Here it was brought under heavy machine-gun fire. The tank then proceeded along the edge of Villers-Bretonneux and cleaned up the machine-gun nests in that quarter, and in spite of an obstinate defence. It then pushed forward with the infantry into the village and proceeded as far as the railway crossing close to the Roman road on the western outskirts. In the course of this manoeuvre considerable enemy resistance was broken. Tanks Nos. 1 and 2 (Lieuts. Vietze and Volkheim), in the course of their advance, succeeded in cleaning up strongly entrenched gun nests which had been holding up the advance of the German infantry, and, at 8.45 a.m., it joined tank No. 3 in front of the brick works. It was only then that the visibility became good enough to enable touch to be kept between the three tanks.

The brick works, which were strongly held by machine guns, were attacked by the three tanks together and paralysed by their fire. Those of the garrison who were still alive surrendered. The prisoners were driven towards the German infantry. Whilst infantry occupied the brick works, tanks Nos. 1 and 2 advanced on the hangars which were situated on the eastern outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux, and which were defended by numerous machine-gun nests. The hangars were destroyed by fire. The tanks then proceeded along the eastern outskirts of the village and reached the Roman road, after having silenced several machine guns placed in houses.

At mid-day the tanks returned to their starting line position, having performed their allotted task.

Losses: One officer severely wounded; two men killed; 15 men wounded (including four of the accompanying troops).

Shortly after 7 a.m. the Uihlein group crossed their own front line. Tank Nos. 1 and 2 (Lieuts. Hennecke and Burmann) advanced along the railway embankment towards Villers-Bretonneux, attacked a well-fortified strong point in front and flank and finally in rear; caused the garrison to evacuate it, and thus enabled the infantry to advance. Tank No. 2 then cleared a trench running in a westerly direction as far as the chapel, and killed a

number of the enemy and took 13 prisoners. Then, in company with tank No. 1, it proceeded in a westerly direction through the railway station. Tank No. 2, in the course of this advance, engaged with success a number of enemy reinforcements which had been hastily brought up, and at 10 a.m. reached the Roman road below the railway crossing. In the meantime tank No. 1, in spite of a defect in its gun mounting due to continual rolling and rocking, destroyed several strong points and joined tank No. 2. Both tanks then opened a heavy fire in the Bois d'Aquenne and on the enemy reserves which had just arrived west of this wood, which the German infantry were thus enabled to enter. Tank No. 3 (Lieut. Theunissen) was only intended to deal with the enemy resistance in the early stages of the battle, and then join tanks Nos. 1 and 2. It advanced, however, over the enemy front line and cleared the enemy trenches from the flank and rear, in the course of which operation 30 prisoners were taken. It then moved towards a fortified farm, the garden of which was reached when engine trouble set in. *En route* it had dealt with several machine gun nests. In spite of a defective engine it succeeded in breaking down enemy resistance south of the railway station where it captured one officer and 174 men. When the tank was put entirely out of action, owing to blockages in the valves and in the induction pipe, Lieut. Theunissen advanced with his men on foot; but as repairs were completed shortly afterwards, he returned to it. A few minutes later he ran into a shell hole immediately in front of the tank, where the machine stuck and partially capsized. During the night two attempts were made to save the tank, but proved unsuccessful. It was left lying in the farm near the German front line and was prepared for demolition. The gun and machine guns could not be salvaged on account of the suddenness and violence of the enemy's counter attacks, which the German infantry failed to repulse.

Tanks Nos. 4 and 5 (Lieuts. Block and Bartens) were to advance against the fortified farmhouse south of Villers-Bretonneux. Tank No. 6 (Lieut. Lappe) was to advance on the farm from the south, in order to support tanks Nos. 4 and 5 by fire from the flank. Tank No. 4 reached the enemy front line at 7.10 a.m., cleared a section of trench, broke down the strong resistance offered at the farm, and thus paved the way for the infantry. This tank then joined tanks Nos. 1 and 2, and advanced with them towards the Bois d'Aquenne. In conjunction with these two tanks, it was successful in repulsing an enemy counter-attack.

Tank No. 5, on account of the thick fog, proceeded rather too far to the north, and was met by heavy machine gun fire. The driver was wounded, and, as the brakes jammed, Lieut. Bartens, together with all available members of the crew, joined the infantry, but a little later on, the repairs having been completed, he returned to the tank which advanced on the hill in front of the Bois d'Aquenne, where it cleaned up a number of the enemy holding sections of a trench and some machine gun nests.

Tank No. 6 (Lieut. Lappe) advanced in accordance with orders. The German infantry, however, did not follow. The tank was engaged with heavy fire by the enemy. At a distance of 30 metres in front of the enemy both engines became over-heated and broke down. The driver was wounded, and no second driver was available, because the three second drivers of the detachment were still being trained with the "Robr Sturm Battalion." After

some time, however, Lieut. Lappe succeeded in starting the engine and then returned slowly to his original position.

Losses: One man killed; two officers and 22 men wounded (including 13 of the accompanying infantry).

The Steinhardt group (attached to the 77th Reserve Division) reached its starting line at 6.40 a.m.

Tank No. 1 (Lieut. Stein) advanced with the first infantry wave, silenced a number of machine guns and cleared up several sections of trench. At 9.45 a.m., however, the tank ran on to a patch of undermined ground, turned over on to its right side and was thus out of action. The crew, under the orders of the commander, left the tank and took part in the infantry battle as "Sturmtruppen," with three machine guns. The tank was blown up* by a pioneer officer when our infantry retired. It could not be salvaged on account of enemy counter-attacks.

Tank No. 2 (Lieut. Biltz) advanced in the direction of Cachy, cleared up several machine gun nests, including one which had held up a German infantry battalion for over an hour. The tank then advanced to within 700 metres of Cachy, effectively bombarding the enemy position there. Next it was engaged by eight enemy tanks which suddenly appeared. It put out of action one of these machines and compelled another to retire. Almost immediately after this, however, it received a direct hit from the enemy artillery and the armour was pierced by a projectile of about 5.7 cm. calibre. Another direct hit was made on the right front of the tank and a third was received in the oil tank. In spite of this, however, the tank was successfully brought back as far as the first infantry position, a distance of roughly two kilometres. It was so badly damaged that it was prepared for blowing up. No further efforts to save the tank could be made because shortly afterwards the enemy recaptured the ground taken.

Tank No. 3 (Lieut. Muller-Albert) was ordered to support the infantry attack in the direction of Gentelles. The attack in this sector, however, was soon held up. The tank, therefore, assisted tank No. 4 in attacking Cachy with gun fire on the eastern edge of this village. As the infantry did not assault Cachy the tank returned to its rendezvous.

Tank No. 4 (Lieut. Bitter) in the course of its advance on Cachy destroyed several machine gun nests. The garrison of a trench about 200 metres long was attacked from the flank and was partly destroyed and partly put to flight. At about 12.30 p.m. the commander of the tank observed the retirement of our infantry in front of Cachy. He immediately turned northwards, halted the infantry, and then advanced himself on Cachy. At about 800 metres distance from this village seven enemy tanks suddenly appeared. Two of these were set on fire by Lieut. Bitter and the third was put out of action. The remaining four were bombarded by him and fled. In the meantime the gun, as a result of the breaking of two springs, was out of action. The retreating enemy tanks were pursued with machine gun fire to within 200 metres of Cachy. Fire was then brought to bear on the north-eastern outskirts of this village. The infantry had meanwhile advanced once more on Cachy, but the village was not assaulted. At 3.45 p.m. the tank returned to its rendezvous, having fought continuously since 7 a.m.

Losses: One officer killed; five N.C.O.'s and men killed; one man missing; 13 N.C.O.'s and men wounded.

(*) This tank must have been the "Elfriede," and, if so, it was not blown up.

?
Capt by Jm

From our
Tank.

?
Capt by Jm

3*

6

A TANK VISION OF 1833

IN 1833 the Editor of the *United Service Journal* received two independent letters advocating the then growing use of steam to the uses of war. The first letter came from Bombay and appeared in the January number. The author in his letter suggests:—

“ . . . Mr. Perkins, I believe, some years ago, exhibited the imposing effects of steam applied to the projection of small iron balls or bullets, in vast numbers, and with considerable impetus, from a stationary engine, such as might be used in the defence of a fortress; but I do not recollect to have seen any proposal for the employment of this powerful agent in the field of battle. . . . We all know that in former times chariots of war were highly esteemed for their destructive operation, yet they were found objectionable, and ultimately they were disused on one account, viz.: the great difficulty of managing the horses when frightened or wounded, and the impossibility of impelling them on the pikes of a formidable phalanx. This objection would have a double weight with the modern use of firearms. . . . The great forte of steam is its passiveness. Secure the boiler and the machinery from the stroke of a cannon-ball, and you might drive a steam-chariot triumphantly through a regiment. Imagine three or four of these machines driven at a galloping speed through a square of infantry; the director might be seated in perfect safety in the rear of the engine, and a body of cavalry, about fifty yards in rear, would enter the furrows ploughed by these formidable chariots, and give the *coup-de-grâce* to the unfortunate infantry. The chariots might be armed with scythes, both in front and flank; and, if the first shock were avoided by the men opening their ranks, they might easily be made sufficiently manageable to wheel round and return on any part of the square which stood firm. . . . ”

The second letter came out in the May issue:—

“ Let us consider the effect of a platoon of locomotives moving along a road against a closely-cemented column of the enemy. Its united muscular strength, if it could be applied, would not stop them. The column must be scattered or crushed; and if either work should be left unfinished, it is only necessary to turn the steam and back they will come with equal force, to the utter destruction of everything that may attempt to oppose them. It is perfectly true that cannon could destroy the machinery, and so it will the wheels and limbers of guns, but this is deemed no valid reason against the employment of

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artillery. Consider, again, the effect of their astounding noises upon cavalry—the power they could afford of advancing or retiring a range of armed blockhouses (if we may so term that which is made of proof iron plates) for the protection of any weak parts of the line, or to cover an attack, and many other purposes, . . . ”

SOLDIERS' FAMILIES HOME, SOUTHAMPTON

THE following particulars regarding the Soldiers' Families Home, Southampton, as a holiday quarter, are published for the information of all concerned.

The Soldiers' Families Home, Bugle Street, Southampton, is available as a holiday quarter for the families of married soldiers during the non-trooping season, *i.e.*, from May until the end of August.

The Home, which is well furnished, contains seven bedrooms, a bathroom (with hot water), a dining room and a sitting room. Bedding is provided. The charges are: Adults, 1s. a night; children, 6d. a night. The caretaker of the Home supplies meals as required on very reasonable terms; alternatively, cooking facilities and utensils are provided in the event of families wishing to cook for themselves. The Home is situated in a quiet street near the sea and is within easy reach of the New Forest and other Hampshire beauty spots.

Applications for accommodation should be addressed to the Staff Captain, Movements, Brazil Road, The Docks, Southampton, stating number of adults and children, and the period for which accommodation is required.

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From Rt. Hon. R. Anthony Eden



Foreign Office,
S.W.1.

9th November, 1936.

Juc

Dear Sir,

It was indeed good of you to think of sending me a copy of "Reveille", and I was most interested to read it.

It is quite true as you say that I was a General Staff Officer of the 58th Division at Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918 for a short time before becoming Brigade Major of a Brigade in the 66th Division. Previous to my service in the 58th Division I served with my own Regiment, the King's Royal Rifle Corps.

I am sorry that I haven't got a photo at hand to send to you in reply to your request, but I can promise you that the readers of "Reveille" sustain no loss in consequence!

Perhaps I may without impertinence add that I have the clearest recollections of the gallantry of

Australian.....

J. Black, Esq.



Australian troops at Villers-Bretonneux at what
must have been one of the most critical phases of
the war.

Believe me,

Yours truly,

Arthur Eden



SILVERDENE,
SUNNINGDALE,
PERTH.

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panel

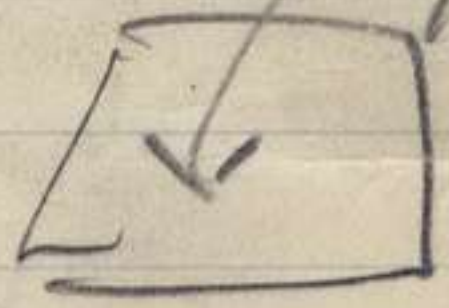
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[VILLERS-BRETENNEUX]

[April 24th, 1918]

[By Brig.-General G.W. St.G. GROGAN, VC, CB, CMG, DSO, 9 bars] 26/8/36



The German attack at Villers-Brettonneux on April 24th, 1918, though limited in time and extent, was nevertheless a very violent one. Had it succeeded, it would have been a disaster for us.

If the Germans had gained permanent possession of Villers-Brettonneux and the adjacent ridges, which indeed are in this locality the last high ground to veil Amiens from direct view, ~~that~~ that great ^{city} ~~town~~ and important railway junction would have been completely uncovered.

Then Amiens, lying as it does at the bottom of the Somme ^{river} valley and its tributaries, would have been open to direct bombardment at a distance of ^{six} miles only below Villers-Brettonneux, and in addition the whole of our North and South lines of communication, ~~which converge~~ Road and Rail, which converge in a knot on Amiens, could have been hopelessly cut.

That this impending calamity was averted at the eleventh hour is due primarily to the gallantry and leadership of the ~~5th~~ Australian Corps 13th and 15th Australian Brigades

The fight at Villers-Brettonneux has therefore a permanent importance in the Records of the Great War, for —

(a) It was the first and perhaps the only occasion in which the Germans in an initial attack employed armoured tanks, clumsily copied from our own.

(b) It will ever be remembered for perhaps the greatest individual feat of the War — the successful counter-attack by night across unknown and difficult ground, at a few hours notice, by the Australian Soldier.

Block
type

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

After pens than mine, ^{described,} have, and will again describe, the fight as a whole. I can only write of it from the narrow point of view of a Commander of one of the Brigades, ~~the 23rd Infantry Brigade,~~ exposed to the first fury of the German avalanche.

[My Brigade (the 23rd) ~~Infantry Brigade,~~ consisting of the 2/Devonshire Regt, the 2/West Yorkshire Regt, and the 2/Middlesex Regt, had, in the last ^{ten} ~~the~~ days of March and beginning of April, been very heavily engaged in defending the line of the Somme, to hold which we had been ~~hastily~~ hurriedly summoned with the rest of the 8th Division from rest billets in the North.

[Losses in this continuous battle had been very heavy and, just before our move up to the Villers-Bretonneux area, these ~~losses~~ had been made good by heavy drafts from England.

The 2/West Yorkshire Regt had lost over 700 other ranks and 11 Officers; the 2/Middlesex about the same; and the 2/Devonshire, ^{which} ~~was~~ had not been engaged quite so heavily ~~engaged~~ on the line of the Somme, rather less. But, in any case, the casualties of the ^{three} ~~the~~ battalions in the ^{23rd} ~~the~~ Brigade were not far short of 1,800 men, and Officers in proportion.

The drafts which we received to make good the gaps in the ranks were entirely composed of young boys of from 18 to 19 years of age, who had received the minimum of ^{essential} ~~necessary~~ training in England before being urgently required in France.

Though their gallantry and morale were of high quality, still they necessarily lacked the stamina and experience of older and more seasoned troops, and that confidence in themselves that mutual association, and comradeship in the same ranks of a regiment for long periods must impart ^{to all troops,} and it was a severe ordeal for these young ^{men} ~~troops~~ to be tried so ^{soon} ~~soon~~ by the fierce fire of War in its most intensive and fearsome form.

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

On the 18/19th April, the ~~8th~~^{8th} Division took over from the 5th Australian Division the defences of Villers-Bretonneux. The front line of these defences, of which Villers-Bretonneux was the centre, extended from nearly as far as ~~Vaire~~^{Vaire} Wood, north of the Amiens-Foucaucourt road, to a little north of Hanger Wood. Vaire Wood and a little to the south ^{continued to be} held by the 5th Australian ^{Division} ~~Force~~, and Hanger Wood and a little to the north ^{was held} by the 18th Division. ^{now held by the 8th Division} The line ran north to south, a little to the east of the village of Villers-Bretonneux, where stood Monument Wood.

This line, ^{just} by Monument Wood made a sharp turn to the west before continuing south again, thus forming a decided salient at this spot.

Monument Wood was indeed about the highest point in this vicinity, and was strongly held, but, being a salient, it made a decidedly weak spot in the defensive line. (It is interesting to note that it was so called, because the French had erected a Monument there to their fellow countrymen who had fallen in the latter part of the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71 in the fighting round Amiens, where Gambetta's young levies under Faidherbe put up a most gallant resistance to the German veterans under Von der Tann.)

Here it was, upon this salient by the Monument, that the brunt of the German attack was directed.

Immediately to the west of Villers-Bretonneux were the two somewhat extensive woods of Bois d'Agienne and Bois l'Atte, which ran into one another.

They offered a covered way to Villers-Bretonneux and the front line, but they were never very healthy to stay in, as the Germans were continually shelling them.

VILLERS-BRETENNEUX

and filling them up with mustard gas.)

However, the Support Line ran just in front of the Bois d'Agonne Bois d'Agonne, between it and Villers-Bretonneux, and was called the "Cachy Switch"; and the Reserve Line ran through the middle of the Bois l'Abbe, rather farther to the West.

On the evening of ~~the~~ April ^{23rd}, my Brigade moved up to take over our front line just North and South of Monument Wood, in the Salient already mentioned. The 2/Middlesex were on the left and 2/West Yorkshire on the right holding the Monument Wood Salient. The 2/Devonshire were in support in the Cachy Switch, immediately behind. Brigade ~~Headquarters~~ ^{Headquarters} were about 600 to 700 yards farther back, in some shelters constructed in the ~~cuttings~~ embankments of the Railway which goes from Amiens to Chaulnes, and which passes more or less through the centre of Villers-Bretonneux in doing so.

We had been warned by Divisional ~~Headquarters~~ ^{Headquarters} before taking over that a heavy attack was believed to be imminent next morning, ~~on the 24th~~ but the troops, though very young and quite new to the game, having, as I said before, just come out from home, were in very good spirits. The trenches we took over were good and all ranks were confident that we would be able to hold our own.

(on April 24th)

At 3.30 a.m. the Germans laid down on our front and rear positions one of the heaviest bombardments I have ever experienced. The nature of this bombardment may be inferred from the fact that a ~~Medical Officer~~ ^{Medical Officer} ~~who was~~ a citizen of the U. S. A., who was captured early in the attack by the Germans, and afterwards released.

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5

Later on informed us that as he went through the German lines he saw long lines of ~~German~~ Heavy Guns, axle to axle, ~~carrying on the bombardment~~, which were being fired at high pressure by gun-teams stripped to the waist, with relief teams standing by each gun in order to keep up a continuous service of the guns.

[This Bombardment was preparatory to an attack along the whole front by ~~no~~ no less than ^{five} German Divisions assisted by tanks.

All our troops had already suffered extremely heavy casualties from this long continued shelling, when at about 6.30 A.M. the enemy started mixing up a ^{dense} heavy smoke barrage with his heavy shells.

[Suddenly, at 7 A.M., a number of ^{large} ~~heavy~~ German Tanks appeared out of the smoke just North and South of Monument wood, ~~and~~ Despite the storm of rifle and machine-gun fire that was opened on them, there was no heavy enough metal to damage or stop them, and they were soon across the 23rd Infantry Brigade's front-line trenches, enfilading them with gunfire and lachrymatory Gas, running up and down them, and otherwise completely disorganising all our front line.

[These Tanks, I may say, were ^{ponderous} heavy, clumsy affairs, heavily gunned and armoured, and were the enemy's first attempt to copy our own better constructed tanks. No one had ever thought that there was a possibility of the Germans employing this weapon, so no provision had been made to stop them, by the placing forward of anti-tank guns to knock them out by direct fire. Indeed, when ^{the} 23rd ~~Infantry~~ Brigade first reported to 8th Divisional Headquarters that our front line was

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX

Being attacked by German Tanks, this message was ~~at first~~ received with frank disbelief, forcibly expressed. I may add one humorous remark, made by a young officer, a brave man, who was killed later ~~in~~ in the war. Seeing his company of young soldiers getting excited and shouting "Tanks, My God", he replied "No lads, that's not a Tank, it's only a ruddy Molehill on the move".

[These German Tanks, of which there appear to have been ^{seven} ~~8~~ in all, having thoroughly disorganised our front-line defences, were closely followed by masses of German Infantry, headed by the German 4th Guard Division, ~~who~~ ^{which} succeeded in gaining possession of the ground North and South of Monument Wood by a double attack against the Eastern and Southern faces of the Salient, and compelling the remains of the 2/ Middlesex Regt and ~~2/ West Yorkshire Regt~~ 2/ West Yorkshire Regt to fall back on Villers-Bretonneux and the ^{Cachy} ~~Cachy~~ Switch Support-trench.

As Major Ingham, a well known Rugby football player in the North of England, managed to organise a new defence line, near the ^{headquarters} ~~H.Q.~~ of his Battalion, the 2/ West Yorkshire, but unfortunately he was severely wounded (~~and~~ ^{he was} subsequently killed on his way to the Advanced crossing station), and when he went this line gave way.

[Then, at about 8 A.M., ~~4~~ ^{four} of the German Tanks followed by Infantry launched an attack against the 2nd Devonshire, who were holding the support line of Cachy Switch.]

One Tank, after blowing in the ^{parapet} ~~parapet~~ of the 2/ Devonshire ^{Headquarters} ~~H.Q.~~, went over it. Their Commanding Officer, Lieut.-Colonel Anderson-Morshead, a very gallant officer,

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afterwards told me ^{that,} as he saw the tank coming up to him, he emptied his revolver at it, and then dived quickly to the bottom of the trench, the tank rumbling over him as he lay as low as he could get. He added: "My heart has never beaten faster in my life, it went a proper Pit-a-Pat I can assure you."

[As a result of this attack, the 2/Devonshire's two left Companies were forced out of the Northern portion of the Bachy Switch, although the two right Companies held firm. But the Germans had gained possession of the whole of Villers-Bretonneux, and pushed behind the 2/Devonshire the left Companies into the Bois d'Agrenne, ~~from~~ whence they were in a position to enfilade the two right Companies of the 2/Devonshire still holding the Southern half of the Bachy Switch.

[However, about this time, the activities of the German tanks came to an end, as some of our tanks, light and heavy ^{ones,} sent for in a hurry from Amiens, came up to fight a battle of tank against tank, in which the German tanks were put out of action. Furthermore, the sight of our own tanks coming up had a steadying and encouraging effect on our Infantry, and the German attack died away soon after 8.30 A.M.

[The 23rd Infantry Brigade was now stabilised from the Southern Half of the Bachy Switch and ~~from there~~ ^{there} ~~running~~ back to the Reserve Line, ^{running} which ran through the centre of the Bois d'Abbe, which was now held by the remains of the Brigade and other troops.

It was, however, most unfortunate that the Germans

VILLERS-BRETTONNEUX

were left ⁱⁿ ~~with~~ the possession of the whole of Villers-Brettonneux and the Bois d'Agienne, as they mounted many machine-guns on the high railway embankment running through Villers-Brettonneux and on ~~Eastern edge~~ the Southern edge of the Wood. ^{This} ~~which~~ made a counter-attack across the open ground to the South very difficult, owing to enfilade Machine-Gun fire, ~~and~~ ^{which this and} was a source of many casualties to the 13th Australian Brigade in their night attack.

In the course of the day things quietened down, and I was directed to make a reconnaissance with Lieut.-Colonel Moore, Commanding the 1st Sherwood Foresters (24th Brigade), through the Bois d'Abbe, which we held, towards the Bois d'Agienne, with a view to try and drive the Germans out of the Bois d'Agienne in the course of the afternoon. This was about 3 P.M., and though we managed to get pretty close to the German positions, and could see what was happening, it was plain enough that the Germans were strongly entrenched in the Bois d'Agienne. However, subsequently Lieut.-Colonel Moore launched an attack from the South-Eastern end of the Wood. ^{The attackers} ~~it~~ came under very heavy rifle and machine-gun fire and a barrage of 5.9-inch guns, Colonel Moore was himself badly wounded, and the ^{troops} ~~attack~~ after gaining a little ground, and having many casualties, ~~the troops were~~ forced to come to a standstill and to dig in on the road, that forms the dividing line between the Bois d'Abbe and Bois d'Agienne.

In the meantime the loss of so much valuable ground had been a cause of anxiety to the Higher Command,

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for it was realised, that, though the ~~Germany~~^{enemy} had failed to gain as much as ~~they~~^{he} undoubtedly expected, ~~yet~~ it was inevitable, that, if matters were allowed to rest as they were, ~~that they~~^{he} would soon make a ~~2nd~~^{second} Attack to gain the remaining high ground and ridge slightly more to the West of Villers-Bretagneux. If ~~they~~^{he} succeeded in doing this, ~~they~~^{he} would be looking straight down into Amiens, and all our lateral communications North and South.

General Sir Henry Rawlinson, Commanding the ~~the~~^{Fourth} Army, thereupon decided that an immediate counter-attack must be made to regain our old positions, and for troops to accomplish this formidable task, he determined to call upon ~~the 5th Australian Division~~^{two Australian infantry brigades - the 13th (4th Divn.) and 15th (5th Divn.)} whose confidence in themselves and their leaders to carry out any duty successfully, however difficult or dangerous, was indeed unbounded.

On weighing up all the factors in the situation, it was decided that a counter-attack in the early hours of the night, assisted by a moon that gave some light, but not too much, gave the best chance of success, though this involved the mounting of an attack across difficult country at night, with no artillery barrage to assist it, against an enemy who had had time to consolidate his position, and mount numerous Machine-Guns.

It is not my place to describe the attack of the ~~the~~ Australian ~~Division~~^{brigades} in April 24th 1918, which will always remain in the memories of the Empire's Armies that fought in France as a great feat of Arms.

There are many Australian Pens, who have commemorated It has been commemorated by many Australian pens,

VILLERS-BRETENNEUX

and will ^{be} commemorated ~~it~~ again.

In my own immediate surroundings, I only saw one phase of that attack in its initial stages, namely, that undertaken by the 13th ~~Australian~~ Brigade (Brigadier-General T. W. Glasgow) across the country just south of the Bois d'Agonne and Villers-Bretonneux, against Monument Wood, and the ground North and South of it. This was ~~the~~ undoubtedly the most difficult task of all the ^{three} Brigades that undertook the counter-attack. Between the 13th ~~Australian~~ Brigade and their objective ~~there~~ were various lines of wire to be crossed, the land sloped from South to North, and this in the dark would tend to draw troops towards the Southern outskirts of Villers-Bretonneux and the Railway Bank, where the enemy had many machine-guns which were likely to, and did as a matter of fact, enfilade the attack of the ~~13th Infantry~~ Brigade at close quarters, causing many losses.

On the afternoon of April 24th some of the 13th Australian Infantry Brigade Staff came up to 23rd ~~Infantry~~ my ^{headquarters} ~~Brigade~~ quarters to make preliminary preparations for the attack of their Brigade, and to study the ground to be passed over.

As the shades of night deepened, the 13th ~~Infantry~~ ~~Australian~~ Brigade moved into their allotted positions, south of the Bois l'Abbe, and at 10 P.M. the attack started off. The orders issued were few and clear, as all ranks knew exactly, what they had to do.

In fact, just before "Zero Hour" one ^{Australian} Regimental

VILLERS-BRETENNEUX

Australian Officer was heard to say these simple words at -
"Boys, you know what you have to do: Get on with it."

[Then the 13th Australian Infantry Brigade started off across country by night, in the face of heavy fire against their face and left flank, but, not to be denied, steadily advanced ~~and~~ and gained possession of Monument Wood, driving out the enemy before them.]

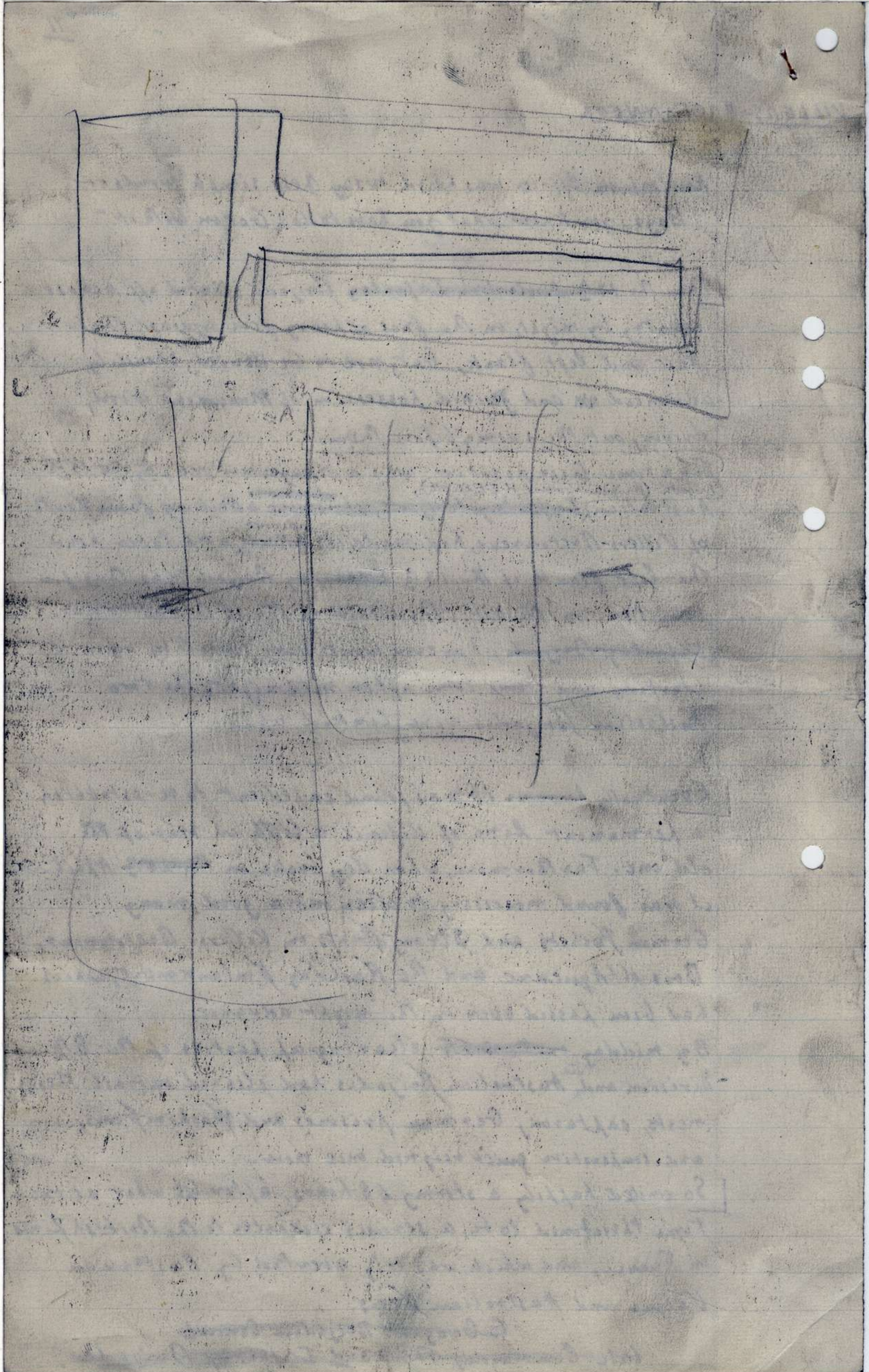
For a time their position was a dangerous one, as the 15th Brigade (Brigadier-General H.E. Elliott), Australian Infantry Brigade, ^{which was} ~~who were~~ attacking from North of Villers-Brettonneux, had made its ^{advance} ~~attack~~ at a later hour. The left flank of the 13th Infantry Brigade was thus for some time in the air. The attack of the 15th, ~~Australian Infantry Brigade~~, however went very smoothly when it started, and some time after midnight the two Australian Brigades were linked up.

[Eventually ~~however~~ it was found expedient to re-establish a permanent line of defence a little in rear of the old one. Furthermore, when day broke on ~~the 25th~~ April 25th it was found necessary to clear out a good many German Pockets and Strong Points in Villers-Brettonneux, Bois d'Agienne and the Railway Embankment, which had been passed over in the night advance.

By midday ~~on the 25th~~ ^{the} cleaning-up parties of the 8th Division and Australian Brigades had cleared out all these nests, capturing German prisoners and machine-guns, and comparative quiet reigned once more.

[So ended happily a stormy 48 hours, after ~~at~~ what at one time threatened to be a serious disaster to the British lines in France, and which was only averted by Australian Valour and Australian Arms.

G. Grogan: Brigadier General
~~late Commander~~ The 23rd Infantry Brigade.



H.N.

Lieut. Harvey, 54th Bn. V/B 20/4/18.

Suppt 2^s were blown in. Capt McNab of Coy took them back to Reserve line of trenches.

Just before the bombardment
Before this Harvey saw a patrol - 4 or 5 coming thru w waterbottles. Sent up a V. light, put L.G. on them. It went out. One cd speak Engl. He had been told there was no oppn - they cd go into V/B & fill water bottles w wine.

During bombt Harvey thought he saw 5^s come up to wire. Took Sgt Joyce & Sgt - went over to 2/R Bde & asked them not to shoot - he was going to receive. Cd see nothing when he got there. Minnies were on front trenches - had one man the ward hit. During bombt H. had been looking to ammunition supply - found them low. ^{all 300 ft away} took Joyce to Enfl. right & tried to get some. When he got there there was no one there. Both the fl. & inf. crew had gone. H. got ammo from the empty post & sent a section of pln over to hold 1 empty 2^s. Cdnt say if posts S. had be abandoned, but N. post was. (This was during bombt wh seemed to be of same intensity all through. There was gas in it). N. told them to keep a good look out. Thick fog came down towards dawn. We cd hear a plane, v. low, came down & zoomed up but cdnt say if it was G. or B.S.

Abt 7 am. mist was lifting & cd see G's adv. from Vaine wood
down into the depression - in line. We had v. light
were ahead. It came to top of ridge we were on
& put a mig. there. When H. saw them coming he
turned to 1 boy & sd: Get ready, here they come.
Abt 30 in 1 trench - a single pl. P. on rt
wd be 30^x away. P. on left (Winterbottom) wd
be 50^x away. When H. saw G's coming he had a
rft w him. He said "Here they come, send
up the SOS." He put a live cartridge in,
& blew it to pieces.

H. was also keeping look to rt & cd
see G's adv past us there towards U. B.
(in single file). From the trenches on rt
they fired on rt fl. L. G. & smashed it.
This was v. soon after they were seen, &
showed they were in 1 Z on rt.

The mig. they had replaced in front
was giving trouble, tho' whole of H's men
were on top of Z. All were standing out there.
H. got a mills grenade & fired it & it
with luck it fell right on 1 machinegun group.

meanwhile. So set a mg. at head of depression
 (B) & were trying to. Enfilade us w mg.
 fire. Every time they opened H's left
 hand L. gunner opened on them. When
 Everything had died down, these f started
 to walk out, getting timber to build up
 their post. We let them come out till
 5 or 6 were there, & when they want to
 get back we opened fire. That quietened
 them.

When bombt. was at its
~~In 1 night time, at dawn~~ worst we saw
 a figure coming right thro it. It was
 Capt Mc Nab. He visited every p. a /
 Coy to see things were O.K. Haroy sent 5
 boys w him in case anything happened.
 H. also told him th his st fl. was
 was exposed. ^{Soon after dark,} That night he sent
 some reserves down to occupy the
 post. H. was visiting th post and happened
 to look out in front & saw a v. strong
 German fighting patrol. He sd "let them
 come near" & opened on them. This

4

dispersed them - they ran all ways. One v. tall
German jumped into 1 Z. I'd something in
German & then jumped out & made a run
for it. One of the boys picked up his rifle
& got him in 1 leg.

Extract from Tank Corps file (24-27 April 1918).

H N.

V/B 2.

Examination of a German Sergeant-Major of 4th Guard Divn.

(dealing mainly with particulars of German Tanks).

Prisoner with 8 men surrendered to two tanks between Bois Aquenne and Villers Bretonneux.

Prisoner stated that, in his Division, they had a very low opinion of the British Infantry. The junior command was considered to be very ignorant. With regard to the Higher command, he stated that German officers frequently pointed out to them that the Flanders Battle and various attempts to use British Cavalry against unbroken lines showed the stupidity of the British Higher Command. He also stated that it was generally considered that the British Cambrai attack produced the greatest opportunity of the war, but that it was generally considered that the British Higher Command had made no preparations to exploit the success.

Prisoner stated that it was generally considered that the Australian troops were about the finest in the world, and that the Germans were loth to attack them.

He said that the general opinion was that the average of the French troops was as high as the average of the German troops. Prisoner said that they could have captured their objectives south of Villers-Bretonneux with very little opposition but that they had been let down by the German 77th Divn on their left.

Dr. Bean.

The abovementioned sergeant-major cannot have been the one ~~that~~ who was captured by the 8th Div. early on Apr. 22^x.

According to the 8th Div. & other records the letter, ~~was~~ belonging to the 3rd Coy. 93 R.I.R. (4th Gd Divn.), was captured with another man of the 93rd early on the 22nd. ~~The above man~~ It would seem from the above notes that that S.M. ~~who~~, who was taken with eight others, was captured by the Tank Corps on the ²⁵24th.

Crell.

The Times
Literary Supplement
8/5/1930

EVERYMAN AT WAR

EVERYMAN AT WAR. Sixty Personal Narratives of the War. Edited by C. B. PURDOM. (Dent. 6s. net.)

The title of this symposium is a happy one. In the first place, it owes its existence to an invitation by Mr. Purdom, the editor of *Everyman*, to his readers to send him accounts of their War experiences. In the second, these are not the reminiscences of professional writers or men of any one type, class, or military calling. They are mostly men in the ranks, but they include one captain and several other officers. The majority write of the Western Front—a special section being reserved for three "Old Contemptibles" of 1914—but Gallipoli, Macedonia, Palestine, Mesopotamia and German East Africa are also represented. Unfortunately there are only three airmen and three sailors. There are also three women and two prisoners of war.

Just a few of the writers have obviously aimed at literary effect, but these are the least effective, with the exception of Mr. William G. Johnson, whose account of the storming of the Wadi esh Sheria in Lord Allenby's first Palestine offensive is a remarkable piece of writing. Otherwise, the best narratives are the plainest and most straightforward. Of these Corporal Bernard John Denore's account of the retreat from Mons, which comes first, is typical. It is a picture of perpetual marching, hunger, thirst, and bloody feet, with interludes of rear-guard fighting, which are dismissed in a few words. In fact, the fighting seemed to him the least important and trying part of the affair. "We seemed to have the measure of the Germans, and yet we retired." Sergeant J. F. Bell's account of a German attack at Ypres on October 29, 1914, is more dramatic, and Mr. Anthony Hossack's story of the first gas attack the following spring still more so, but they are both more or less in the same vein. One of the best accounts of a battle is by an officer, Captain S. J. Worsley's "Delville Wood." Few are out of the ordinary run or describe adventures which we do not think might have befallen any one of us, but therein lies their fidelity. They *are* the War. There are, however, one or two extraordinary incidents in a different category. One is Flight-Sergeant Lewis's story of his jump from the basket of an observation balloon ripped open by shrapnel, when he first fouled the cable, and then, having got the parachute wound round his body, dived on to the top of his fellow-observer's parachute—a chance in a million. The other, Lieutenant F. Mitchell's "When Tank Fought Tank," is quite unique and, as the story is also exceptionally well told, really belongs to the high literature of battle. It is an account of the tank fight, the only one of any importance in the course of the War, at Villers-Bretonneux on April 24, 1918. If the reader feels that hitherto he has been meeting familiar adventures he will assuredly find excitement enough here. We have space only to mention in addition an excellent account by Corporal J. C. Morgan of the life of a Labour company at Ypres, Mr. W. Wainwright's story of the landing on the Mole at Zeebrugge, and Quartermaster-Sergeant Harry Drake's little record of his treatment in sickness by an old Frenchwoman at Famechon. But almost all have the stamp of reality and hardly one has the air of exaggeration.


H.N.

Villers Bret. Ap 24/5 -
Origin of C/attack

Captain White, 30th Bn, ^(12.4.30) tells me) to be

was liaison offr. of the 5th Divn at HQ of 8th (Brit)
Div. at the time of Villers Bretonneux Ap 24/5 1918.
He was in their General Staff office ~~throughout~~
these proceedings.

When the Germans attacked the
Sherwood Foresters were to C/attack but something
went wrong - the C/attack, at any rate, did not
succeed. Divisional headquarters was depressed -
arrangements were being discussed for D.H.Q. to
withdraw & it was assumed that the retreat would
begin all over again.

The Division was to be given two brigades
with which to make an attack on both sides
of Villers Bret. Colonel Armitage, the G.O.C.,
with the map before him, indicated with his fingers
that the attack should be delivered on each side
of Villers Bret.  (as was eventually done) - indeed

this was the obvious procedure. May Jen
Henniker? Kitchen Commanding the 8th Divn., agreed;
but ^{at this time} it was not known what ~~brigades~~ ^{brigades} would
be allotted for the attack. Armitage was
then - as far as White knows - the originator
of the plan.

The 5th Divn was averse to allowing
its 15th Bde to ~~act under~~ ^{be used as its} own position
was threatened & the 15th Co its support, but
Corps ordered it to be used.

Elliott & Glasgow came along (either
together or practically so) to 8 Div H.Q.
~~& when these two masterful men began~~
~~to talk to~~ & the plan was put to them;
at first the J.O.C. 8th Div & his J.S.O.I.
attempted to control the conference but
these two masterful men quickly
took matters into their own hands & swept
the J.O.C. & J.S.O.I. along with them, White says that
the Englishmen seemed somewhat to their
astonishment or bewilderment.

Mr. McAllan.

In the course of a telephone conversation yesterday General Elliott told me that, if the War Memorial is collecting books relating to the war, it would be advisable to purchase "The Re-making of Modern Arms" by Captain Liddell Hart. He says that in the final chapter there are a number of interesting references to the Attack at Villers-Bretonneux on the 24th/25th April, 1918. Some claims are made which are quite new to him, and which he thinks are not justified.

From the title one would imagine that the book deals chiefly with post-war developments and, in view of this, it may not have come to our notice. If there are references to Villers-Bretonneux it would appear to be advisable to order a copy. Will you please attend to this.

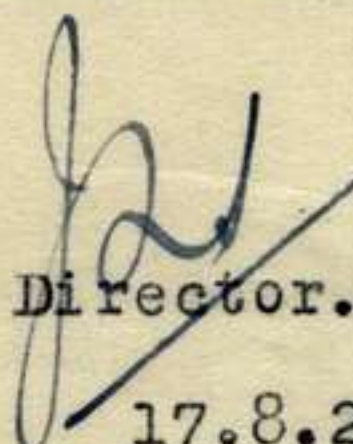
Director.

17.8.28.

Mr. Bazley.

For information.

You might think it worth while to note this book as one to be consulted when Volume V is being written.


Director.

17.8.28.



COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

FEDERAL MEMBERS ROOMS
(5th. FLOOR) TEMPLE COURT
422-428 COLLINS STREET
MELBOURNE

THE SENATE.

14.4.28

Dear Capt Bear,

I have just read a new book. "A Greater than Napoleon - Scipio Africanus"; by B. H. Liddell Hart. The description of the Battle of Ilipa pages 56 - 66 & plate opposite p. 60. would ~~help~~ help you to an understanding of the tactics employed in connection with the Counterattack at Veller Prettonne on 25th Apr 1918.

Unfortunately however because of his seniority I had no authority to issue instructions to his W. Flank as to how the attack on his side was to be made.

I may add that I have never previously had an opportunity of studying the tactics employed

At Ilaya - but I had read &
studied Hannibal's similar scheme
at Cannae at which Scipio had
been present & no doubt took
the lessons to heart. If you
substitute Hannibal's feigned
retirement ~~at Cannae~~ in his
centre at Cannae - for the real
retreat of the British at Villes
Brettonneuse - you get the
exact parallel of the tactics at
Villes Brettonneuse - except that
the Cornet's attacks on the wings
were carried out by Hannibal's
Numidian Cavalry. whereas ours
were carried out ~~in force~~ by Infantry.

I am hoping to see the announce-
ment of the first Vol of the Operations in
France shortly - but knowing that the cause
of the delay is your desire for completeness
& accuracy I am well content to leave
the matter in your hands. Yours faithfully
H. S. Bell



FEDERAL MEMBERS' ROOMS.

TEMPLE COURT.

422-428 COLLINS STREET.

HE/JF MELBOURNE.

2nd September, 1930.

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

Dear Captain Bean,

When you come to the period of the history dealing with Villers Bretonneaux you may be interested in an article entitled "The First German Tank Attack at Villers Bretonneaux on the 24th April 1918" (by one who was attacked), which appears in Volume XIX No. 2. of "The Army Quarterly" January 1930, pages 381-383.

I have followed up the reference to General Bridges in my last letter to its source, which is to be found on page xiii of the preface to the Volume of British Official History, "Military Operations, France and Belgium 1915" as follows :-

"The number of trained officers is gradually diminishing and officers of the class by which their places are being taken require more definite instruction than periods in the style of Field Service Regulations provide for them."

The above is a quotation from reports compiled soon after the Battle of Loos and the following note appears below

on the same page.

"Major General W.T.Bridges mortally wounded in Command of the 1st Australian Division at Gallipoli, said at a General Staff Conference at the Staff College, Camberley, a few years before the War: "The periods of the Field Service Regulations are as much use to the Australian forces as the cuneiform inscriptions on a Babylonian brick!"

In a book called "Undertones of War" by Edmund Blunden, a Signalling Officer of the Sussex Regiment, page 233 of the 1930 edition, I found a graceful reference to the Australians whom he met at a Signal School.

"The course of signalling imposed no burden, beyond that of --
 "estrangement from one's battalion, upon the officers attending.
 "Many of them, to my joy, were Australians, at whose resourceful
 "wit and confidence one refreshed the parched mind. I hear still
 "the gay and easy Captain Bath, reciting the "Nancy Brig", or offer-
 "ing sermons on the Uncertainty of Life. I see his towzled hair,
 "bright eyes, and vinous flush such as jolly Bacchus must have had.
 "I hear also his laments for Adelaide, while we were wandering
 "through benighted farm buildings in performance of a scheme". His
 "companions were worthy of him, and they revealed every day that it
 "is possible for an army to be highly efficient without a sign of
 "pedantry."

You may be interested to learn also, if you were not previously aware of it, that the "Captain Bath" to whom he refers, well-known to us as "Charlie Bath", met a heroic death since his -- return to Australia some two years ago. He was attending a race meeting when a little two year old girl escaped from her mother and ran out into the racing track just in front of the field as the horses were coming up the straight. Bath immediately rushed out and seized the child and threw her out of danger but was unable to save himself and was knocked down and fatally injured by the horses' hoofs as they swept by.

Yours faithfully,

H. S. Ellwood

Re counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux on 24 April 1918, General Elliott has always claimed to have been the originator of this plan. In my diary of that date I think I mention my being present at 5th Divisional H.Q. when Elliott, General Butler (III Corps), and others were being rung up. In connection with the arrangements for this attack, Elliott's claim may be correct, but it should not be accepted without complete verification, as, fine old chap that he is, his vanity amounts almost to a mania and is the secret of his attacks on White, Glasgow, and others. His whole outlook has been biased by his having been informed when in France that he could not be promoted to a higher command than that of a brigade. Such promotion would have been most unwise, since Elliott was so wrapt up in his own schemes that he was apt to act without reference to the general interest or that of brigades on either side of him. Such an instance of this occurred at Beaumont in 1917, but I am not sure of the Corps staff ever heard of it. It is fully related in my diary.

Since the war Elliott has seen comparison made between the counter-attack at Villers-bretonneux and the Battle of Cannae, and he has written to the War Memorial and myself ~~x~~ long statements to the effect that Hannibal's plans ^{perhaps - sub-consciously} were his model. I very much doubt this, and the attacks on General Glasgow (who is quite unaware of their being made) should be accepted with much hesitation. Glasgow's brigade had infinitely the harder job at Villers-Bretonneux, and I know that Glasgow had a large part in settling the plan as far as brigade was concerned.

4.10.1928.

his

TELEPHONE NOS.
F 2597.
F 2598.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
"AUSWARMUSE."

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO
"THE DIRECTOR."

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

No.

"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.

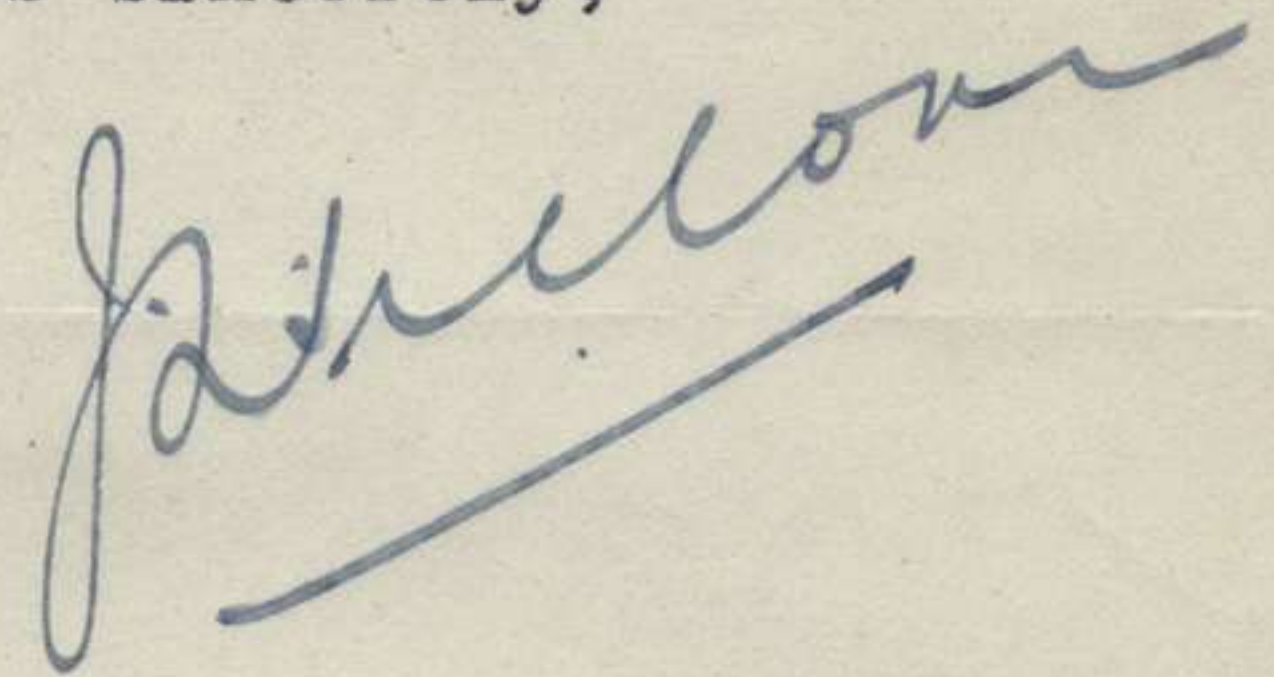
6th August, 1928.

Dear Mr. Bazley,

In the course of a telephone conversation today General Elliott mentioned the following facts in regard to the counter-attack at Villers-Bretonneux, which may be of interest to Mr. Bean when he comes to deal with this operation.

General Elliott claims that he conceived the scheme for the counter-attack. He said he wanted the operation to be conducted on the same lines as Cannae, that the operation resembled this battle very closely, but would have been a greater success if the 13th Brigade had been placed definitely under his orders. He says that if maps and diagrams in Dodge's "Life of Hannibal" in the "Great Captains" series are compared, ~~the student cannot but be impressed~~ with the maps illustrating the counter-attack on the 25th April, 1918, the resemblance is remarkable.

Yours sincerely,



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

Glasgow. Villers Bret. Ap 24 1918.

Elliott claims to have been the author of the plan of C/attack at V/B.

Glasgow understands that Elliott's suggestion was that Glasgows brigade should attack towards the village. When he saw Henniker (GOC 8th Div) on Ap 24, Henniker put this suggestion to him. Glasgow refused to attack in that direction as his right would be exposed, sweeping along the front of the enemy and subject to MG fire. He agreed to attack towards the Monument. Henniker rang up Gen Butler of the III Corps, and informed him that Glasgow refused to make the attack suggested, and B. agreed to the proposal to attack towards the Monument. Glasgow also said that he could not be ready to attack at 7 or 8 pm. They asked what time- 9? Glasgow said 10. He was a little ~~optimistic~~ too optimistic even then. He says that his brigade attacked before Elliott's, and received the whole attention of the Germans, and would have suffered less had Elliott's been earlier. There has, (to my mind) never been any question that the heavier job, by far, fell to the 13th bde, which had to sweep past the Bois l'Abbe' with Germans in the wood on its flank. The fact that V/B was burning behind the Germans, who could be seen against the glow was of some assistance.

When G. saw the three British bailers near the wood, 2 were a bit done. The 3rd, an older man, was calm. The sitn. was unknown, till a young very efficient brit. offr came in and told G. the Switch was held and the tps there were quite alright.

~~Glasgow Polygon Wood 26 Sept 1917~~

HISTORICAL NOTES. Glasgow re Villers-Bretonneux. (~~1928~~)
(1928)

When the 13th Brigade was called in to assist in the recapture of Villers-Bretonneux on 24 April 1918, General Henneker proposed to Glasgow that the attack should be made from Cachy northwards. Glasgow would not look at this plan, as it would involve advancing with his right flank exposed and enfiladed. He insisted that the attack must be made eastward with his flanks covered. The left flank could be protected by dropping a certain number of troops to deal with Bois Bois l'Abbe as the attack swept past it. This method was eventually used. Henneker was in telephonic communication with Butler (III Corps) during this interview. Henneker commanded the English division which had been driven back.

(Elliott has been constantly claiming that his brigade had the heaviest task at Villers-Bretonneux. Glasgow deliberately refrains from any public controversy, as he believes - and rightly - that his own brigade had much the harder task and one which was made more difficult by the fact that Elliott's brigade started an hour later than his.)
(and controversy would extend to a wrangle over this?)

Glasgow.

H N

V. Bret, Apr 24-5 / Glasgow saw Heniker, ~~who~~ ^{and} asked for situation. Heniker said when last news came his men were "here" or "there", "but of course / sita is changing all / time".

Glasgow recognized H. didn't know where his men were & said "all right, full - no matter - I'll go up & see for myself".

He went across to the dy arch behind in rear of Bois l'abbé & found 3 bodies there - two quite done & useless, the third an older man with more grip. But while he was there a staff officer - a younger man - came in, ^{wiping the sweat} ~~with great dripping~~ from his forehead as he took off his tin hat. Glasgow said he was man he wanted & took him aside.

"Have you been up there?" "Yes"
This trench "Are you holding the Cashy switch?" "Yes ^{with a number of} machine guns."

"Are you sure there is it - have you been there?"

"Yes"

"Will they hold?" "Yes I ^{feel sure} think they'll hold."

"Well how about this trench thro' / wood - are you there?"

"Yes there are a lot of men in

in it." "Will they hold?" "Yes, I'm sure they will."

"Well, you get some one through to them & tell them to hang on whatever they do - there'll be troops ^{up} with them in two hours time."

→ Glasgow went back & told Hamilton how he meant to attack.

H. "But you can't do that - the Gaps says the attack is to be made from Cachy."

G. said he didn't care if the Almighty said it had to be made from Cachy, he wouldn't do it that way.

"Why not?"

"Because of your own teaching" -
(My notes are correct as to this).

On the way back Glasgow after seeing the main road came up a ~~the~~ rise, & there was his brigade coming on, with their tin hats over one ear (just as I saw them). He thought "Poor chaps, they're in for a tougher time than they realise."

in it. "Will they talk?" "Yes, but some

they will."

"Well, you get some one to write them
- to the team - stay on a station they do -
there'll be things with them in the house
time."

Group was back at the Hamilton
has to remain in attack.
H. But you can't do that - the group
group in attack in the middle from
"Cathy".

? said he should care if he should
said it had to be made from Cathy, he
wishes to do it that way.

"Why not?"

"Because of your own teaching"
My notes are correct as to this).

As to my book (pages after King the
main good come up a rise, &
there was his bridge coming on with
their tin hats over our (just on
I saw them). He taught "Foot steps"
there in for a couple of times then they
realize."

As G. was leaving he said - "How about the time, Sir; you must coordinate that."

"Well, when would you propose to do it?"

"10.30"

"Oh that won't do. Can you do it at 8?"

Gasparow said he couldn't - it would be too light.

H. referred to Corps who proposed 8.

G. refused. Corps suggested 8.30.

"No." "9?" "No."

Eventually Corps suggested 10. G. said he would meet their view & do it at 10.

He then went to Blangy Trouville & for the first time saw Elliott.

Elliott proposed to send the ^(? British) ~~57~~ ^{Bn attached to him} around the S of V/B to enter it from that side.

G. pointed out that they wd run into the Northampton & his 51st Bn. G. suggested that Elliott shd put the 57 behind the ^{1st} flank of 15 Bde, & let it mop up V/B from the rear & this was the eventual arrangement.

H.N.

Villers Bret. Ap 25. 1918. Re origin of operation.

Glasgow: In morning of Ap 24 Glasgow & Morrell his Bde major went ahead to Glisy, N.O. & Maj. Gen. Henniker. Henniker saw them & G. asked him for information. H. said: "We have troops through the wood here — & here — & others in Cachy Switch here ... but of course the situation changes from minute to minute, & I cannot be sure of it." Glasgow considered this information too vague & said, "Oh I can easily find out about that, Sir. I'll go up there myself & come back to see you." G. knew that he was to attack South of the town & Ellith N. of it. He wanted to be certain that his brigade, if it formed up for attack South of the Wood, would be protected by troops said to be holding the Cachy Switch.

He went up with Morrell, & found Bde HQs under the only bridge South of the Roman road, west of Bois l'Abbe. Three brigadiers were there, but they seemed vague as to the situation, & one, Haig, an elderly man, had clearly been overtaxed — the situation was beyond his grasp at that stage. While G. was there, however, there came in a young British staff officer, red in face & bathed in perspiration,

2
but perfectly collected & competent. Glasgow
said: "You may be able to tell me. I want
to know if there are troops in this
Cachy Switth, south of the wood".
"Yes, that's well held," said the S.O.
"Can I be certain of it?" "Yes".

"Well tell them to hold on at all costs.
They'll be perfectly all right, there
will be plenty of troops behind them".

Glasgow then went back to
Shig & saw Heniker & asked
what the ^{13th Bde} ~~troops~~ would be wanted
to do.

Heniker ~~said~~ ^{explained} that he
wanted them to form up south
of the wood & attack it
& the village from the south.

"We can't do it that way,"
Glasgow said
Heniker mentioned something
about the Corps Commander

have given orders for it.

"I can't help who has ordered it";
 said G., "you ~~will have to~~ ^{tell us what} you want
 us to get, but you will have to let
 us get it in our own way."

Heniker asked what was the
 objection.

G. said that it was against all
 the teachings of the British army to attack
 across the enemy's front - they would
 get hell from the right. What he
 would do would be to attack eastward
 south of the wood.

This was settled & Glasgow was
 leaving when he asked - "What about
 the time?"

"I want you to do it at 8 o'clock"
 said Heniker.

"It can't be done," said G.; "we
 will do it for you at 10-30."

Again Heniker mentioned the
 Corps Commander.

"It is was the Almighty that

gave the order we could do it in daylight," said Glasgow. "Here is your artillery ^{largely} mostly out of action & the enemy with all his guns in position."

Henriker said that the other troops would all be ready.

"Well - we'll meet you & make it 10 o'clock," said Glasgow - & so it was settled. Actually the 13th Bde were / only troops ready at 10 o'clock.

[Two British battalions were to attack the wood at the same time thus \rightarrow . The Southern - the

Northants - ^{13 Bde} \rightarrow tried to carry it out but Colonel & Adjt were both killed - it was no fault of theirs that it did not succeed.]

Glasgow ~~later~~ after leaving Henriker went on & met his bde just xing the Somme by the Engineers bridge at Blangy Tronville. They were looking full of confidence - tobacco tins, cigarettes in

routes. He ordered them to extend while
 they the Somme flats. They dropped the
 49 Bn there; the others ~~they~~ three went
 on to their forming up position.

Glasgow now for the first
 time saw Elliott, & asked him how
 he was going to carry out his
 part in the show. Elliott had a
 plan of his own. He was going
 to put two battalions in north
 of V/B, & send the other round the
 wood to the south of the town to
 join them E of V/B.



But the two British
 battalions were already to attack
 the wood & Elliott's ^{southern} battalion would
 be moving across the front of both of
 them. Glasgow urged him not to do this
 but to keep the third battalion to
 mop up V/B from the East after the

attack was over. Elliott agreed.

It was ~~actually~~ the 57th Bn that ^{thus} cleared V/B. of the Germans.

Henniker had with him two excellent staff officers, one, Armitage, a general staff man, & the other on the "A" staff. Henniker himself did not seem to "take hold", and his attitude towards the Australian brigadiers was not encouraging. He did not say a word of appreciation to them after the operation. But the two staff officers did — they rode over, and Armitage, in saying what a ^{satisfactory operation} ~~good it was~~ they thought it was, added ~~as~~ in an aside to Glasgow that he was glad that ~~for~~ he had ~~handled~~ handled the "old man" in the way he had done — it was the way to get the task through.

9511.

2 December 1935.

My dear Glasgow,

In finishing off the chapter dealing with Villers-Bretonneux, April 24-25 1918, I am puzzled by the fact that, whereas you gave your men the objective set by corps headquarters, beyond the Monument and aerodrome, Elliott had made his objective the Villers-Bretonneux--Hamel road and an extension of it southwards, 1,000 yards behind the left of your objective. As you were present at his conference with his battalion commanders about 7.30-8 p.m., I am wondering whether this discrepancy was noticed at the time and whether anything was said about it. So far as I can see, Elliott did not order his troops to reach the old British front line, but a line 1,000 yards west of it; and, if you had reached your objective, the process of joining might have been difficult.

Would you give me your recollection of this? I have concluded that the discrepancy was not noticed at the time.

With kind regards,
Yours sincerely,

Major-General Hon. Sir William Glasgow, K.C.B.,
C.M.G., D.S.O., V.D.,
Grange Hill,
Gregory Terrace,
Brisbane, Q'land.

THE PARKS AND PLAYGROUNDS MOVEMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES.

C O N S T I T U T I O N .

(1) The title of the organisation shall be "The Parks and Playgrounds Movement of New South Wales."

(2) The objects are:-

- (a) to secure the systematic and timely reservation of adequate park and playground space in N.S.Wales;
- (b) to ensure the appropriate and effective use and control of all park and playground spaces;
- (c) to these ends, to secure unity of effort among all bodies interested.

(3) The Movement shall be governed by a General Council consisting of delegates from associated bodies, forming a Combined Committee. Each associated body may send two delegates, duly accredited by its association. Except as hereinafter laid down, each delegate shall exercise only one vote.

(4) Additional bodies may be admitted to the Movement upon approval by the Executive Committee.

(5) The officers shall be:-

- (a) president and three vice-presidents, each of the following sections being represented - (i) men's sports, (ii) women's sports, (iii) town planning bodies, (iv) scientific, conservation, and historical bodies;
- (b) honorary secretary and honorary treasurer.

Proceedings between general meetings shall be governed by an Executive Committee of eight members, comprising two representatives of each of the following sections - (i) men's sports, (ii) women's sports, (iii) town planning bodies, (iv) scientific, conservation, and historical bodies. These eight shall include the President and Hon. Secretary & Hon. Treasurer. The Executive Committee may co-opt any other members in an advisory capacity only.

(6) A membership fee, minimum 5/-, shall be payable annually by each associated body.

(7) The Combined Committee shall meet annually for election of officers, consideration of the year's work and finance, or any other matters relating to the objects of the Movement; it may also meet from time to time when called together by the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee shall meet on the request of the Chairman, or of the Hon. Secretary, or of any two members.

(8) At meetings of the Combined Committee separate votes may, where the Chairman so decides, be taken among representatives of each of the following sections: (i) men's sports, (ii) women's sports, (iii) town planning bodies, (iv) scientific, conservation, and historical bodies. As to the section to which each representative belongs, and as to the right of any representative to vote in more than one section, the decision of the Chairman shall be final.

(9) Rules may be amended, cancelled, or added to either at an annual meeting or a special general meeting of the Combined Committee convened for that purpose of which a fortnight's notice has been given.

(10) Delegates shall hold office for a year unless the bodies electing them decide otherwise. Notices of meetings shall be sent to delegates through the Secretary of the body which they represent.

(11) All officers and the Executive Committee shall be elected annually.

Chap XVI p 105.

QUEENSLAND CLUB

BRISBANE

9: XII: 35

My dear Beau

My recollection of the
D'Ulers - Brittoncaus counter attack,
with reference to the point you raise
are as follows.

I did not see Elliott on 24th April
1918 until about 8 pm. My orders,
based on those of the Division, had
been issued some time before &
Elliott had just finished a conference
with his Bn. commanders. He told
me that he had given instructions
for a Bn to move around the western
side ~~of the B~~ then up a gully on
the southern side of V. B, joining
up with the left of my advance. I
pointed out to him that this Bn
would be moving across the
advance of the 2 British Bns which
were to attack the town from the North
west & South west. He then cancelled
the instruction for the Bn mentioned.

We did not discuss the objective
of the attack. I naturally thought

QUEENSLAND CLUB

BRISBANE

that his objective would be like mine
that of the Divⁿ.

The fact that his troops did not
attempt to get as far as mine
may explain why my men were
not able to maintain the position
they reached & had to fall back ^{a little};

In the morning I think my left
was nearly south of Elliotts right.

As far as I am concerned the
discrepancy was not mentioned nor
was it noticed.

Kind regards

Yours sincerely

J. W. Gussart

Commonwealth of Australia

HISTORIAN,

VICTORIA BARRACKS,

PADDINGTON, N.S.WALES.

8 July 1936.

No. 9820.

Captain T.G. Clark, M.C.,
5, Liston Street,
Parkside, S.Aust.

Dear Captain Clark,

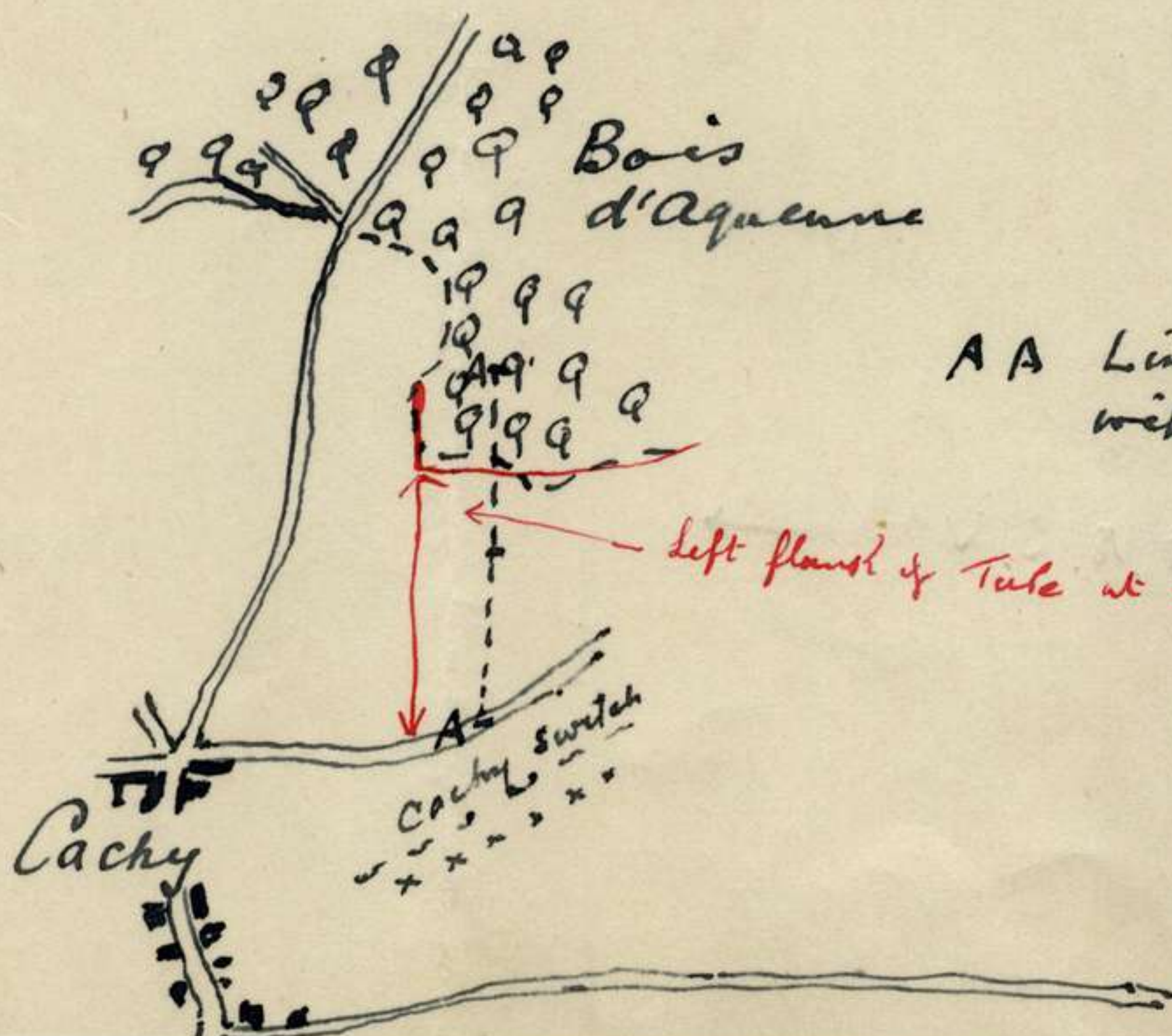
Writing in January last, you kindly offered to help me on points concerning Villers-Bretonneux, 25 April 1918. I should be grateful if you could tell me -

- (1) precisely where the left flank of the jumping-off tape rested; and
- (2) whether there was any firing from the Germans *in the wood* immediately before the attack started.

Yours faithfully,

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

Official Historian.



A A Line for Tape shown in sketch map issued with 8 Div orders.

left flank of Tape at corner of Wood (U.S.A. 5.7.)

(1) Alter sketches so as to
show tape line clear of
horn of wood.
(2) Was it twilight?

5 Liston Street,
Parkside,
18th July, 1936.

Official Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
PADDINGTON.

Dear Sir,

In reply to your letter of the 8th July, 1936 re information of an attack which took place at Villers-Bretonneux on 25th April, 1918.

In reply to your first query, I should like to mention that the left flank of the jumping-off tape rested on the corner of the wood (Bois d'Aquenne), which by the way made an abrupt corner of approximately ninety degrees the map reference of which is (U.3.a.5.7.). The southern side of the wood was shaped more as shown by my red lines on your letter, which I return herewith, and gave a clear run for the troops towards their objective.

In regards the second point, there was definitely some machine gun fire coming from the wood in question, and it was necessary for the intelligence officer of the unit on the left flank to clear the corner of the wood (U.3.a.5.7.) of a machine gun before he could get his section of the jumping-off tape down.

Too much credit cannot be given to the intelligence officers, and their men, who laid this jumping-off tape down under my supervision, as they were operating in the dark in country which they had never seen before.

If I can be of any further assistance to you on this matter, I will be glad to do so to the best of my ability.

Yours sincerely,

T. E. Clark

9862.

5 August 1936.

Captain T.G. Clark, M.C.,
5, Liston Street,
Parkside, S.Aust.

Dear Captain Clark,

Many thanks for your letter of the 18th ult., which gives just the information required. General Glasgow tells me that the starting hour was a little earlier than he would have liked, and that the tapes had to be laid before the twilight had quite disappeared. I should be grateful if you could tell me whether your memory confirms this.

Yours truly,

C.E.W. Bean.

C.E.W. Bean Hon. Treasurer

John Downes V.F.C. et al.
Specified with accounts and money collect.

Copies on file of letters 1/15/35
Letter of copies on file 1/15/35

Dr.

State of New York
Thurston Charles Purton
B.C. et al.
Association
Company New York State
Doubtless -
New York State
Institutions -

54° 3' 0

10° 9

1° 5' 9

55° 4' 0

515° 3' 0

1° 0' 14

2° 4' 8

1° 0' 0

54° 13' 11

54° 3' 0

5° 10' 0
51° 13' 0

515° 3' 0

55° 4' 0

53° 3' 0

51° 0' 0

4° 11' 0
10° 0
19° 0

4° 0' 0
53° 0' 0

RECEIVED

RECEIVED THE GENERAL INVESTIGATION DIVISION
AUG 11 1936

Knightsbridge

Adelaide

23. 11. 33.

Capt. C. E. W. Bean

Official War Historian.

Dear Sir,

I have just completed the reading of your volume covering 1917 operations. On two or three occasions you instanced cases of officers entering an attack with a pronouncement of death and perhaps particulars of yet another instance may be of interest to you. The officer in question Capt. Frank Hancock of Broken Hill and C Coy 50th Battalion had the feeling very strongly. On the afternoon of 24th April 1918 we were in the immediate rear of the wood on the right hand side of Villes Bretonnux (facing the Germans) prior to the unnecessary movement made during that afternoon. Usually lively he was then very depressed and would not respond to efforts to cheer him.

Before the movement Lieut. McKay (killed that night by German prisoners) and myself both of C Coy were detailed to the trenches. As you know we counter attacked that night and as C Coy had officer casualties in the afternoon just prior to the attack we were recalled.

I caught up to Hancock just on reaching the Cape and he then told me as much as he knew of our job. On leaving him to take over my platoon he remarked "Wake you will find the code and map in this pocket" at the same time indicating his left hand coat pocket. He also remarked "The pitcher goes once too often to the well."

I saw him again during the advance apparently, from what I heard, just before he was shot in the head.

I think most soldiers at some time or other had these premonitions but Hancock's unfortunately proved only too true.

Yours faithfully,

W. Wakeley
late Lieut.

TELEPHONE NOS.
F 2597.
F 2598.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

TELEGRAPHIC ADDRESS
"AUSWARMUSE."

COMMUNICATIONS TO BE ADDRESSED TO
"THE DIRECTOR."

IN REPLY PLEASE QUOTE

NO.

"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.

c/o Federal Capital Commission,
CANBERRA. F.C.T.

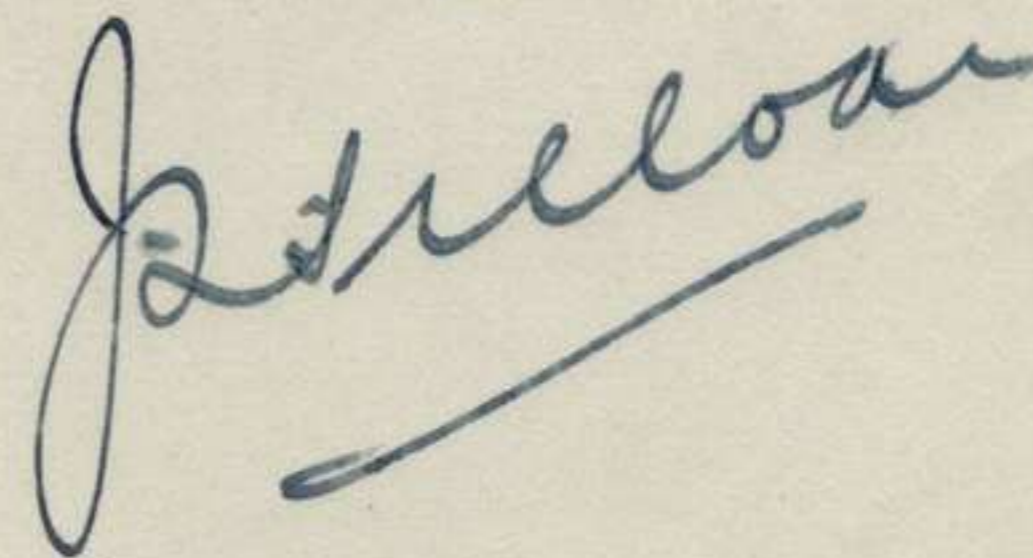
27th March, 1928.

Dear Mr. Bazley,

The copy of F. M. Cutlack's "Australian Campaigns in 1918" which you sent to me on the 20th February, is being returned under separate registered cover, today. The three photographs will be returned in a few weeks' time.

On page 163 of Cutlack's book, Mr. Bean has written a marginal note reading, "Brigadiers, I believe, said they would prefer to go forward in the dark and without bombardment". It may interest Mr. Bean to know that General Glasgow told me a few days ago that the reason for the attack being made without any substantial artillery support was that the German attack had driven the guns from their positions and they had not had time to carry out ranging from their new positions. They were not, therefore, in a position to put down a barrage. Their support had to be limited to the bombardment of Villers-Bretonneux and to several other points in advance of the town where the Germans were likely to collect for counter-attacks, etc.

Yours sincerely,



Mr. A. W. Bazley,
c/o Official Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
SYDNEY. N.S.W.

^{The lay out for 15 hours.}
Col. Latham, ^{Capl. Forsyth} of the 5th ^{and}, who nearly saved his life, wrote
note: "He seems 1 best type of English gentleman, but too old for active service."

The digger & the little Tommies.

Capl Forsyth writes (of Apr 24-5) at Archy (in a cellar):

One poor little Tommy was whimpering in a corner. He wasn't badly hit, but he was only a kid. [I tried to get an American ^{attached to an English ambulance, &} M.O. for big orderlies ^{& 20-30 other British soldiers} to deal with him, but the American had orders to wait for cars to come from Camou, ^{5 miles away} & to evacuate ~~the~~ wounded by car - he wouldn't lend his men - He "had an awful Casablanca idea of orders" & had the lot to wait & ∴ waited]. My tired boys carried out every one of 1 Tommies by hand. ~~The little~~ Anything was better than staying in the Hell of misery & shell fire. The little Tommy in 1 corner was whimpering again; I despaired of 1 English bearers & told the boys to take him. He wept loudly with delight, although he seemed sure he wd be blown to bits going out, & brought out a handful of five-pence notes for 1 boy. The diggers' manner was the queerest thing I saw that whole day. They behaved like a group of elders might have if a small boy had been violently sick at a prayer meeting. They looked at each other & then one of them with a particularly wooden face grabbed the notes, stuffed them back in the kid's tunic, & addressed him briefly, "Garn kid! keep 'em to buy lollies with. Think we can't carry a mate out without that!" Off he went shedding tears & blessings.

15th. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE.

Report on Operations near VILLERS BRETONNEUX from 24th. to 26th.
April 1918.

Reference 1/40,000 Sheet 62.D.
and Sketches attached.

Headquarters,
2nd. May 1918.

DISPOSITIONS PRIOR
TO COUNTER-ATTACK.

On the ^{morning} evening of 24th. April the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade, which was in Fourth Army Reserve, marched from QUERRIEU area to join III Corps and was attached to the 8th. Division.

At 4 p.m. that day the 49th. Battalion was garrisoning the AUBIGNY line from the Railway at O.27.c.5.9. Northward to the Corps Boundary (appendix A) and the other units of the Brigade were bivouaced in assembly positions in the vicinity of the BOIS de BLANGY. (Sketch I).

SITUATION.

The situation on the 8th. Divisional front was briefly that the enemy after strong attack that morning had driven back our line capturing VILLERS BRETONNEUX and penetrating into the BOIS D'AQUENNE.

The AUBIGNY line was intact and portion of the CACHY Switch was still holding out, but the actual position of the front line was obscure.

On the South the 5th. Division had been forced back about 2,000 yards. On the North the right of the 5th. Australian Division had been swung back sharply to conform with to the 8th. Division, but had not been very heavily engaged.

PLAN OF
COUNTER-ATTACK.

When reporting to 8th. Division for orders at 1.0 p.m. the G.O.C. had been informed that the Brigade would probably be used to counter-attack and at 4 p.m. a conference was held at 8th. Divisional Headquarters when the following plan was formulated.

No direct attack on VILLERS BRETONNEUX was to take place but it was to be enveloped by two simultaneous attacks.

(1) By the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade from the West, passing just South of the town and,

(2) By the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade from the North in a South-Easterly direction passing North-East of the town.

The two attacks were to junction East of VILLERS BRETONNEUX, the ultimate objective being the original front line. The work of mopping up the BOIS d'AQUENNE and VILLERS BRETONNEUX was to be entrusted to English Battalions of the 8th. Division, the 2nd. Northants being attached to this Brigade for the purpose and two other Battalions to the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade. The attack was to take place at 10.0 p.m. without previous artillery preparation.

The risks of launching a counter-attack on a large scale at night over strange country and without any previous reconnaissance were very great, but on the other hand it was absolutely necessary to clear up the situation, and it was essential that the town of VILLERS BRETONNEUX, on account of its commanding position, should be retaken without any delay.

Moreover, the earlier the attack the greater were the chances of success owing to the enemy being still disorganised after his advance of the morning. The adoption of such a plan would, however, have been impossible had there not been the fullest confidence in the Officers and men who were to carry it out.

ORDERS.

As soon as III Corps had approved of this plan a car was sent to bring the C.O.'s to 8th. Divisional Headquarters GLISY where the Brigade Headquarters was established for the time being. Meanwhile maps were obtained and boundaries, objectives &c. marked thereon, so that on the arrival of the C.O.'s the maps were ready and verbal orders were given by the G.O.C. which were written down at the same time and issued to each C.O. before he left. (Appendix B).

The 52nd. Battalion were to attack on the right and the 51st. Battalion on the left, the 50th. Battalion following in rear and digging in on approximately the line U.6.b.0.0. to O.36.d.9.9. The 2nd. Northants were to mop up the BOIS d'AQUENNE and the Southern portion of VILLERS BRETONNEUX as indicated above.

At 7.5 p.m. the C.O.'s returned to their Units and Brigade Headquarters moved to TRONVILLE Chateau establishing itself there with the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade.

NARRATIVE.
24/4/18.

The Brigade and Battalion Intelligence Officers went forward with a few Scouts to lay the 'jumping off' tape but were fired on from the BOIS d'AQUENNE so applied to some English troops for a covering party and were then able to carry out this work, though the tape was eventually laid some 300 yards West of the position originally intended. at the right time

The 52nd. Battalion was deployed on the tape, but the 51st. Battalion was 10 minutes late and the attack did not move off until 10.10 p.m. (Position of troops at that time shown in Sketch II).

The 2nd. Bedfords on the right of 52nd. Battalion were in position to time and moved forward to the attack with them, but the Battalion on their right was late.

NIGHT.
24th/25th.

As soon as the attack started heavy machine gun fire was opened from the BOIS d'AQUENNE and numerous casualties were suffered especially by the 51st. Battalion. It was sufficiently moonlight to be able to keep direction and touch fairly well throughout the line though the wiring in front of the CACHY Sw itch running diagonally across the line of advance formed an awkward obstacle. Some of the troops of both 51st and 52nd. Battalions got as far forward as MONUMENT WOOD, but as they were being heavily enfiladed with machine guns from VILLERS BRETONNEUX and as the Brigade on the right was in difficulties they ultimately withdrew and the line was consolidated as shown in Sketch III.

During the attack nothing was seen of 2nd. Northants Regiment and the work of mopping up VILLERS BRETONNEUX was not carried out by them. It was subsequently learnt that the C.O. and Adjutant were killed before the attack started, and this led to disorganisation.

The 15th. Aust. Inf. Bde. had started an hour late, and no information could be given to the attacking Battalions as to the progress on the left.

The result of consolidating on a line short of the objective was that the Support Battalion (50th) got mixed with the two attacking Battalions and committed to the fight, and reorganisation was not possible until

the following night 25/26th.

The fighting had been of a scattered nature - enemy posts being attacked as they were discovered - and mopped up by the nearest troops.

25th.

At 6.15 A.M. 3 Tanks were sent forward to the BOIS d' AQUENNE and these did good work. After dawn the work of mopping up VILLERS BRETONNEUX was taken well in hand by the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade and the ROYAL BERKS attached to them. At 9.15 A.M. it was reported that the 15th Brigade had reached the line O.36 central to P.20.a.3.5 and orders were sent to 50th Battalion to join up with 57th Battalion at the Railway Line (Approximately-G). (Appendix C.)

The disposition of the English troops of 8th. Division at this time, as far as is known, is as given in Appendix D). After consultation with Division the 2nd NORTHANTS were ordered forward from the position they had taken up (as shown in Sketch III) to the Railway Line and Station in O.35.d. (Appendix E).

At 10.55 A.M. the 8th Division ordered a Battalion of SHERWOOD FORESTERS to relieve the 49th Battalion and when this had been done verbal instructions were given to the C.O. 49th. Battalion to move 2 Coys to GACHY Switch and 2 Companies to O.33.a. The situation on the right of 52nd. Battalion was not very satisfactory and large parties of enemy were continually being seen in U.10 and U.16, and it appeared as if our right flank was threatened. However, after he had been forward to reconnoitre the C.O. 49th. Battalion reported that there were plenty of English troops in the GACHY Switch and instructions were then given to move his Battalion to the vicinity of the Sunken Road in O.33.a. and c.

At 3.50 p.m. it was reported that the whole of VILLERS BRETONNEUX had been cleared of the enemy except a pocket in the vicinity of the Railway Bridge in O.36.c. and it was arranged that 3 tanks were to go forward and clear up the situation. The 50th. Battalion had not been able to get forward as previously ordered owing to the hostile fire from MONUMENT WOOD, and the tanks after cleaning up the situation in VILLERS BRETONNEUX were to go on to MONUMENT WOOD (Appendix F.) Situation at 4.15 p.m. is shown on Sketch IV. The three tanks, however, lost their way and failed to do as instructed, but some troops of the Durham Light Infantry completed the mopping up of VILLERS BRETONNEUX.

NIGHT
25th/26th.

At 10.10 p.m. orders were issued to 49th. Battalion to take over the line from the Railway at O.36.d.1.2. to O.36 Central, which had been laid down as the new left boundary of the Division. This was completed by 3.40 a.m. These two companies were placed under tactical command of O.C. 50th. Battalion. (Appendix G).

FRENCH ATTACK
ON 26th.

During the afternoon information was received from 8th. Division that the French were making an attack on our right the following morning and the G.O.C. went forward to 8th. Divisional Headquarters to make arrangements for co-operating with them. At 11.30 p.m. orders were issued for 50th. Battalion to co-operate with 8th. ZOUAVE Regiment and consequent on the alteration in boundaries for the 51st. and 52nd. Battalions to take up new positions (Appendix H).

26th.

The French attack, however, failed to make much headway on our immediate flank and the position at 7 a.m. is shown in Sketch V.

Hostile Infantry

No serious attacks were made on this Brigade front during the 26th. and 27th. though numerous parties of the enemy were seen at various times and engaged with either artillery or machine gun fire.

EVENTS SUBSEQUENT TO 25th. Both the French and the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade reported counter-attacks, however, which were driven off without loss of ground. On the afternoon of 26th. the 52nd. Battalion was withdrawn to billets in BLANGY TRONVILLE. No other changes were made in dispositions until the relief by the 12th. Australian Infantry Brigade on the night 27th/28th. April. (vide appendix J).

ARTILLERY.

The Brigade front was covered by the 30th. Divisional Artillery grouped under the 8th. Division. There was no preliminary bombardment or creeping barrage for the attack, protective firing by ~~the Field Guns~~ only being carried out by the Field Guns, and a bombardment of VILLERS BRETONNEUX by the heavies. A liaison Officer was attached to Brigade Headquarters and alteration in S.O.S. lines and harrassing fire &c. were arranged through him.

The enemy artillery was very active throughout the operations, carrying out heavy shoots all over the area as far back as the BOIS de BLANGY. Prior to the attack on the 8th. Division on the morning of 24th. he had shelled the BOIS L'ABBE heavily with gas and the fumes hung there causing several casualties to our troops even two days afterwards.

MACHINE GUNS.

The 13th. Australian Machine Gun Company were attached to the Brigade for the operations. For the attack two Vickers Guns were allotted to each of the attacking Battalions and one section was told off to take up a position in U.S.a. covering the exits of VILLERS BRETONNEUX until the town had been mopped up when the guns were to be distributed in depth. The remaining two sections were ordered to take up positions in CACHY Switch where they could cover the right flank of the Brigade and where they would also be close to all the Battalion Headquarters and available for use as required.

During the afternoon of 25th. a number of Vickers Guns of the 8th. Machine Gun Battalion were mounted in and around VILLERS BRETONNEUX and several captured enemy machine guns were also mounted by Infantry and machine gunners - the total number of guns covering the Divisional front being estimated by the C.O. 8th. Machine Gun Battalion at about 70 exclusive of the guns in the reserve (AUBIGNY) line. Under these circumstances the two sections of 13th. Machine Gun Company which were in Reserve were not employed other than in the CACHY Switch from which position some firing was done at 1900 yards range.

When the French attacked on the morning of 26th. four out of the 8th. forward guns were mounted in 0.35 d. and 0.36 c. covering Railway and MONUMENT WOOD.

The value of the machine guns was felt after our attack was over, but for obvious reasons the Lewis Guns were far more valuable during the actual advance.

The enemy handled his machine guns with great boldness, and these were the principal obstacles to our advance. The manner in which he pushes forward numbers of guns apparently relying on the daring and initiative of the crews to use them to the best advantage, may lead to greater number being lost, but he certainly inflicts enormous casualties in this way.

TRENCH
MORTARS.

The fighting during this period was of such a nature that no scope was given for the employment of Light Trench Mortars. The Battery was sent forward to CACHY Switch where it was at hand for any Battalion Commander to use as required. On the night 25/26th two mortars were mounted near the Railway Station at 0.55.d. but the only targets which presented themselves were out of range. Two captured six-inch minenwerfer were destroyed by the crews of the forward guns by bursting shells in the barrel.

TANKS.

The work of the tanks co-operating was uneven. The tanks detailed to mop up the BOIS D'AQUENNE on the morning of 25th. did excellent work as also did three whippets which went out on the afternoon of 25th. to clear up the situation in U.10 Central.

On the other hand the three tanks that were to have mopped up the Railway Arch and MONUMENT WOOD (vide appendix F) failed to put ⁱⁿ any appearance at all. The value of tanks seems to depend largely on the courage and resource of the crew.

In their attack on 8th. Division on morning of 24th. the Germans had used tanks, this being, as far as is known, the first recorded instance of their employment. A derelict, seen by a party of 51st. Battalion, which reached MONUMENT WOOD is described as being larger than our own male tanks, but with smaller caterpillars. The armament was not known.

On the afternoon of 26th. two 18 pounders were mounted in the Eastern edge of the BOIS d'AQUENNE for use as anti-tank guns, but the provision of a smaller and more mobile gun for this purpose would appear to merit consideration.

COMMUNICAT-
IONS.

For the attack it was necessary to use existing methods of communication as far as possible as there was no time to prepare others.

It was decided to establish Brigade Headquarters with the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade, at TRONVILLE Chateau which ensured the closest co-operation between the two attacking Brigades, this being all the more necessary as there were two Divisions ~~connected~~ ^{unconnected}. A Forward Report Centre was opened at the Railway Arch W.25.c.0.0. which was also the Headquarters of 23rd. and 24th. Infantry Brigades.

To this point communications were already existing and the necessary ~~adjustment~~ allotment of lines was made by 8th. Division, but forward of this there was nothing.

All Headquarters were ordered to ^{be} establish ^{ed} in CACHY Switch, which was the only place where there was known to be any cover at all - the wood being out of the question on account of the gas fumes which were still lingering there.

To this place lines were run and communication by 'phone to 52nd. Battalion was established. Soon after 1.0 a.m. From there lines were run to 50th. and 51st. Battalions and subsequently to 15th. Machine Gun Company (Appendix K) These lines held fairly well, through the untiring efforts of Brigade and Battalion linesmen.

The following day two other lines were laid between the Forward Report Centre and Battalion Headquarters and thereafter no trouble at all was experienced in keeping communication. other

Runners were the only means of communication actually employed.

For an operation of this nature the advantage of having all Headquarters near to one another cannot be too greatly insisted upon. When plans have to be

made and orders issued hurriedly, it would seem to be the only way of ensuring co-ordination. During the night 26th/27th. a more suitable position having been found in the Railway Embankment at N.26.d.9.9. all Headquarters moved there.

MEDICAL ARRANGEMENTS.

The 13th. Australian Field Ambulance evacuated for the Brigade. Ambulance cars were got as far forward as the Western end of the BOIS l'ABBE, U.l.a. Early in the attack the R.M.O. of the 50th. Battalion was killed and the R.M.O. of 52nd. Battalion wounded. The R.M.O. of 51st. Battalion attended to all the casualties of the Brigade until he was joined later by the R.M.O. 49th. Battalion and two other Medical Officers sent up to relieve them.

Subsequently the line of evacuation was altered and Advanced Dressing Station established at Mon du BOIS l'ABBE O.26.c. The system of having all Regimental Aid Posts close together worked satisfactorily and Medical Officers were thus able to relieve one another.

CASUALTIES.

The total casualties are shewn in Appendix L.

CAPTURES.

2 Officers and 130 other ranks were captured and a number of light and heavy machine guns though the exact number cannot be stated as the majority of them were left where they were and were afterwards removed by other troops or set up for action.

FLAG OF TRUCE.

On the 25th. two invitations to surrender were sent over by the enemy under a flag of truce. Detailed report of the incident by C.O. 52nd. Battalion is attached (Appendix M).

CONCLUSION.

Though the final objective of the Brigade as laid down in the order for the counter-attack was not attained, the advance made was of the greatest value, and discounted the enemy's success of the morning. There seems little doubt that he did not expect the counter-attack, and from the number of different identifications obtained he was still somewhat disorganised.

One prisoner stated that his regiment had just come into the line, and that fresh troops were being put in to continue the advance the following day. This prisoner was very surprised at being captured.

The casualties suffered by this Brigade were very heavy in comparison with those suffered by the 15th. Australian Infantry Brigade and the probable reasons for this were
(a) that this Brigade commenced the attack about an hour before the 15th. Brigade thereby receiving more than its share of the enemy's attention and
(b) the mopping up of the BOIS d'AQUENNE and VILLERS BRETONNEUX was not carried out.

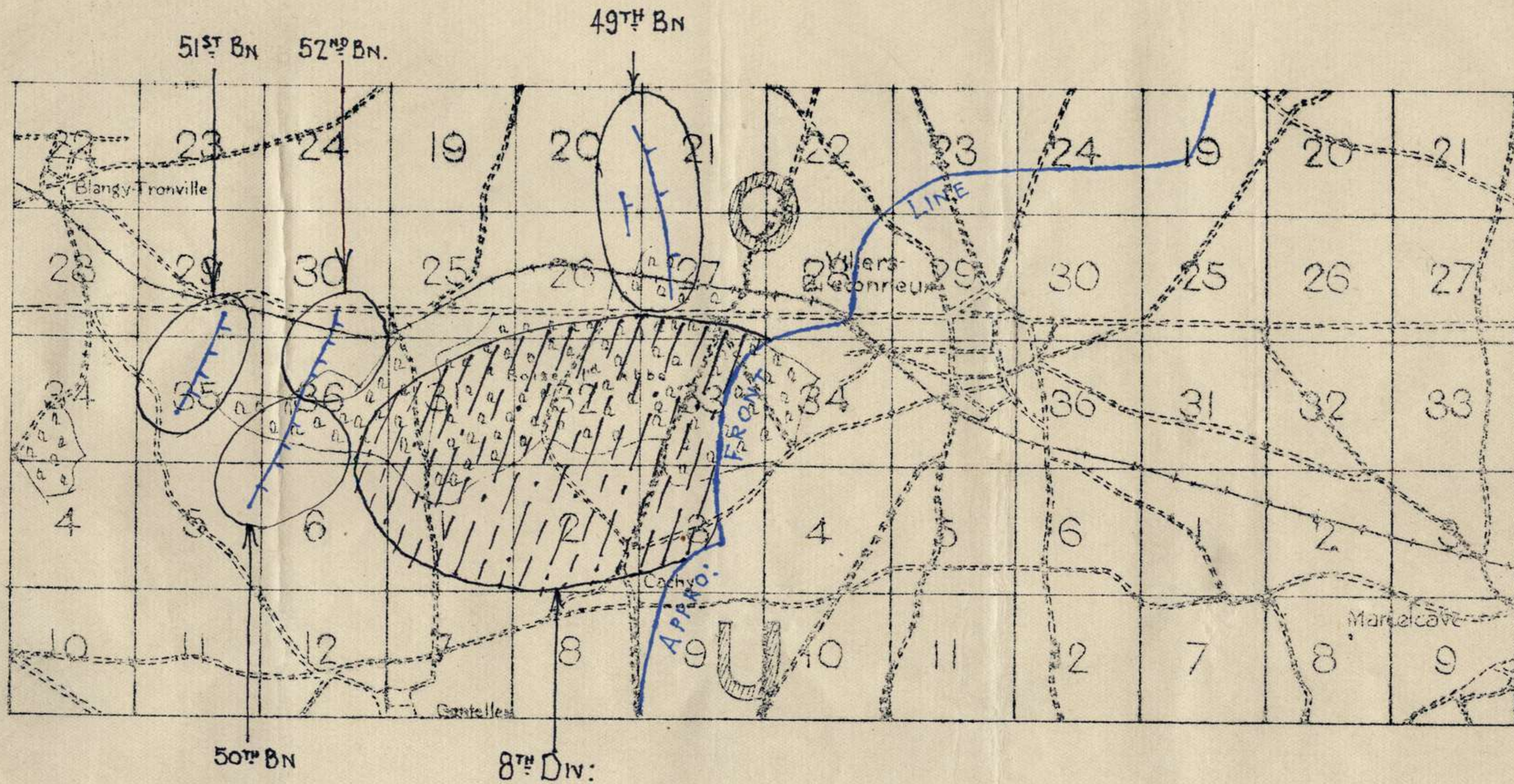
These statements are not made in any disparaging sense for as regards the 15th. Brigade the time allowed for getting on to the tape was short and loyal co-operation and support was given by them throughout; and as regards the 2nd. NORTHANTS it was unfortunate that the important work of mopping up had to be given to a tired Battalion which had already been engaged and doubly unfortunate that it should lose its Commanding Officer and Adjutant before the work commenced.

(50) T.W. Glasgow

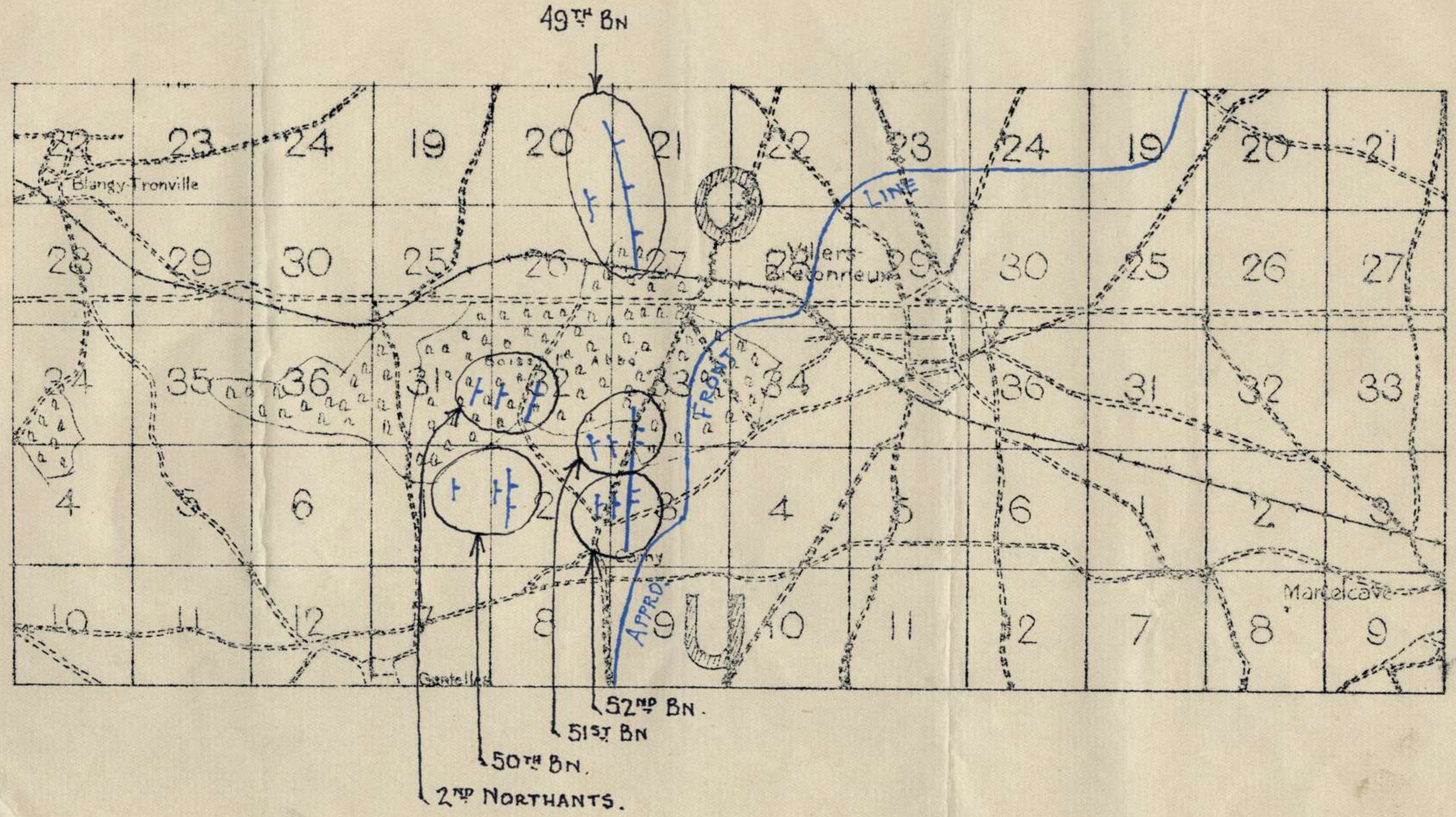
Brigadier-General,
Commanding 13th. AUSTRALIAN INFANTRY BRIGADE.

SITUATION AT 4 P.M. 24.4.18

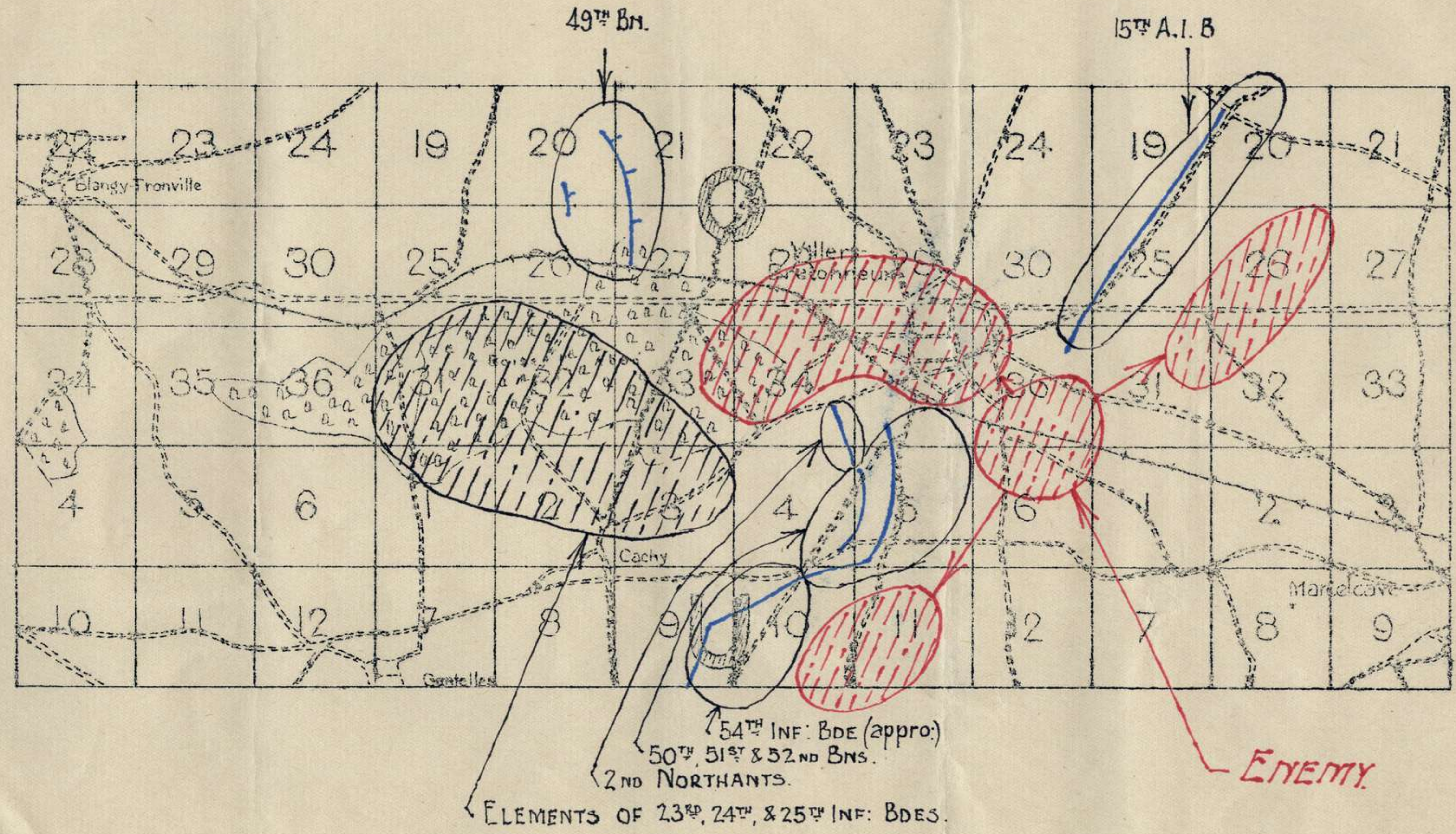
I



SITUATION AT 10.10 P.M. 24.4.18

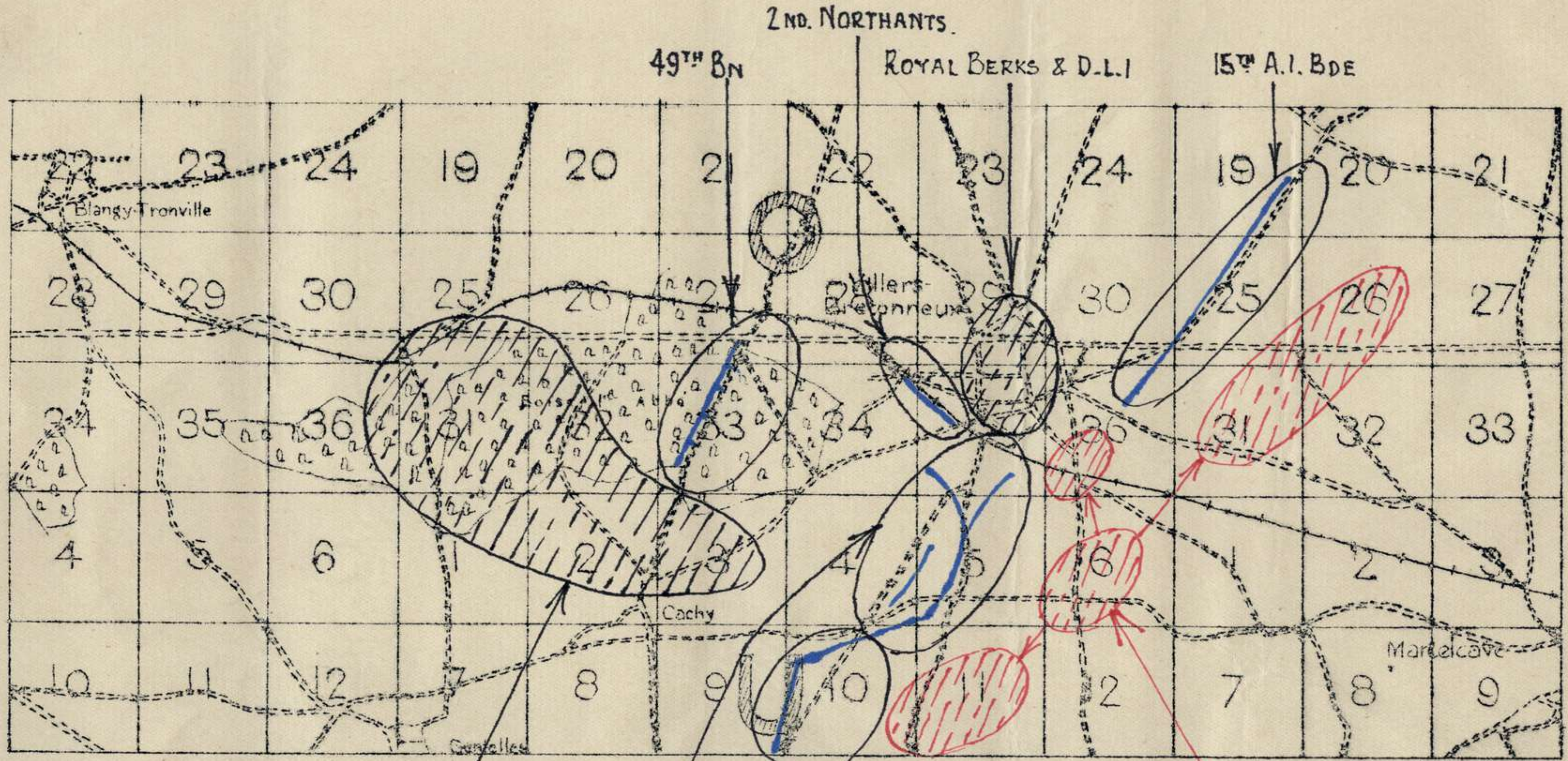


SITUATION AT 6.0 A.M. 25.4.18



SITUATION AT 4.15 P.M. 25.4.18

IV

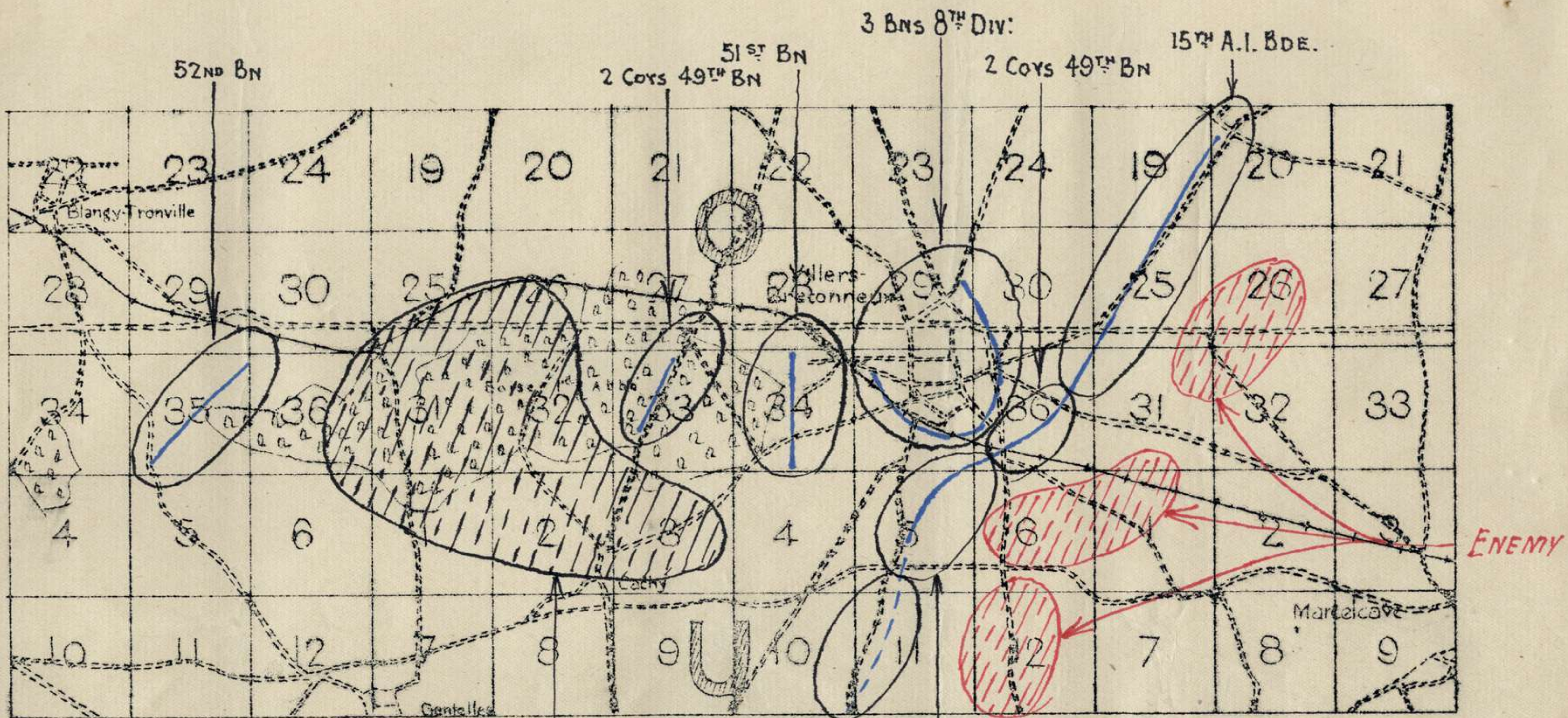


49TH BN
 ROYAL BERKS & D.L.I.
 15TH A.I. BDE
 54TH INF BDE
 50TH, 51ST & 52ND BNS.
 ELEMENTS OF 23RD, 24TH & 25TH INF. BDES.

ENEMY.

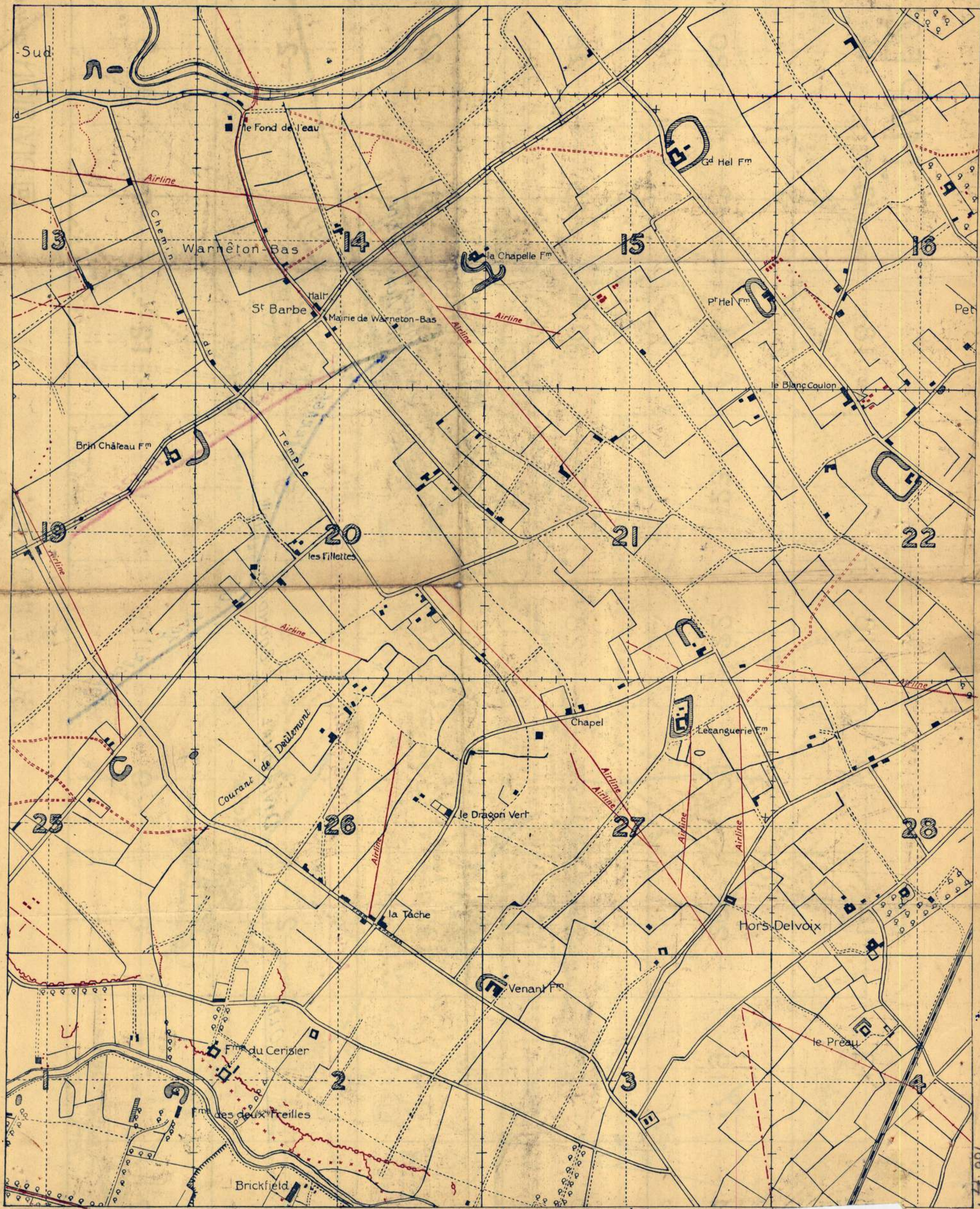
SITUATION AT 7 A.M. 26.4.18

V



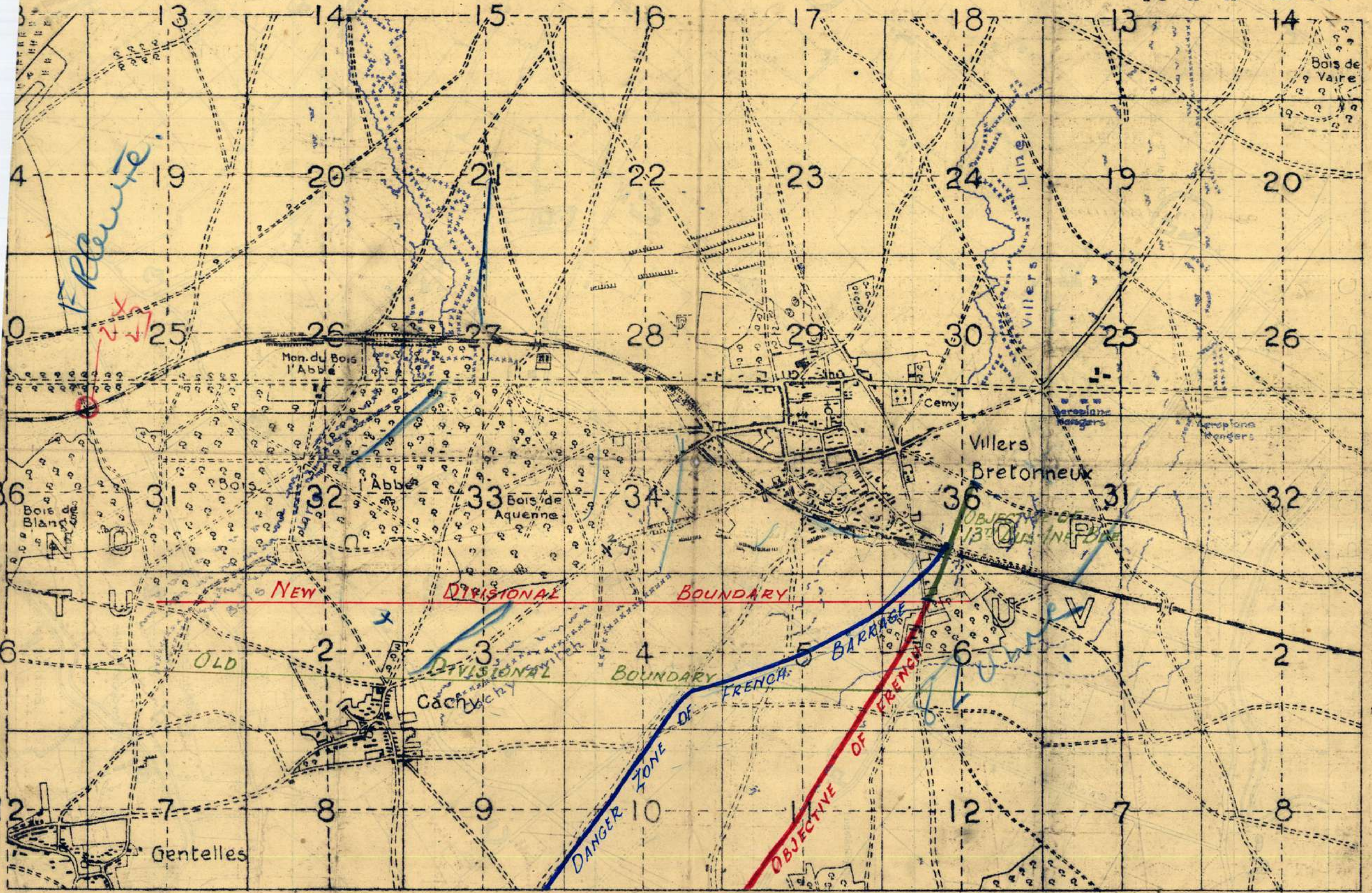
ELEMENTS OF 23RD, 24TH & 25TH INF: BDES:

SPECIAL MAP "C"



Scale 1:10,000

MAP E2



SCALE 1:20,000

□ DIVISION 21-4-18

V/B;
Harborn,

H.N.
+ 6 Hobbs Avenue
Midlands
June 29th 35

Dear Mr Bean,

The Yillers Bretonnens
Battal. After 17 years my brain
my not work too well, but will
endeavour to give you my little
account of this Glorious Fight.

Please forgive me
if I use the word I too often
but take same meaning for all
officers in my Battalion. We
left Corbie on 23rd April 1918 and
proceed to a place called Pont Moyelle
for a rest on the 24th. While on
parade word arrived that the
Stun had attacked and made
a breach on the line at Yillers
Bretonnens. So we had to pick
up and march a distance of about
10 kilometres, half the way in
Artillery formation and you
know how tiring that is for troops
on the march. On the way up
I informed my Coy we were

to march to a point behind
Villers-Brethil and we were to
attack without Artillery or tank
support in conjunction with the
15th Brigade A.I.F. on our left.

Time was very short so we had
to make a forced march and
arrived on the jumping off
tape about 10 minutes late.

But we started the attack
immediately. Before going any
further I will explain the idea
of the stunt. The 15th Australian
Brigade was attacking on the
left of Villers-Brethil and 13th
Brigade & British troops on the
right, the idea being to work
round the village and connect
up the other side surrounding
the garrison. The 51st Bn had
a very nasty sector having to
cross two belts of wire with our
left flank open resting on the
woods held by machine guns

From the start the 51st Bn had to
 fight hard, and lost very heavy
 in officers & men through
 machine Gun fire from the left
 flank. I had command of
 'C' Coy the left flank Coy
 and Lt. Sadlier V.C. was the
 young officer in charge of the
 extreme left flank. Our
 objective was the Railway
 cutting on Bank and Monument
 Wood. The Enemy side of Vickers Bar
 when the 15th Brigade would
 link up with me. We very
 soon engaged the Hun and
 I found that my Coy 'C' was held
 up with heavy machine Gun fire
 Lt. Sadlier on my left flank
 reported that the woods was a
 nest of m. Guns. and that he
 would skirt the woods and
 endeavour to clean same up.
 My Coy pushed forward about
 200 yards and I found that the

rest of the Battalion were not moving forward and held up. I personally went to the high ground on the right of the woods and found out the reason. The Bn was under heavy M. Gun fire with Burt. Wine and old trench trench in front of them meanwhile my two platoons on extreme left were clearing the woods of enemy M. Guns I got in touch with Captain Cook OC. A Coy (the other Coy in the attack) and decided that we blow our whistles and charge the old trench & wine. This was a very successful move. The men followed like heroes every Jack on far as you know we had a least 50% new men and this was their first battle) Sedlin then put in his final work won

NICOL

the V.C. The Bn moved forward the battle was won but sorry to say on looking back found Capt Cooke and many other brave men lay dead on this awful wire. By the time Sadler done his heroic work and allowed the Bn to move forward. Lt Earl from 'B' Coy was thrown on the Gap between my ^(right) flank and where Sadler went out of action through being wounded. This young officer played a very gallant part. Pushed on through the woods up to the Village. My Coy arrived at about 2 am. on the Edge of Monument Woods. Seeing that I was out of touch on my Right and Left flank I fell back about 200 yards from Monument Wood to an old line of trench

7.

night but in small parties
and they kept Lt Earl and
his men going till day light.
at day Break we were in
command of the position
looking into V-Brett on my
left flank and Monument
Wood straight in front of
me. My left flank is
still in the air. We did
not get in touch with the
15th Brigade nor do I know
what became of them.

During the afternoon of
25th April a German S. Major
came through my lines
under flag of truce stating
that it was a pity to throw
away good Australian lives
and that we were surrounded
and the German Commandant
gave us till 6 o'clock to surrender
I gave order that the Bn to
dig in for all they were

worth and we would
fight till the last man.
at about 6 pm that
afternoon the German
dropped a Box barrage
on us for about 45 minutes
closing the four walls of
the Box in. My Bn stood
up to this awful bombardment,
though we were on guard
for a counter attack, the
Germans did not follow
this advantage as we had
no ~~our~~ guns to back us up. The
men were just about done
through pull of fight. We
were that night relieved by
a French Bn and retired
in support near the woods.
In this action every NCO and
man earned a V.C. and
stood their ground against
heavy odds. Though the tanks
were to help us they were a
failure as far as my sector

was concerned. Though we had no Artillery Support the men never lost heart. You may wonder why we took very few prisoners well I will inform you as I have said before we had about 50% new men in the line, also a night attack did not know the ground or when and what was in our rear the first lot of Germans I ran against I will admit with their hands up my men asked what to do with them, I shouted no prisoners (I ~~do not~~ ^{did not} know what to do with them) give them a burst from a Lewis Gun, and the men obeyed me all night nearly every German went down before us during the awful 4 hours of that 'great' attack.

now Mr Bean I am sure
you will be able to pick
out and knock in to
shape that Glorious
night attack of the 51st Bn
on V-Brutt.

I personally would deem
it a great honour ~~to~~ if
you could send it
saddling a copy of your
book when finished as
he was the only 51st Bn
V.C. Hero

Thanking you

Yours faithfully

W R Hartburn

Late Captain 51st Bn
M.C. and Bar.

Reference to my Military Cross
Military Order 77. 8/2/19 Page
252.

V/B: Steadman
51st Bn

H.N.
PERTH,

18/6/35 19

3444 Cpl E Steadman
Late 51st Batt
69 Chatsworth Rd
Perth
Western Australia

Dear Sis

I would like to tell you what happened to the 51st Batt on Angae Eve 24th of April. We had just come out of the front lines after having five weeks without a spell, we had only been out one day when Fritz came over ~~for~~ with his bombing planes, he dropped several bombs & killed quite a few of our men. Shortly ~~after~~ five o'clock we were about to have our tea, when we get orders to pack as we were going to do a hop over, we were told that we would have tea on the march, I really forget the place were we moved of from but I do know we had about eleven kilometres to travel & that we had to be there by ten o'clock to live the tape ready to hop over, we did not get there until ten past ten & Fritz was waiting of us coming, we had only

Just got as far as our eighteen Pounders guns when we met the Tommies coming back in droves all they could say was give them hell Assey they have knocked us rotten, we had not gone more than 200 yds past our own guns, when we were met with a terrible bombardment, we were to advance on the right hand side of Monument Wood, we had no time to line the tape, the barrage & machine gun fire they were putting over was terrible, they were in monument wood & we were cutting it off advancing on each side of it, when we had got over about 100 yds of ground we came to barbed wire entanglements the slaughter at that spot was awful, I was in charge of the bombing section, I told them to lay as flat as possible until I could find an opening what with shells bursting & many lights going up from Fritz it was just like daylight, the machine gun fire was the worst that ever happened on any front, by sheer luck I found

3

a gap in the wire, I led my section through, which I am thankful to say we all got through safe, after getting through the wire we were on the edge of a very deep gully. it did not take us long to get down to the bottom, that was right at the end of monument Wood, we met plenty of Germans. then, in shell holes I in the gully, we cut the weed completely off, I surrounded it, it was estimated that we got 1500 prisoners I 150 machine-guns we kept on advancing I we went about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile past our objective, we were then ordered back to our objective. we entrenched in one of the German trenches, I he did not forget to let us know that he knew where we were. later in the morning there was only a few of us left, I was put in charge of the ration fatigue I had to lead the men over the battle area of the previous night, well, you can guess what a slaughter house is like, but I

H

never saw anything like it in my life, & I would never like to see it again, out of about 1000 men in my Battalion alone, there was only about 200 of us left the remainder were all laying round about the wire entanglements of the previous night's battle, they were laid on top of the wire & all around it, we picked up our rations & got back safely, previous to going into the line our rations were very small, for instance three men & sometimes four to a loaf of bread, so you can guess what it was like to share 1000 men's tucker between 200, there was a terrible lot of waste, quite a lot of us could not eat after seeing the such an awful sight on the battle field, we got back to our trench alright, & just at dawn, the French hopped over the top of us & they lost a hundreds of men in taking this objective which we had to come back from the same place the previous night, after the French hopped over, Fritz started with his

56
shelling again, we were in one of his old
trenches, & he threw the exact range
he bombarded us with apt 2 for nine
& a half hours, dropping them in the trench
just over & sometime a little short, one of
my best coppers got killed there, a shell
dropped right in the centre of the trench,
you may not believe it, but you could see
men, that I dont suppose said a prayer
in their lives, kneeling with their hands
to-gether praying for him to stop shelling,
captain Smith our C-O got killed here
a sniper got him, they were deadly shots,
very seldom missed this man, I may add
if we had not hepped over that night, the
Germans would have been in Amiens the
next day, the prisoners that we took had
six days rations with them & this main object
was to get Amiens at all costs, I think this is
all I can tell you, I will close with saying, that
if the young men of to-day knew what we went
through in that battle, there would never be
any more wars

6
P, S, I have just found a paper cutting
amongst my war relics, which will just
about bear out what I say, I would
like you to return it to me, also tell me
the name of your book when published
as I would very much like to read it

Well I will close now
hoping your book will be a good seller

I remain
yours sincerely
E. Steadman

HN - V/B.

Mulqueeny 51st Bn.

Lake Brown

Western Australia.

23rd June 1935

Dr G W. Bean

Australian War Historian

Victoria Barracks

Paddington N.S.W.

Dear Sir

In the West Australian newspaper dated June 18th there is an appeal by you for survivors of the Villers Bretonneux operations on April 24th - 25. 1918. of members of the 51st Battalion to forward their recollections of their own and units experience in that epic battle which drove the Germans from their advantageous position overlooking Amiens.

Well I am forwarding my recollection from memory & assisted by my diary written at the time.

Firstly my name is John Mulqueeny J.P. Justice of The Peace. Lake Brown. West. Aus. I was a member of C. company 51st Bn

when it took part in Villers Bretonneux operation 24th + 25th April 1918.

Colonel R. Christy commanded the Bn at the time. He was always ready to participate in a fight, a great fighting commander. Bullocky Bob the B the men called him in tones of affection. They thought the world of him and would go through hell for him. He received a bar for his D.S.O. for this stunt.

At the time I was No. 4016. Private J. Mulqueeny C. company. Captain Harburn company commander. Bomber in No 10. platoon of which Lieutenant Bliff K.W. Sadler had charge. Daquall was the sergeant of the platoon and Dick Hardwick Corporal.

We marched out of Querria early on the morning of 24th April 1918. and marched all day. During the afternoon a German plane flew very low & close right over the Battalion on the march.

The whole Battalion opened rifle fire on it without effect.

We continued on until evening and dug in in some chalky country. and thought we were going to camp for the night.

But it was not to be so comfortable.

Captain Harburn of C company addressed his men and told us what was expected from us, in a speech that was rather amusing. He told us we were going over the top that night. He said the monument was our objective. and that nothing was to stop us from getting there, that was our goal (Gail he pronounced it and caused a titter) In his own words he said Kill every bloody German you see we dont want any prisoners and God Bless you.

That was characteristic of the man he was as game a little man as was ever in the A.I.F and did do himself what he expected his men to do. He spared none of the enemy in a fight. And some very brave things can be told about Captain Billy Harburn of the 51st Battalion. He was one of the very few officers who got through the Pillers Bretonnieres Stunt. He played a very gallant part

in that great fight. He was undoubtedly a fighting soldier. Fritz killed his brother Jack at Paskendale and he had a grievance. He practically had charge of Brigade or seemed to during the final stages of the battle. He evidently stood on some one's corns higher up for he got rapped over the knuckles latter on and his splendid efforts did not receive the recognition which we all know he was entitled to. He was an inspiration to all and certainly should have received a decoration for his part.

We filled our water bottles looked to our ration and got into fighting order. No rum was issued, we went over the top without it, not as some people think full of it. And I consider our success, and coolness, was due to that fact.

Before we came to the tape we were under heavy shell fire.

Private Tom Moloney of our platoon lost his leg from that shell fire. I believe he was the first man put out of action. We arrive at the tape. Lieutenant Sadler said a few words. He said if you hear any noise in the wood not to get the wind up.

As it would be only a few Gornies cleaning up. I might state here before we reached the tape we met Gornies by the hundred going back as fast as they could saying Jerry is coming.

After a brief rest on tape the order was given to our platoon by Lieut Sadler, and over the top we went, every man eager to do his bit and in splendid heart, at 10.30 P.M. approx. We had not proceeded far when flares shot up from a wood on our left, and it was as bright as day while they lasted. At the same time a most deadly fire opened on us, and many of our men were killed and wounded.

Those of us not hit dropped to the ground immediately.

When the flares died out we again attempted to advance, only to meet with further flares and terrific machine gun fire.

These machine guns in the wood on our left were in such a position as to enfilade our advancing troops if we

Continued on to our objective the
monument as instructed.

So for the time we all lay stretched
out on the ground a yard or two apart
not daring to move.

Then Charlie Stokes crept up among us.
He was a corporal then in No 9. platoon.
Our platoon was No 10. with Lieutenant
Bliff K. Sadler in charge. Stokes said
what are you going to do. I was lying
next to Sadler on this night. Sadler
replied to Stokes. we are going straight
on to our objective. Stokes said you
cannot do it. Every one will be killed.
What can we do was asked? Stokes
said collect your bombers. and go into
the wood and bomb those guns out.
Sadler then passed the word along to
us to bomb the wood and rush it.
This we did; although it looked like
facing certain death. Fritz did not
expect this move, and the bombs
rattled them. and put a lot of them
out of action. But did not stop them

Charlie Stokes was wonderful he killed 9 men of those gun teams himself. He is nearly 6 ft tall darkly tanned skin splendid muscles, and a magnificent type of Australian manhood.

The whole move was due to his initiative and courage, and all the guns in that wood were put out of action.

I remember a fine big Fritz with one arm up in the air calling out 'Amara' and the other hand on the gun firing for all he was worth. Lieutenant ^{Sadlier} shot him with his revolver.

Sadlier got one through the shoulder but carried on. The cleaning up of that nest of ~~machine~~ German machine guns, allowed the whole of the 13th Brigade to get through.

After the cleaning up of that post, those of us who were able proceeded on to our objective.

Further along on a sunken Road was a lone German machine gun, and to those of us in the open he caused no end of trouble. He got Sergeant Dagnall of our platoon in the arm or shoulder he was able to walk out. The same fellow from his hidden post got me few minutes.

latter twice He hit me with a bullet on
 right arm, just above the elbow. And the
 arm was useless. Then he got me on the
 right knee with a bullet, and it is still
 there. That stopped me from walking.
 I crept into a shell hole and soon had
 a boot full of blood, there was other men
 in it one of them helped me to get my
 field dressing & iodine and bandaged me.
 Charlie Stokes again who seemed to bear
 a charmed life got in and stopped the
 lone gunner on the Sunken Road. he was
 got hit through the whole of the operations
 I lay in that shell hole waiting for the
 moon to get under a cloud. Hoping to
 crawl back to the R. A. P. as the Battalion
 had then pushed on towards the barb wire
 entanglements. When Bill Catchpole came
 along with a badly wounded hand he got
 on my gammy side and helped me
 along to the R. A. P. saying I am not
 going to leave you here. It was great of him.
 The 51st Battalion went into that stunt
 over 900 strong. Somewhere about 160

B

answered the roll call in the morning
But they reached their objective.

There was only one V.C. awarded in this
stunt to Lieutenant Bliff Sadlier. Charlie
Stokes got an extra stripe sergeant and
a D.C.M. Stokes should have got the V.C.

he was the inspiration of the whole of that
splendid action. Although Sadlier
played a splendid part or did every man
in the platoon.

It states in the Digger Book of Western Australia
that Lieut Sadlier led his bombers into that
post, I was one of them, and then states we
were all casualties that is not correct
many of them got through and pushed on
some like myself to be stopped by the
machine gun on the sunken Road or
like my particular pal Harry Gallagher
to be killed on the barb-wire a little further
on.

next morning at the casualty station at
Amiens it seemed as if the whole of
the 51st were there. I remember Bliff
Sadlier coming in with his shoulder
in a sling.

the P.S. Although Stokes was recommended for the V.C. & by
myself was this corp headquarter recommended Sadlier to
honour the platoon or platoon commander P.M.

~~7~~ 10.

We were a badly broken up lot but a fresh drafts of wounded men from this great fighting battalion continued to come along. Those of us who had sufficient life raised three cheers for each lot.

After this I was taken to Rouen hospital for a few days where a Yankee sister put 13 medicated fomentos on my leg in one night and probably saved it, and then to Bath war hospital for 3 months where the V.A.D. English sisters were like angels after the Hell at Villers Bret.

Back again to the Battalion in time to take part in the latter engagements to ward Amdenbergtine and luckily got out of them none of them were a patch on the Villers Bret Stunt.

Other survivors I know who may help you are Captain Harburn Traveller for Mills & Ware Perth Cliff Sadler V.S. time keeper Banning Dam W.A. Charlie Stokes Carrier Subias M.A. Fredrick Hardwick Education Dept Parkerville I trust this ^{will} be of value to you our platoon W.A. played a very important part as we were in the first wave to go over. and we were badly let down by the Germans who did

not take their position on the line at the time allotted to them and the gaps had to be filled with the 13th & 15th Brigades. and they did the extra work well.

I am proud to have been associated with the 51st Battalion in the Diller Bretonneux Stunt. Under fearful fire and their mates falling all around them. No one ever thought of turning back.

They carried out their instructions to the letter at a terrible cost.

It is grand to have been a mate of such men.

The 51st was a great fighting Battalion with splendid fighting Officers.

They were known as the fighting 51st and certainly earned the title.

I would like to know when the volume goes to press. as many things in it would deeply interest me. There are not many of 51st who were in that Stunt left to give you information. But I hope those who can will give it. None of us could see all. But all of us saw something.

Wishing you success Yours faithfully

Lake Brown, W.A. J. Mulqueeny J. P.

From Private A. H. Barber
51st Bn

On Monday April 22nd '18, the 51st Bn (Lieut-Col Christy in command) arrived at Query, on the Albert-Amiens Rd, from Corbie, from which place we had been on fatigues, digging reserve trenches, etc.

While at Corbie, 150 reinforcements arrived on April 13th, & another detachment of re-os & detach on April 18th. This brought the strength of the Bn up to somewhere about full strength.

A parade to re-organise after dinner on the 22nd, 2 Lewis guns to each platoon.

A number of the reinforcements were quite young, never heard a shot fired.

April 24th. Heavy drum fire was heard about dawn, also occasional long range shells were falling close to the village.

While doing buzzer work about 10 AM, a runner brought the order to return to billets & get into fighting order. Fritz was making a push south of Corbie.

The Battalion moved out of the village at noon, & marched all the afternoon. Column of route, most of the time, but we broke down to artillery formation on one occasion to avoid shell fire. An enemy plane also gave us a good deal of attention, & machine gun fire, but as far as I know, there were no casualties.

On the way we passed the R.H.Q. & on another occasion the 52nd Bn passed through us, as we lined the sides of the road. Their Padre at the rear with a heavy pack & a cheery word for everybody.

In the early evening we halted on a side road leading away from the main road to Amiens. Stretcher bearers were bringing the wounded back. The Bearers were Tommies, fine big chaps. Up on the side of the hill was a Chateau, which later was used as our dressing station.

Capt Cook (A Coy) came along the line. "You chaps had better dig a fuck hole. No telling when we may be under shell fire."

Russian like we weren't interested until without warning a shell buried itself in the ground. We assumed it upright somewhat sheepishly (the shell was a dud) & dug fuck holes!

Another one came over close to H.D. Q.R.S., & a cry of "Stretcher bearers" went up.

First blood to Italy.

The scout Officer & scouts went forward at dusk & returned after dark.

At 8 PM we all fell in, practically every man. No nucleus left behind this time.

Our orders were to "go forward at all costs. Leave the mopping up to the 2nd wave."

Stan Hicks, A Coy Q.M. came along for a last

word. My cobby Bill Watson said.

"What shall I bring you back Stan?"

"Bring yourself back Bill. Never mind souvenirs."

"Don't forget the tucker Stan" I remarked.

"Right on Barb, I'll send the tucker up if it's at all possible."

Captain Cook was giving his last words to O'Reilly, his runner. "Stick to me O'Reilly, but if the fire gets too hot look after yourself."

Some time after 8 PM we moved off in file, up past the Chateau on the left, until we were skirting a wood, also on the left. The moon was about half way down, & no doubt was in the second quarter.

An occasional shell past overhead, otherwise there was no opposition.

I should say we marched about 3 miles & then deployed on the right to the top.

C. Coy were to deal with the wood on the left then A. Coy, the other coys no doubt were on our right.

We were now under fairly accurate shell fire. One of the reinforcements asked rather anxiously "if we had any artillery?"

I knew we had none, but to cheer him up a bit, said "Yes, you wait till you hear our barrage."

Ten o'clock Zero hour. A whistle sounded,

Someone said "Come on lads" & we were off.

Almost at once from the wood on our left came a murderous machine gun fire. C. Coy dealing with the wood were not making the same progress as we were, so the enemy were having a great target at us, before engaging our C. Coy.

Men fell in swaths; the rest of us threw ourselves into snail shell holes, piling on top of one another but as soon as the fire slackened the least bit we were up & on again.

Advantage at all costs, & the costs were going to be heavy. Those poor devils of reinforcements.

Flares & Very lights soared into the sky & we stood motionless, eyes on the ground, on again, with nothing to shoot at.

Presently there are shots immediately in front, men fall, & someone called out "Bomb the ———".

Bombs are thrown into some outposts & we discover we have been boxing on with some Tommy's in outposts. They didn't know we were advancing, & thought we were Germans.

who had got around behind them, we certainly thought they were Germans. Coming back I wounded two hours later I saw the outposts again & wondered how many of the dead we had accounted for.

The fire, if at all possible, was increasing in intensity. It was almost impossible to make oneself heard above the sound of those infernal machine guns. How we kept on our feet at all was a mystery. Certainly the night saved us.

Presently we came to a trench in a hollow. Flares were going up from a position half-left about 60 yds. From the parapet we opened fire in the hope of silencing a machine gun there.

Our Platoon Sgt came running along the parapet. "Come on boys we can't stay here" he shouted in a hoarse voice. Up lads & at 'em, & we fixed bayonets & charged forward, to be halted by barbed wire entanglements about 60 yds ahead of the trench. The machine gun half-left was only about 30 yds away.

Throwing myself down I looked along to the right & by the light

6

of the moon & stars I could see our fellows
pouring throo a gap in the wire.

Jumping up on to one knee I started
pulling up the pickets when I stopped
one in the left shoulder; of the other two
one got it in the neck & one in the gut.

Making my way back an hour later
I met two tanks going up, at least 2 hours
late.

Capt Cook was killed on the wire entanglements;
Leut's Jack Kitchen & Joe Barrett also.

Sgt's Geo Smith, Monty Davis, & Geo Nash
done their last laps over.

The casualties for the battalion I believe was
400. (I also heard 700).

From what the boys told me afterwards
they reached their objective alright ~~but~~
but had lost too many men to do
anything but just hang on.

C. Coy had a stiff job in dealing with machine
gun nests in the wood. The enemy manned
their guns to the last. Some died at their
posts. Leut Haslem won his VC that
night.

9254.

4 June 1935.

C.W.K. Sadlier, Esq., V.C.,
c/o R.S.S.I.L.A.,
Anzac House,
Perth, W.Aust.

Dear Mr. Sadlier,

I am writing the story of the fighting at Villers-Bretonneux on 24-25 April, 1918, but am hampered by lack of information as to what was the actual course of the fighting on the edge of Bois l'Abbe and near the Monument. I should be most grateful if you could give me the benefit of your recollections, as I want to do full justice to the 51st and 50th Battalions.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

586

V/B. 57Bn.
Sadler.

H.N.

Canning Dam
New Armadale

28/6/35

Dear Mr. Bean.

Mom & 4th with reference to the fighting at Villers-Bretonneux regret delay in replying but have got in touch with several other Sr Officers, who got through the whole stunt & can give you details re the Monument. I was only in for about 4 hrs & as we had no maps & it was night time can only describe by aid of a rough sketch, & trust that same may be of use to you.

I will commence from the morning of the 24th April, we were in parade at Pont Royelle when orders came to get into fighting kit and move up to a position behind Nelles-Brett I believe we went forward of a village called Blancy Jonville. The march up was approx 15 kilo & about half this distance was done in open or artillery formation, weather was misty & light rain, when crossing over a river we were surprised with a Fritz plane (evidently flying low to pick up bearing) swooping down & blazing at us with machine gun, at the time we had about 50% new reinforce. in Bn & this was their first taste of war, late in the afternoon we found ourselves trying to dig in on the slope behind the Wood, in a

(2)

position it would have been impossible to hold, however at 8 pm. we received orders to counter attack at 10 pm. & we had about 5 minutes to have our own & only glimpse of the map. Orders were to go forward past the Village find old front line dig in, my orders were to skirt the Village & wood & connect up with 15 Brigade who were attacking on the left of Wood & Village, Air force were supposed to bomb the Village & tanks to assist but neither eventuated.

We got into position for the attack within a few minutes of 10, I think a little late & we went into unknown territory, on what appeared a very slight hope of success, fighting every ^{against} conceivable difficulty that could discourage us, wire leading off our true direction, a bludge of front machine gun fire & abnormal casualties at the start & 50% of new men.

When we arrived at hopping off mark, my platoon on the open flank was around a curve in the wood & I went over to inspect the wood to see the prospects of ~~going~~ advancing through the edge of same, but decided to keep out as it contained a very strong odour of gas. & the risk of losing ~~any~~ touch

With one another ~~to~~ appeared to great, the wood itself appeared to me to be fairly dense. When word came to advance we had gone only a few hundred yards when it was clear that we were walking into certain death from machine guns enfilading us from the wood, with my first casualties. We got down to sum up the position & locate where the fire was coming from. (The land on right of wood was sloping up toward our ^{own} right flank & some were out of range over the ridge.) Then looking to my right I could see men lying, kneeling & half kneeling in groups of 5 & 6's & I at first thought that the whole advance was held up. & gave my runner orders to work out over the ridge & tell my Compny Cdr that we were taking to the woods to clean up machine gun posts & would be late out to objective. ^{I did this to.} ~~to~~ give them a chance of joining with 15th Reg on our left. & save a gap in line in front of village, after a few minutes down we decided to push into the woods having located one gun. My runner returned & reported he could not find balance of Company & when I pointed out what appeared to be the company held up he informed me they were all dead.

(4)

B' Company had by this time come close up on our heels & I got in touch with nearest officer & explained position & advised him to move over to the right flanks & push out to front line as I would be held up for some time, by the time I made the wood I had about seven men left including sergt. Lewis Gunner & Bombing Corp., the Lewis Gunner was left in a shell hole just outside the wood with instruction to engage the first Machine Gun while we rushed in with bombs through the edge of wood, we had not gone far when I walked around a bush & almost fell into a post of 3 Fritz's & yelled out to boys to hop back & pulled the pin of a Mills & dropped same in trench. I was just stepping back when I got ~~the~~ a clean bullet wound through inside of right thigh but the bomb cleaned up that post naturally as soon as bomb went off we rushed through, to get at the first post we had to use Mills bombs as rifle grenades but had no containers fired them with handle against bayonet; this was rather risky in dark, but had to be done get over trees etc. after giving a few bombs the gun stopped

5
& we rushed through & cleaned up
the post, after this we ~~we~~ ~~that~~ opened
out to about a couple of paces apart
& worked ~~through~~ ^{along} the edge of the wood,
at about this time we got bombed by
Jettys & we kept meeting Germans behind
bushes. & I can see very plainly still
going around a bush & some else around
the other side ~~to~~ the two of us to find
a German standing there & both blazing
at once I often wonder whether any of
us hit one or the other; his machine
guns were about 50 yards apart & I
think placed for anti-aircraft work
as some were using tracer bullets, which
made things more terrifying, seeing
what you were walking into. The second
gun we got two new lads had them
bailed up at point of bayonet just
as I got in these were the only ones
that night that I saw give any sign
of surrender & that was only after they
had probably been hit with bombs
& did not see us until we had
jumped almost on them. I found that
we were up against an exuberant
enemy, who fought till the last, &
under the circumstances we could not
afford to give any quarter.

(6)

as ~~we~~ we got toward the village our party had dwindled & in the finish I found myself alone & still one gun to shift the history of that is written with my decoration. I then started to make out to the front line & I decided to load my revolver. I was carrying bullets loose in jacket pocket & found that the revolver was empty & also that my right hand was paralyzed the ~~bullet~~ last wound I got had cut nerve in forearm; my leg was stiffening so I decided to get out while I could still walk. The cleaning up of the wood must have taken us about 3 to 4 hours. I got back to 52 Bn. Head Qrs & reported to Col. Fitzgould, after passing 52 going up.

I trust that this does not ~~sound~~ sound egotistical as I am trying to convey what every one of the boys must have done & how they must have fought to have carried the stunt through; my sector was very limited & I have been in touch with Capt. Harbour M.B. ~~James~~ ^{Hobbs} Ave Hedland who commanded C. Coy that night & can give you details of balance of our front.

(7)

Col. Christie D.S.O. Now Major at.
Victoria Bk. Victoria was in charge of
Bn at time +

Well I am sorry I can
see you no more as naturally want
the 57th Bn to get credit for the work
they did that night, it called a halt
to Fritz + finally stopped him
separating the English from the French

Yours Truly
C. W. Sadler

Railway Str.

Monument

V.B.

Wood

Ridge
W. side
W. side

C Coy

A Coy

B Coy

D Coy

Hop row

S.I. Bn.

Blaney Howell

revis

9306.

...the ... 2 July 1935.

C.E.R. Burt, Esq., D.C.M.,
Solomontown,
Port Pirie, S. Aust.

Dear Sir,
In writing the story of the counter-attack by the 51st Battalion at Villers-Bretonneux, I find that, while from the commanders' point of view the action is well described, there is a dearth of record as to the actual experiences of the companies - indeed, we have much fuller accounts of these of the German front-line troops who met them. I should be most grateful if you could assist me with a note, however short, of your recollections of the actual fighting. The chapter is now being written, and I would therefore be greatly obliged if any notes that you can give me could be forwarded at your earliest convenience.

Yours faithfully,

Official Historian.

P.S. I am forwarding a duplicate copy of this letter to you c/o Messrs. Dixon Bros., Girrahween, Koorewatha, N.S.Wales, as I am not certain of your present address.

G. H. O. McColl

Koorawatha
N.S.W.

We moved from our support line somewhere about eight o'clock, every thing at that time was busy, heavy shelling, and all in readiness for advance or retreat. The enemy concentrating on that sector with very heavy shells.

Our first resistance was on nearing the first sunken road until then our casualties were light. Then we encountered the enemys barbed wire entanglements, which was not touched by our Artillery + the only way to get through those was through the roads that were left purposely, the enemy concentrated on these roads + inflicted heavy losses on our side. At the second sunken road was where the heavy fighting occurred, hand to hand for the possession of the road. on the outskirts of Villers Bretonneux the enemy was so massed that machine guns (Lewis) were used from the shoulder + the enemy suffered very heavily, the streets were greasy with human blood. The enemy counterattacked at very different times through the night, but never again got possession of the sunken road or Villiers Bretonneux.

at this stage was when Sgt G. R. Best + Pte R. Hillier won their D.C.M. capturing 60 prisoners + 4 machine guns under very heavy fire.

I am
Yours faithfully
G. H. O. McColl

H.N. ✓
V/B. 51 Bn.
Keeley.

216 Stirling St
Perth W.A.
24.6.35

Gen Bevan,
Victoria Barracks,

Dear Sir,

Noticing your
appeal for any particulars that may help
of the part played by the 51st, 52nd Bns
in the attack on Villers Bretonneux
of the night of 24th April 1918.

I was Seryt acting Platoon Commander
of Co 2 Platoon A Coy. 51st Bn on that
night. I will try & give you my
experiences as well as my memory serves
me. & you will possibly be able to sort out
anything of interest.

It was I think about 9 AM. on
April 24th & being behind the line the
51st Bn was on parade. Runners were
noticed making towards the company commanders
& I will always remember the first words
spoken by a member of my platoon.

if they were "Stulls" where have the B.-
Poms run now?

However no information was given
then we were just formed up &
moved off in fighting order. It is during
the march the C.O. called company
commanders forward & explained the action
that was to take place they in turn
called Platoon commanders forward & they in
their turn explained what was to be done
to the men during the 10 minute rest each
hour.

I don't think that an action was
fought during the whole period of the
war with so little preparation.

During the most of the march a
German aeroplane was flying overhead so
that we had plenty of notice.

We landed on the jumping off
tape I think about 10.20 P.M. about 10 minutes
late & started the attack immediately. Our
instructions were. Fly on the left with
left flank resting on the wood we
were not to penetrate the wood but

but keep moving forward crossing two sunken roads & establish ourselves on the crest of Monument Hill which was the crest of the ridge past the second sunken road. We also had to keep Villers Bretonneux on our left & not penetrate the village but link up with the 15th Brigade who were attacking on left of Villers after we had passed the village.

Owing to barbed wire, heavy machine gun fire & heavy casualties A. Company was broken up & had to act in small parties. Seeing that it was impossible to get through the wire where we were I took what was left of my platoon away to the right where the other Coy had made a breach & passed through there & then moved back to what should have been my correct position but it turned out that my small party were the only ones of A. Coy to get through.

The Germans did not wait after we broke through the wire but fell back on to

a line of outposts near the second
 sanken road, it was here that I
 made contact with a large force of Germans
 my party totalled only nine, but thinking that
 the rest of the Bn were moving forward
 on my left, right. we drove the Germans
 out & held off a counter-attack, causing
 the enemy heavy casualties. I made
 my Lda quarters in a quarry that
 the English troops Northampton's I think
 had also used as HQ's as they had
 left four of their wounded on stretchers
 in the dugout.

It was here that the German tank
 was lying it had fallen on its side when
 it went over the quarry bank. I think
 that was the first German tank captured
 & if you remember I tried to give you an
 idea of the shape of the tank shortly after
 the action.

Night was coming on so I
 decided to send a messenger back
 to find out what had become of the
 rest of the Bn, he returned with the

information that they had stopped on the previous rise just about on a line with the Sulers Bretonment railway station, as the Germans were holding positions on my right & left I was forced to abandon the position which was within a short distance of our objective & the English wounded back & rejoin the rest of the Bn.

It appeared to me that the Germans only made a faint attempt to fight back once he started to fall back as everything was in his favour as we had lost over two thirds of our effectives on the first wire, had our left flank wide open & were broken up into small parties & had no artillery support.

I think that I was the only Sgt to march out of the action & Lieut J. Z. Kitchen was the only Officer & he was killed in reserves next morning.

I hope that some of this may be of some use to get in with you already. We have.

C.K. Sadlier won his V.C. in this action but he penetrated the wood against instructions & possibly his action helped to break down the German defence.

I am sorry I could not give a more detailed description but after the heavy losses on the wire & breaking up in small parties it was a bit of a mix-up & I certainly would not have got as far forward as I did if I hadn't have got lost.

Yours faithfully
J.A. Keeley.

1967

Sgt J.A. KEELEY

A. Coy.

5th BN

orders to turn the troops through it and so out of the trenches. Then, with Lieutenant Gooney (13th) and Oliverwell (13th), and one other, he took position in a communication trench between 0.0.1 and 2, from which they could bomb the advancing Germans.

9345

20 July 1935.

(TAKEN IN BRETON No. 121)

They had forty machine bombs which they began to throw slowly. In O.C. 1 Lieutenant Gooney, 216 Stirling Street, Perth, W. Aust.

J.A. Keeley, Esq.,
216 Stirling Street,
Perth, W. Aust.

Dear Sir,

I have to thank you for your courtesy in writing to me in connection with the operations at Villers-Bretonneux. Your notes are most useful.

I take it from other evidence that the German tank was south, or slightly south-west, of the Monument orchard, that is to say, slightly to our right of the Monument. I would be grateful if you would let me know anything that fixes the position of the quarry.

Yours faithfully,

C.E.W. Bean

Official Historian.

Capt. J.M. Gooney, 13th Bn. B. 1891.
Lieut. F.M. Oliverwell, 13th Bn. 1891.

Lieutenant Stone had previously been sent by Murray to search with Captain Langens a document that had been used by German signallers, and to send back any papers found. He went through the papers, left the document, and went off the parcel, when he found the German attack almost upon him. Langens, who stayed to finish his task in the document, came out shortly afterwards to find the Germans all round him, and was captured.

A Breton. (2nd Bn. I.L. Brigade, 16th Bn. 1891.)
Then situated, according to one of its members, Private A.T. 13th Battalion, "Four days" from O.C.S. 1891.

Col. J.S. Wheeler (No. 2011, 13th Bn.) 1891.

H.N.
V/B. 51 Bn.
Keeley.

216 Stirling St
Perth

W.A.

30th July. 1935

C.E.W. Bean.

Dear Sir,

Your letter of 20th Inst to hand.
With reference to the position of the German tank. You will realize that owing to the nature of the action & the fact that it was night points of the compass are vague. However I have done my best to sketch the line of advance.

The 4th Division never reached their objective & the 51st took up a position at Ref. (4). My position was at Ref. (3) & the tank was on its side in quarry at Ref. (1). The A. D. Post. Ref. 2 was in the quarry. & it was here I sent back four wounded the fact me to understand they were "Northampton's" & had been abandoned by their comrades. & this quarry had been used as Head quarters before being driven

out.

I hope you will be able to make
some sense out of the sketch, as while
being able to describe the action it is hard
to put it on paper

Yours faithfully
J.A. Keeley.

REF
(6)

REF
(5)

MONUMENT HILL

REFERENCE NOS

- (1) TANK on side here
- (2) ENGLISH AID POST
four wounded
Kommiss here
- (3) Position I took
up till day break
- (4) 51st Bn occupied
these trenches & I
fell back on them
at day break
- (5) Road ground
leading out of
Dillers Brook
- (6) 5th Division
on left of Villers

TRENCHES

QUARRY REF

REF (3)

REF (2)

REF (1)

ROAD

TANK

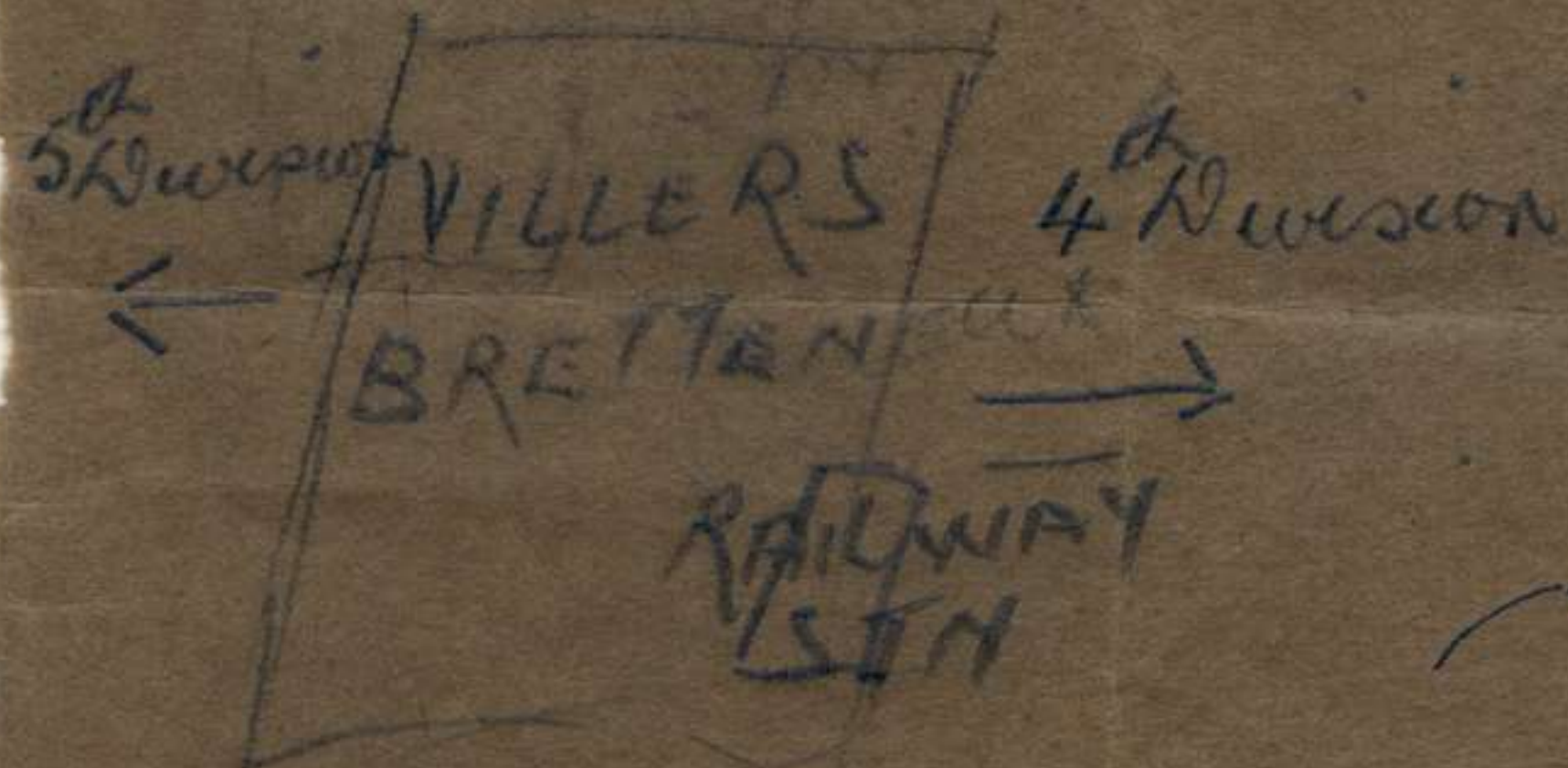
BANK 3'

LEVEL

800 yds

ENTRENCHMENTS
REF (4)

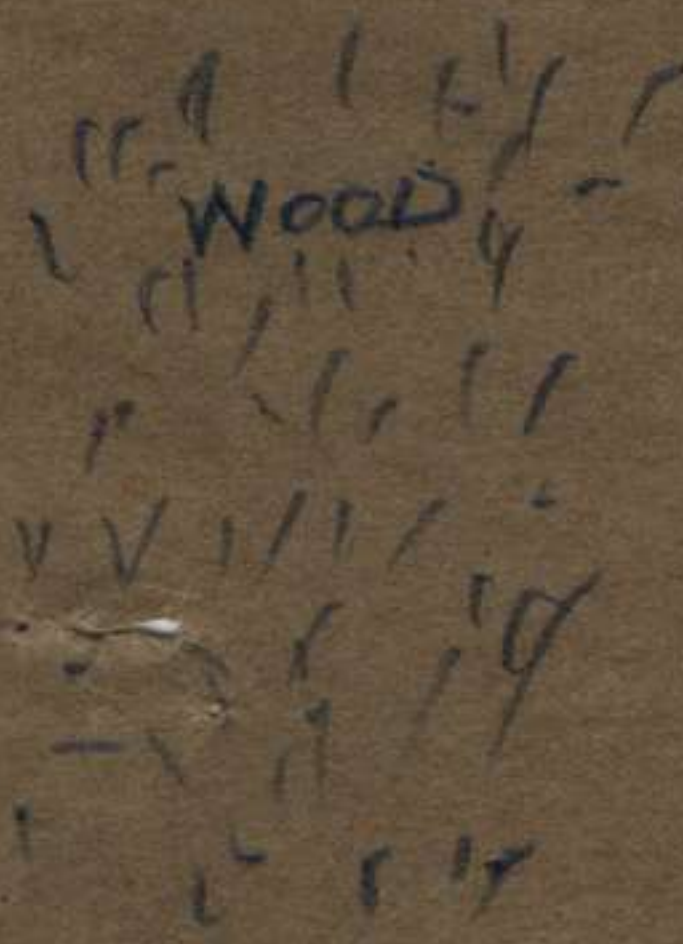
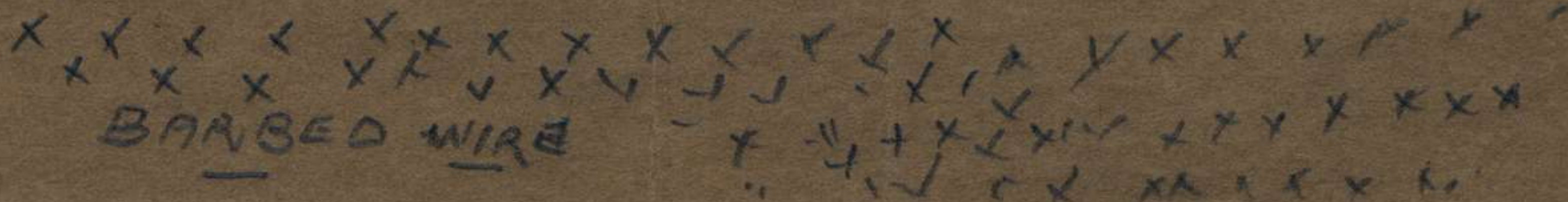
SLIGHT RISE



DIRECTION OF ADVANCE

DIRECTION OF ADVANCE

SUNKEN ROAD



8 July 1935.

My Dear Longmore,

Your kindness in inserting the notice asking for accounts of Villers-Bretonneux has saved the situation. Several admirable narratives have come in, but one or two difficulties crop up in reconciling them. The most important are as follows -

- (1) Mr. J. Mulqueeny, of Lake Brown, who was with Lieutenant Sadlier and Corporal Stokes in the edge of the wood when Sadlier won his V.C., writes enthusiastically about both of them, but says that Stokes suggested the idea of going into the wood. Mulqueeny was lying beside them under hot fire during the conversation.
- (2) Mr. Mulqueeny also says that after Sadlier had finished his job and had to go to the rear, Stokes succeeded in subduing or capturing the further machine-guns which had done such damage to the 51st Battalion by firing up the Villers-Bretonneux--Cachy road just beyond the wood.
- (3) After passing the road and the wire beyond it, Captain Harburn was reorganising his company when a number of Germans appeared "as if from the ground". These were allowed to come close, when Harburn's company opened on them and shot down a number, the 50th Battalion helping in this as they came up from the rear (Harburn had sent for them). About this time Sergeant Burt and Private Hillier, going down the slope towards the valley south of Villers-Bretonneux, ran into 60 Germans with 4 machine-guns, who surrendered. I don't know how far these last two incidents were connected, or what relation they bore to each other. Were the two lots of Germans part of the same group?

I am wondering whether you could possibly find ~~the~~ time to get touch with Mr. Stokes, who is a carrier at 38 Dennis Street, ~~Widdowson~~ Subiaco (Telephone B.8439), and find out whether (1) and (2) are accurate, and whether he knows anything about (3). If not, Harburn, whose home is at Hobbs Avenue, Nedlands (F.1207), might be able to clear this up, although a letter I have had from him is rather vague and suggests that his memory may not be perfectly clear. Sadlier has also written to me, but his letter does not go into the details mentioned in (1).

If this is asking too much, don't hesitate to let me know, and I will write direct. I wrote last week to Stokes, and may yet hear from him.

Your assistance in the past has been exceedingly valuable, and that has made me bold enough to write to you in this matter.

With kind regards, Yours sincerely,

9321.

9 July 1935.

Dear Longmore,

Since writing to you yesterday, it has occurred to me that I should mention that Captain Harburn writes that during the advance his company met a large number of Germans with their hands up, but that, having no means of dealing with prisoners, he had to turn the Lewis gun on them and shoot them down. I think that probably a certain number got back into Bois d'Aquenne. One of my problems is this, that I don't know whether this may not be the body of men captured by Sergeant Burt and Private Hillier, and also whether it may not be the incident referred to in another account in which, when Harburn was reorganising, a company of Germans appeared "askif from the ground" and was approaching his flank when he turned fire on them, a company of the 50th also coming up at the same moment. It is important to know whether these are separate incidents, or all versions of the same incident.

I should like to get over there and disentangle it myself, but there appears to be no chance of this, and that is why I have written to you.

With apologies for troubling you,
Yours sincerely,

Captain C. Longmore,
"The West Australian" Office,
P.O. Box D.162,
Perth, W.Aust.

c/o The Western Mail

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1833



PERTH, JULY 27, 1935.
W.A.

H.N. V/B Ap. 24/5.

Langmore re 5157.

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

Dear Doctor,

Further to your letter, No. 9318 of July 8,
I have seen Mr. Stokes and the following is the result.

He is a tall, raw-boned Aussie, a carrier
now, quiet spoken and not gifted with eloquence or the
ability to express himself on paper. His Red Indian caste
of countenance irresistibly caused me to picture him in
that Villers-Bret stunt as a warrior really on the war path,
and gave intense reality to the story I dragged out of him.

Dealing with paragraph (1) of your letter:
Stoke says it is correct in all particulars except that he
was a sergeant, not a corporal.

Enlarging on paragraph (2) Stokes said
that the various platoons (9, 10, 11 & 12) were badly cut up
by machine gun fire from the tape onward and that when he
discussed the situation at midnight with Sadlier and sug-
gested dealing with the guns in the wood, Sadlier had no
men left. In Stokes's platoon only a corporal and seven men
remained. They decided to go for the guns and Stokes took
the bag of bombs off the corporal, (who did not come with
them). He bombed the first gun out of action, Sadlier
shooting one of the gunners. As they advanced to the
position Stokes saw a German with his hands up (it was
bright moonlight) but instinctively he moved a pace and
got behind a tree as the German whipped his hand down and
shot Sadlier with his revolver. Stokes hopped into action
with the bayonet and with a vicious swipe nearly cut the
German's head off.

With Sadlier taken to the rear Stokes and
his little party stalked the second position, knocked out
the crew with bombs and captured the gun. Four of his men
were killed and wounded in that operation and Stokes had
only two men left and no bombs to deal with the others.

Then Stokes met Corporal Bob West, who had two rifle grenades, and with these Stokes attacked the third gun. Both grenades missed and West then went back and collected some German stick bombs. Stokes put two of these right into the position, knocked the crew out, and took the gun.

The fourth gun was manned by only one German and Stokes crept into a favourable position, shot the gunner and captured the gun.

There was still a fifth gun in the wood giving a lot of trouble. Stokes met Corporal Meldrum, of "B" Company, with a Lewis gun, and pointed the enemy piece out to him. They had just crept into a favourable position to deliver a burst and were getting ready when the German fired first. One bullet knocked Stokes's steel helmet off and another got Meldrum in the leg. While Stokes was attending to Meldrum the German moved his gun back. At any rate the position was clear when Stokes next looked for him.

All this happened between about midnight, when Sadlier and Stokes first discussed the guns, and 4 a.m., when the fifth gun was disposed of in the manner indicated above.

With regard to paragraph (3); Stokes says the first sentence is correct. The second sentence is also correct, except that he is sure it was a company of the 49th., not the 50th. He doesn't know anything about Burt and Hillier in the third sentence, and so cannot answer your question at the end of the paragraph. Stokes says that you (Dr. Bean) or someone sent by you took his photograph as the remnants of the battalion were coming out of the line after this engagement.

On Friday last, Captain Harburn, who is a country traveller and only in town during the week-ends, called to see me by appointment and I went over your letters and Stokes's evidence. The following is the result:

(A). Re paragraph 1 of your letter. Stokes was a sergeant. Harburn does not know personally, but in the battalion just afterwards the story was current in accordance with the details as given by Mulqueeny.

(B). Regarding paragraph 2 of your letter and Stokes's account, Harburn says they are correct, so far as he knew or gathered at the time or immediately afterwards. He thinks Stokes is astray about times, and believes that these events happened between 10 p.m. and midnight. The show was over at midnight with the exception perhaps of the fifth gun.

(C). With regard to paragraph 3 of your letter Harburn says the first sentence is correct. The second is also correct and the battalion was the 5 Oth. With regard to the third sentence he says that Burt's 60 Germans were probably the remains of the body dispersed by Lieut. Earl and his platoon, whom he had dispatched to the left some time previously to cut off the retreat of the Germans frontally engaged with the remainder of Harburn's company.

(D). Harburn corroborates Stokes in that you took a photo of himself and Stokes together as they were coming out of the line. He says he told you that "Stokes was a certain V.C."

(E). Referring to your letter written on July 9 Harburn says that the men his company shot down in the advance were not the prisoners captured by Burt and Hillier, as the shooting occurred in the early part of the engagement. Neither did it coincide (being earlier) with the incident when the Germans appeared "as if from the ground". They are separate incidents.

Well, Doctor, I hope this will enable you to straighten things out. I have worked somewhat in the dark as I had no map to follow their accounts intelligently but I've done my best to unravel the tangle along the lines mentioned in your letter.

If ever you want a good personal account of any particular episode let me know in good time as I have a splendid team of Digger Diarists writing for me now in "The Western Mail".

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

Changmore

9252.

4 June 1935.

Dear Whitham,

I was delighted to see that you had gained another step in the list of commands.

I am just writing the account of Villiers-Bretonneux, 24-25 April 1918. The records for the 15th Brigade are ample, and so are those of the brigade and battalion headquarters in the 13th. What is lacking is any account of the experience of officers and men of the 52nd and 51st Battalions in the neighbourhood of Monument Wood. Curiously enough, we have far better German than English records for this. I should be grateful if you could suggest the names of any survivors who would be likely to let one have the benefit of their recollection. The volume will be going to press fairly soon, and so it is necessary to get the information at an early date.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,

Colonel J.L. Whitham, C.M.G., D.S.O., P.S.C.,
Victoria Barracks,
Brisbane, Q'land.



AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES.
1st MILITARY DISTRICT

DISTRICT HEADQUARTERS,
VICTORIA BARRACKS,

BRISBANE,

29 June 1935

Dear Beam

For my delay in reply to
yours of 4 June (no 9252) I must
express regret. - I received it in my
annual letter on 11 June & put it
aside hoping to come across some
survivors of 52 Bn M.F. in Brisbane who
could recall the particulars of the fighting
in or near Monument Wood on 24/25 April
1918. I have only met a couple of
ex-officers of 52 Bn so far neither of whom
were

able to assist. One however promised to
dig up one Tulin, my former Post Office Officer but
he has not yet made his whereabouts known. I am
still hopeful of locating him. I sent a
message today to Lt Col. Halton, now Comd 25th
Battalion at Toowoomba: he was a sub. in 'A' Coy 52
Bn MF & I expect to hear from him this week
& if he has any information I'll ask him to
send it to you direct.

Sorry to be so helpless but without a file
giving names of personnel or companies one has
small chance of reflecting names & addresses.

But I have my baggage unpacked now & may
be able to put my hands on some documents which
will assist: I will write you more fully in a day
or so.

Thank you for kind messages on my
"translation" from Tainui to Queensland.

All good wishes

Yours truly
J. L. L. L. L.

AUSTRALIAN MILITARY FORCES—1ST MILITARY DISTRICT.

Please quote this Number when replying.

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VICTORIA BARRACKS,
BRISBANE, 17th July, 1935.

Dear Bean,

When I wrote on 29th June to acknowledge receipt of yours of 4th June (No. 9252) I thought it would be possible to send you names of some "veterans" able to throw a little light on the events of the night 24/25th April, 1918, and in particular those who fought in vicinity of Monument Wood.

Lt.-Col. N.G. Hatton, M.C., (Now C.O., 25 Bn., A.M.F., at Toowoomba), was one of my subalterns in 52 Bn, A.I.F., and was with "A" Coy in the counter-attack, and was an unwounded survivor. He sent me the short story enclosed herewith, but I fear it has little in it that is not known already to you.

The Lieut. Henderson mentioned in his story was with "D" Coy, 52 Bn, and is mentioned in the Battalion War Diary. I do not know whether he is in Australia.

In a telephone message, Hatton mentioned one, H.A. ARMITAGE, as possibly being able to give a story, but he doesn't know where he is, but believed him to be a Tasmanian. In a letter I sent to Sir John Gellibrand early this month I asked him to pass the name Armitage on to one Frank Mulcahy, the Hon. Sec'y of 52 Bn A.I.F. Association in Hobart, to ask if he is known by them. Armitage was a Sergeant on 24th April, 1918, and was wounded in the Villers Bretonneux fight; his regimental number was 2673.

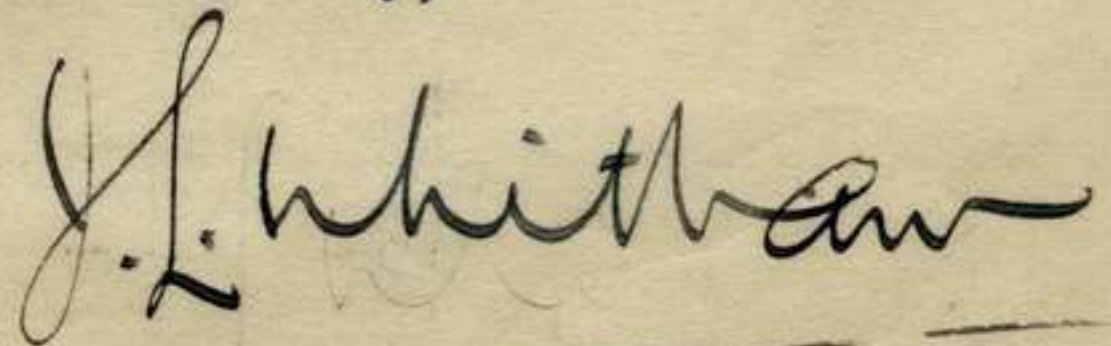
I have not been able to see Lieut. Julin - he is out of Brisbane and I doubt, anyhow, whether he could give any personal information. I got in touch with ex Lieut. BOASE (captured at Dernancourt) last week, but he was unable to put me on to anyone in Brisbane who could help.

In looking over the copy I have of 52 Bn report of the operation (Appendix "W", dated 29th April, 1918), I note some amendments made in my own writing which may not have been made in the copy held by you. I refer to the remarks on the maintenance of direction of the attack where it appears in the original typing of the report that the 52 Bn companies kept edging to the left; this should read "to the right". (See paragraph on page 3 of that report marked "General" in margin). The siting of the wire and trenches crossed by the attack would tend to throw the direction to the right.

Sorry for the delay in writing and for the inability to assist in getting the information you wanted. Am looking forward to seeing the new volume of the History.

Kind regards.

Yours sincerely,



Dr. C.E.W. Bean,
A.I.F. War Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
PADDINGTON. N.S.W.

You will have the story complete up to the Bn occupying a frontage S. of VILLERS - B'T'X, and just E. of the second road coming from the S., which we crossed after leaving the start line. The position was some 800x short of MONUMENT WOOD. *see sketch at end*

Whilst consolidating there LT. HENDERSON arrived from somewhere and I remember him saying that he was up near the WOOD and the enemy was getting guns away. He only had about 3 men with him. We were in anything but decent order, first being split by the wire that ran in a N.E. direction and then finally by the Bn on our R. which ended up facing N. and E. of our line. We were not in a position to go further.

The 51st Bn on our left reached about the same alignment as we did.

The position of the front line was about the position that should have been occupied by the 50th (Support) Bn.

I do not think that with the exception of HENDERSON any one of us saw the WOOD till the next morning.

The enemy line ran, after a re-organization, just W. of the WOOD.

That is the picture as we made and left it.

The question of the capture of the WOOD was commenced on the night of the 25/26th April by a FRENCH REGT.

I remember the relief order, the easiest I ever experienced. We were to leave our trenches without a handover, which we did, about 2200 hrs, and the FRENCH REGT. would go on and attack on the morning of the 26th. This they duly did, but from whence they came, where they started, I do not know for we were back in BOIS L'ABBE without a sign of them.

Their walking wounded that morning told us a silent tale that they were on the job.

From hearsay, I do not think they got the WOOD at that attempt.

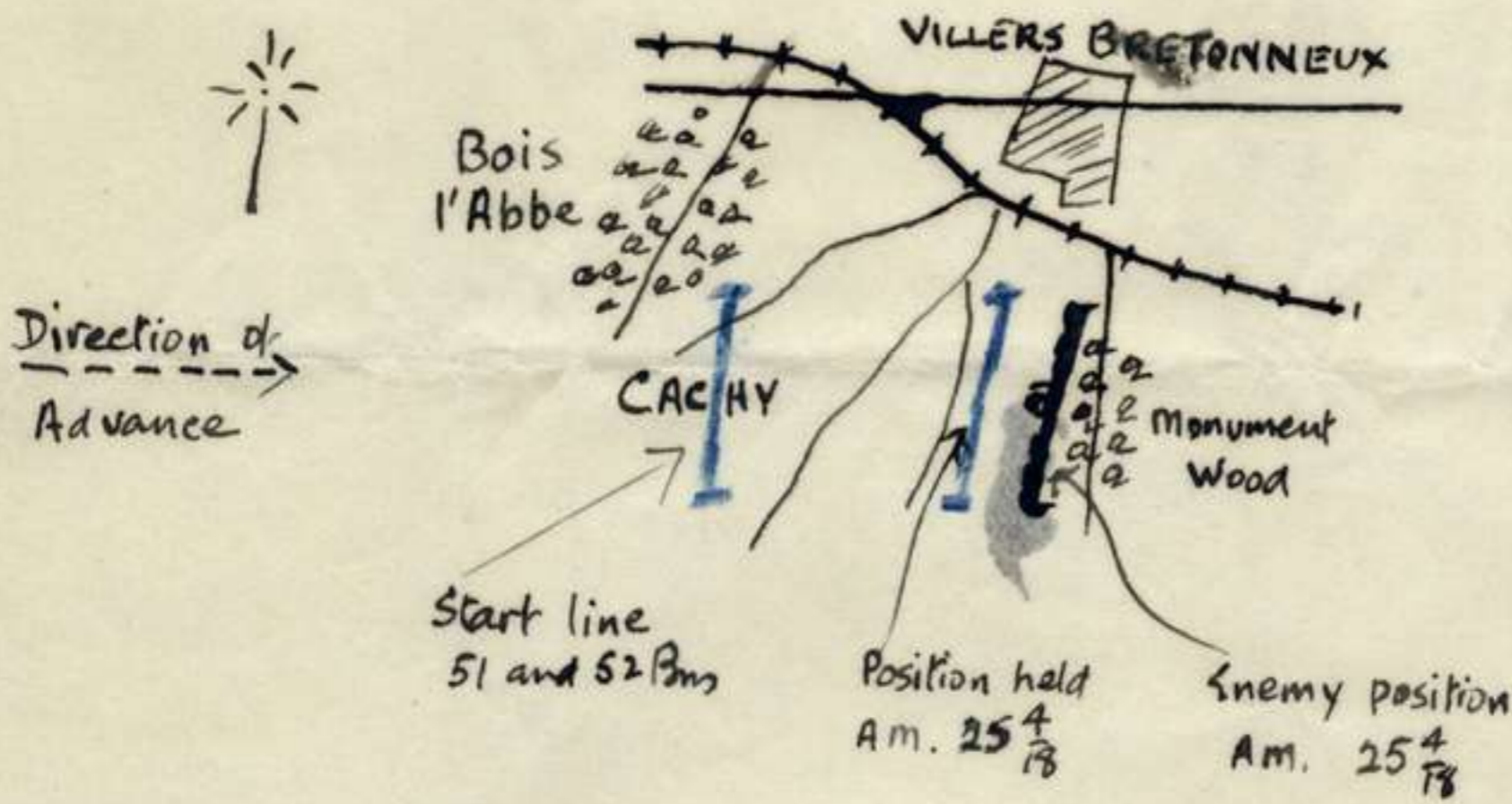
On looking over the roll book I do not think there is anyone there who could enlighten the position, but you can scan the pages and perhaps remember someone who might assist.

So far as the capture of the WOOD is concerned, it is definite that we did not succeed, our efforts ended at the position we occupied S. of VILL.-B'T'X. You will know of the WHIPPET TANK sorties during the afternoon of the 25th, but what I am anxious to know is why the threatened counter-attack that same afternoon did not eventuate?

see note 'A' at end of Report.

You might be able to put a few questions to me on the foregoing whereby I can give you further assistance.

(Sqd.) N. G. Halton



This is a rough reproduction of the sketch he added to his report and if drawn from memory it is a jolly good picture.

NOTE 'A'

I mentioned these matters (re British composite reports on our right flank) and also the affair of the Whippet Tanks in the report or comments I sent you a couple of years ago when you send me a draft copy of the British Official History.

17/35

Halton was not aware at the time ~~that~~ counter-attack was made on 24⁴/₁₈ that the unit on our right (7th Bedford) did not have to face and east on attaining their objective. I was not aware either when I received Bde operation orders that the right flank (British) Brigade was only required to reach an objective situated more or less on the line held prior to German attack on 24 April. We went in to the attack believing that the units on our right would also be required to face east when they consolidated. Halton, of course, had not seen the Brigade operation order nor was he present when I gave attack orders to Coy Commanders. His OC (Captain Wilhelm) was killed early in the fight so Halton faced the morning light on 25 April believing that our objective (that of the British Battalion on his right) was on a North-South line facing East. Actually our objective (13th Bde) ran from U 6 C 5.3 due East to U 6 A 4.3 (along line of CACHY - MARCEL CAVE Road) thence N.E. through V 1 a and b to P. 31 d 6.7. (approx) where our flank with 15 Inf Bde was to join. I was unaware then ^{where} the original position front line ran ~~from~~ prior to German attack on 24 April except on that portion of the objective allotted to 13th Inf Bde but thought it coincided with the line of the road from Monument Wood to Hangard Wood, (U 6 C 5.3) through U 11 b and d. Thus I was in extreme doubt on morning of 25 April of the position of the British on our right & also where the enemy was (until I saw the result of the Whippet Tanks "reconnaissance" that afternoon). I had no doubt then! *John*

H.N. V/B.
Nicholas (52 Bn)

2 Richardson Terrace
Daglish
W.A.

D. C. E. W. Bean
Victoria Barrack
Paddington
N.S.W.

Dear Sir / I understand that you
are seeking information for the
purpose of writing up the record
of Villes - Bretonneuse.

I was one of the original members
of the 52 Bn which was formed in
Egypt and I held the rank of
platoon sergeant with the Bn in
France. I am giving you a
brief version of my experience at
V.B. which may be of use to you

Yours faithfully

Sgt A. Nicholas

Villers - Bretonneux

We were out on our usual parade, in one of the French fields, when a brigade runner came up to our commander with a message, the time being about 11 o'clock. The captain instantly gave the order to return to our billets, and get into fighting order. We were ready to leave about 11.30 and though the cooks reported that dinner was ready, we were not allowed to remain and eat it. As we marched along, we helped ourselves to the rations we had in our haversacks. We were naturally anxious to know what was doing, but could get no news from our officers. However we got some information along the route that Fritz had broken through the Tommies' line.

It was a dull sort of day, with clouds flying very low, and while going across some fields, towards the line, a German plane flew down from the clouds, just over our heads, so evidently they expected an attack. We marched all the afternoon, and it was not until six o'clock that we halted, still waiting for news. About seven o'clock our Battalion commander, Captain Kennedy called the N.C.Os together and informed us that we were to hop over at eight o'clock that evening. He could not give us any information regarding the lay of the country, or what opposition we were likely to meet. This is the way he spoke, 'you have got to advance 3,000 yards in a North-

easterly direction, you have got to get there and get there ~~on~~ the best way you can. If I remember correctly, the village was on our left. Our battalion was instructed to advance in two lines, allowing about 150 yards between the lines. There were two companies in the first line and two in the second line. I was in C. company which was in the second line. The orders were for the first line to go right through, and the second line was to mop up all the prisoners and send them back. We knew that there was but little danger from gas attacks, as the wind was blowing from behind us. There was not much shell fire in our sector, not the nerve-wrecking barrages of Pozieres and Moquet Farm, but we soon got into a barrage of machine gun fire.

It was rather a foggy night and illuminations by the very lights sent over by the Germans were simply wonderful. The machine guns soon told on our lines, and we could see the lines thinning out. How anyone could have advanced under such conditions was a mystery, as there was a continual ping of bullets whizzing past. A remarkable incident happened during the attack. We noticed phosphorus bullets being fired out of a dug-out immediately in front.

They were firing at the first line which had just gone through. The voice of lieutenant Rogers, our platoon officer still rings in my ears, when he yelled, "Here they are boys, get them!" Needless to say they did not fire any more bullets, and our attitude towards the German prisoners changed very much after that little affair. The front line was thinning out, and we gradually got in line with them. When we had advanced about two thousand yards the line stopped. I cannot give any reason for it. I only had about half a dozen men left of my own platoon, though the line was fairly strong. It was composed mainly of men from other companies and battalions. I immediately endeavoured to get in touch with some of our officers, but could not locate any. In walking along the line inquiring if there were any Australian officers about, I was halted by a young English officer wearing a gas mask. He asked me who I was at the same time covering me with a revolver. He asked me if the smoke that was coming from some German shells fired to the rear of us was gas. My reply was, "If this is gas I would have been dead long ago." He then ordered his party of about two or three dozen men from some of the Midland Counties regiment

to take off their gas masks. I could get no information from him regarding our position. I travelled further south, and after going a little distance I noticed a crowd retiring.

Thinking that a German spy might have given the order I ran back, and found out it was the same English officer taking his men to some comfortable dug-outs further back. I ordered them back, to the front line, which they obeyed. Still failing to receive instructions as to what to do, I decided to make for the village, but on my way there I received a bullet wound in the left arm.

After wishing luck to the few that was left in the platoon, I got hold of some German prisoners, who were straying about, and took them back with me. This ends my story.

C/O Agricultural Bank,
BRUCE ROCK W.A.
11th July 1935

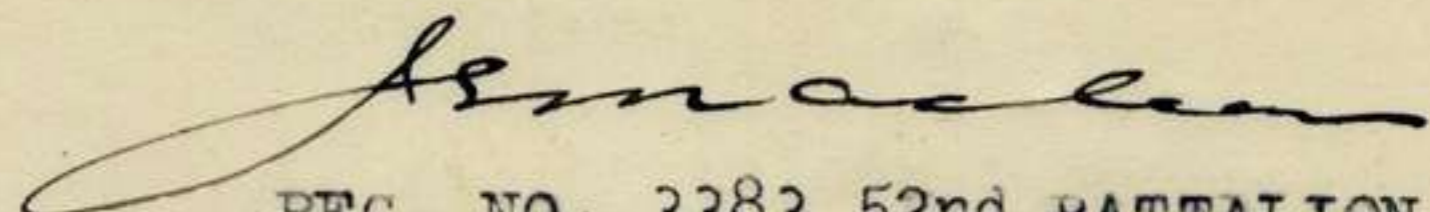
Dr Bean,
Victoria Barracks,
PADDINGTON
N.S.W.

Dear Sir,

I notice by a paragraph in the local press that you would like ex-members of the 51st and 52nd Battalions to write to you of their experiences at Villers Bretonneux. You will probably not receive many accounts from ex West Australian 52nd Battalion men, as I believe there would not have been more than one hundred of such left in the Battalion when the battle was fought. I am therefore sending you an account of my experiences, though I am afraid they are of too trivial a nature to be of very much use to you.

I was an actual eye-witness to the death of Baron Richthofen, the German ace, and as there has since been much controversy upon his death, I am penning you my version in the hope it may be of use to you.

Yours faithfully,


REG. NO. 3383 52nd BATTALION
(H.O SCOUT SECTION)

Encl.

52nd BATTALION AT VILLERS BRETONNEUX

The battalion had moved back from Vaux Sur Somme on 22nd April 1918 to Point Noyells. On the night of the 23rd April a very heavy bombardment could be plainly heard which was rightly guessed as a forerunner of another German attack. In the morning orders came through that the battalion was to move up at once.

The writer, who was attached to the battalion scouts, was ordered with his section to report for duty without being given time for breakfast, though it was ready and would not have taken more than a few minutes. A small thing in itself, but an augury that things were not too well in the line.

If I remember rightly, the section was to act as guides, but after proceeding to a spot within 5 or 6 miles of Villers Bretonneux, we were joined by the best of the Battalion.

There was a heavy fog similar to that on the morning when the Germans smashed through the 5th Army: because of this it was not possible to see much of the country through which we were passing. The battalion was halted and rested some time. While thus halted, a German plane flew up and down the lines at a very low altitude, gathering information. An eighteen pounder nearby, opened fire, but without success, most of the shells bursting above the plane. To overcome this, they tried bursting a shell just beyond the muzzle of the gun but the Aviator must have seen the gun in time and turned aside, disappearing into the mist with the information he had gathered. He was a brave man but as we knew that his information was for the enemy's Head Quarters, we saw his going with regret.

The Battalion moved up South of Bois L'Abbe to its objective to the South West of Villers Bretonneux with the remnants of the "Tommy" troops, whose job it was to clear the wood on their left. Battalion Head Quarters were ~~there~~ of course, to the rear of the Companies, and I did not actually see the attack which if I remember rightly, was at nightfall contrary to the usual British practise of attacking at dawn.

The position was very obscure for a long time and Battalion Head Quarters had some difficulty in locating the exact whereabouts of the Companies. Some of the original "Tommy" defenders were holding isolated posts when our fellows arrived. I was told that some of these opened fire and killed some of the 51st Battalion under the mistaken impression that it was another German attack.

During the advance, the shelling was heavy, but afterwards was not specially in evidence.

I believe there was somewhat of a gap between the 52nd Battalion and the French on our left, and from my observations at the time, one of our ~~whippet~~ tanks made an incursion into No-Man's-Land to inspect the German trench much to the alarm of its occupants, who opened heavy rifle fire and sent up many flares: however as it was about midday when the incident took place, the flares did not show up in the sunlight and the German artillery could not have picked them up, as there was no answering barrage. The German Soldiers could plainly be seen and were in force shoulder to shoulder, which made it appear that they had contemplated a counter attack; this probably owing to the inquisitiveness of the tank, ~~they~~ however did not ~~evacuate~~ ^{evacuate}. The tank, after its inspection, returned to our lines without worrying about returning the German fire.

The writer was chiefly engaged in guiding up ration parties and taking messages back during the Battalion's stay in the line.

The Battalion was relieved on the 26th April moving back to Blange Trouville. Part of our line was taken over by French Troops clad in green uniforms instead of the customary sky-blue: these consisted, I believe, of Zouaves, Foreign Legion, and Russians serving with the French. It was noticeable that the Zouaves dug in all over the place and seemed to have an aversion to occupying a continuous trench.

The 52nd moved to Bois L'Abbee on 27th April and into Villers Bretonneux on the 9th May. On the 10th May the writer was evacuated with trench fever. I believe the front was held by one man to every 12 yards - a magnificent bluff: had Fritz attacked, he could not have helped going through.

It was the last appearance of the Battalion as a unit of the A.I.F. As you know, there were not sufficient reinforcements to build up the Battalion's wastages and extinction followed. It still leaves a bitter taste to this day.

The writer was transferred to the 51st and soon afterwards to the "Cadre" in England.

Swainson



H.N.

PATENT OFFICE, MELBOURNE.

6th February, 1928.

Captain C. Bean,
Official Historian,
Australian War Memorials'
Committee,
CANBERRA.

Dear Captain Bean,

The enclosed letter from Major-General Bruche, which is self-explanatory, has caused me to forward attached copies of letters received from Major van Strawbenzee who commanded the Chestnut Troop, Royal Horse Artillery during the War, and was our Anti-Tank Defence during the 1918 Somme.

Strawbenzee is now Lieutenant-Colonel Commanding Woolwich School of Artillery.

Any further particulars you require in the matter could be had from Major-General H. E. Elliott, who commanded the 15th Brigade during that period.

With kindest regards,
Yours very sincerely,

C. V. Watson

Late C.O., 58th Battalion,
A.I.F.

C. V. Watson.

Recd
16/2/28
B

COPY.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.

MILITARY BOARD.
(Adjutant-General.)

PERSONAL.

Army Head-Quarters.

Melbourne, 13th July, 1927.

My dear Watson,

Very many thanks for sending me the wire from Caddy and also the letter regarding the Chestnut Troop, R.H.A., and the 15th Brigade. I certainly think it is a unique case and I do hope that all the regimental histories of the peace battalions will mention it. I would also suggest to you that you write to Bean as he is now engaged on the history of the A.I.F. in France so that he could mention it. I think a proper place would be after his description of Villers Bretonneux but of course it is purely a matter for you to decide, but I think the association is too valuable and important a fact to be omitted from the official history. Please do not think I am butting in but you know I have a very warm regard for the 15th Brigade, both in War and peace.

All good wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd.) J. H. Bruche.

Copy.

THE CHESTNUT TROOP R.H.A.

BORDEN

14th June, 1919.

Dear General Elliott,

At our annual dinner at which 25 officers who have served in the Chestnut Troop were present I told them of our close association with the Australian Corps and more especially with your Brigade. I pointed out that as in the Peninsula War the 43rd and 52nd Regiments and the Rifle Brigade were made Honorary Members of our Mess, so I would ask them to extend a similar invitation to yourself and the officers of the 57th, 58th, 59th and 60th Bns. of Australian Infantry, of the 15th Infantry Brigade, as a permanent record of the great admiration and regard we had for them.

This suggestion was enthusiastically received, and I was asked to send you the enclosed invitation.

We will hope to keep in touch with you at least at our yearly dinner and perhaps in the future opportunity may occur for our renewing our friendships.

The Troop goes to Mesopotamia in the Autumn, and I think it will be some years before we serve at home again. With all good wishes to yourself and to any of your officers that we knew,

Believe me,

Yrs. very sincerely,

(Sgd.) A. W. van Strawbenzee.

COPY.

THE CHESTNUT TROOP R.H.A.

Major van Strawbenzee and the undermentioned officers who were present at the Annual Dinner of the Chestnut Troop R.H.A., hope that

BRIGADIER GENERAL ELLIOTT

and the Officers of the 57th, 58th, 59th, and 60th Battalions of Australian Infantry, of the 15th Australian Infantry Brigade, will consider themselves Honorary Members of their Mess, - to establish a permanent record of our admiration and regard for them at VILLERS BRETONNEUX on 24th April, 1918, and on other occasions between April and October, 1918.

Major Gen. Sir John HEADLAM K.C.B.

Major Gen. The Hon. Sir F. R. BRIGHAM K.C.M.G.

Major Gen. A. E. WARDROP C.B.

Surgeon Major Gen. Sir A. F. BRADSHAW K.C.B. (Retd.)

Lieut. Col. W. R. EDEN C.M.G.

Lieut. Col. A. DUDLEY

Lieut. Col. H. W. WYNTER D.S.O.

Major R. MAITLAND D.S.O.

Major G. C. RICHARDSON D.S.O.

Major J. L. C. WHITE M.C.

Major The Hon. I.M.TWISTLETON-WYKEHAM FIENNES D.S.O.

Major E. H. THURLOW (Retd.)

Major G. TAIBOT (Retd.)

Capt. R. STANLEY D.S.O.

Capt. B.O.COCHRANE (Retd.)

Capt. C. MCKAY M.C.

Lieut. A. CORBETT (Retd.)

Lieuts. L. P. HUGGINS M.C.

E.J.ORAM

D.A.HUNT

G.W.HAYLEY.

R.A. MESS BORDEN.
14th June, 1919.

2952.

22 February 1928.

Lieutenant-Colonel C.V. Watson, D.S.O.,
Commonwealth Patent Office,
581 Bourke Street,
Melbourne.

Dear Colonel Watson,

I have to thank you for your note about the
connection of the 15th Brigade with the Chestnut Troop, R.H.A.
I have noted it and am keeping it among my papers for a later
volume.

Yours sincerely,

A.N.

V/B 24/5 ap 1918.

Capt Doutheward says Marshall
led the whole 15 Bde to the V/B attack &
was responsible for the success of 15 Bde

at V/B. Doutheward's own
C.O. had fallen down on his job.

Mr. told him to stick to him. He

was "here, there, & everywhere".

It was he who managed successfully
to lead the flank round the village

on a semi-circular course - He

had got Doutheward to prepare

Compass bearings beforehand.

Mr. Doyle says that Marshall got

the whole 15 Bde straightened

up & moving forward on 1 right line

when it lost direction in 1 night.

attack.



FEDERAL MEMBERS' ROOMS.

TEMPLE COURT.

422-428 COLLINS STREET.

HE/JF MELBOURNE.

27th May, 1930.

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

Dear Captain Bean,

I have just read with great interest a Book written by Brig-Genl. C.B.Baker-Carr C.M.G., D.S.O., late of the Tank Corps which I advise you to get and from which I cull the following paragraph -- p.88.

"As a matter of fact to say that the military mind thinks is a misleading statement. It does not think in the true sense of the word. "All it does is to react along well defined stereotyped lines. This is "not the fault of the individual; it is the fault of the system. Nothing "is more discouraged in the army than a departure from the well worn -- "path of tradition. The "good soldier" is one who does what he is told "without thinking."

After General Birdwood had raged at me for supposedly issuing an order not to fire upon the Germans when in December 1916 we were in line in front of Flers and had compelled me to cancel an informal truce which had been brought about by the Guards Division who had preceded us in the line, ^{and} which (in view of the fact that in the circumstances a

27th May, 1930.

renewal of hostilities would find all the advantage with the enemy and against us) was plain unvarnished stupidity, I must say that exactly the same thoughts shaped themselves in my own mind, Birdwood's mind in my opinion was pre-eminently the "military mind" as I fancy you have begun to suspect.

Baker-Carr's remark (see page 165) on the "unforgiveable" offence of criticising superior officers is very illuminating. That apparently was my own particular offence (so far as I can get any trace of an offence) which brought about my own supersession.

Again his remarks (see page 178) on the Anzacs who came to him for a time is an effective counterblast to recent attacks. The Sergeant Instructors reported that their "Aussies" were the best behaved and the most intelligent men they had ever had to deal with. It was the first of many Australian classes and not one single "crime" serious or trifling, did they ever commit during the whole of their stay.

Attacks similar to those being put out in England which are annoying Generals Hobbs and Monash now were current in France and upon ^{the} ~~which~~ I have noticed a ^{recent} comment by ~~my~~ ^{your} myself in Smith's Weekly. I --- wrote on this subject in my full report on Villers Brettonneux which I committed directly to Treloar's hands at the time fearing its destruction in view of what had happened to my Polygon Wood report.

The most illuminating passage of all in Baker-Carr's Book (see pages 245 and 246) is the confirmation in connection with the 3rd Battle of Ypres of what you have already noted at Pozieres that the -- higher formations had not the remotest conception of conditions in the

front line: particularly the following passage :-

"There is no doubt that G.H.Q.s was prone to live in a little --
"world of its own, far removed from the turmoil and filth of battle....I
"am absolutely convinced that the department responsible for the staging
"of the Ypres offensive had not the remotest conception of the State of
"affairs existing, and, accordingly formulated their plans on a hopeless-
"ly incorrect basis."

I noticed in the last Volume your own remarks upon this
subject. I told White the same thing many times.

Baker-Carr apparently thought that the 3rd Ypres was
waged throughout as an independent effort but I think that my conver-
sation with Haig in Belgium after the War to which I alluded in previous
letters shows that the latter was not entirely a free agent and that as
at the Battles of Loos and the Somme the idea of continuing a useless
slaughter was not perhaps so much due to "British stubbornness and stup-
idity" as to the situation on the French front.

Baker-Carr, about page 164, mentioned getting himself
into trouble for an adverse report made by him on the siting of a trench
line and the machine gun positions thereon.

Curiously enough I got into exactly the same trouble
for a report I made on the "Aubigny line". Unfortunately I cannot find
a copy of the report but I enclose a copy of the reply which I sent to
General Hobbs in response to a charge that I had "attacked the compet-
ence of certain officers of his staff" *in connection with this
report.*

This may enable you to trace the file dealing with --

Captain C.E.Bean.

-4-

27th May, 1930.

this subject. As a matter of fact I had no knowledge at the time what officers had been siting the line but it was very badly done and the correspondence should *interest you*.

In my opinion a new War in India formented by Russia and in its later stages directly aided by her forces may be expected to commence at any moment and I am concerned to think that General Birdwood with whose mental reactions I am only too familiar may be entrusted with the Supreme Command.

I am looking forward with great interest to your next volume.

With best wishes.

Yours faithfully,

H. E. S. S. S.

Enclosure: 1.

H/N *April 1918*
from Brig Gen. H.E. Elliott

Headquarters,
15th Australian Inf. Brigade
30 April 1918.

G.O.C.
5th Australian Division

With reference to the attached report and comments thereon by yourself and Officers of your staff, I desire to most emphatically repudiate any intention whatever of criticising any member of your Staff.

I was certainly unaware that you were responsible for the system. I imagined that it was of general application throughout the British Army and wished to point out that it was unsound.

I have had the very slightest acquaintance with your C.R.E. but Col. PECK, Major WOOTTON and Major Marsden are all well known to me, and I can say without hesitation, that I would most certainly, were I to occupy your own position tomorrow, be only too glad to have these Officers on my Staff.

Please reassure all these Officers on this behalf and if anything in the original report would to an impartial judgement bear such a construction I shall be only too pleased to modify its expression in such a way as to make this perfectly clear.

But I would like it made perfectly clear also, that under present orders of General RAWLINSON, there is to be no retirement from our present line. I have accordingly given orders that when their last reserves are thrown in every Battalion Commander and every member of his staff shall be armed with rifles and take their place in the firing line. The personnel of my Headquarters here are also organised in echelon to serve as final -- reinforcements, and finally, by my orders, myself and Staff Officers, when no other reinforcements are forthcoming from Division, proceed to the firing line to fight, (as I hope) to the end. This has been fully explained to Battalion Commanders and naturally they and myself are keenly alert that in no circumstances is a "leak" left to develop, in this line, which may be thus desperately defended.

That must be my justification for my interference in the matter. Otherwise I had been perfectly content to rest in ease in my Headquarters and turn my Brigade into a Fatigue Party.

My criticism was directed purely against the system (as such) however sanctified by use or custom in the army. The fact that VAUBAN or -- TODLEBEN may have been great Tacticians and Generals as well as great engineers certainly does not prove that every engineer, even of the rank of C.R.E., must necessarily be a great Tactician or have the time to site correctly in a very limited time an unlimited number of lines. My instance of Lieut. Col. in Egypt was merely to give point to this observation. On the other hand, every Infantry Brigadier, unless there has been gross favoritism in his promotion, must necessarily have a fair knowledge of -- Tactics, and he can reasonably be held responsible for at least one of the systems of Defence. The fact that the present C.R.E. may be and probably is, the equal or the superior of any Australian Brigadier is beside the point, and entirely outside the scope of the criticism on that point. There are, at the present time, undergoing construction in the Divisional Area at least 5 or 6 entirely separate and distinct lines of fortification. It would, in my opinion, tax the utmost skill of the Angel Michael, let alone that of an ordinary mortal man, whether C.R.E. or C. in C., to oversee the simultaneous constructions of all of these lines in detail.

So much for the general question of responsibility.

As for details:

(a) In regard to comments of the C.R.E. on complaint (1):

With all respect I beg to differ very materially and emphatically. The object of tactical wiring is to delay the enemy under Machine Gun fire. It is sufficiently obvious that the bullets go in a direct line and if there is a kink then one portion of the wire or another must at

intervals be free from fire. Therefore if an attack be made in mist or darkness it may thus be possible for a portion of the enemy to cut the wire without interference from the Machine Guns. If on further consideration you are of opinion that the reason mentioned by the C.R.E. which I admit are sound in themselves, outweigh the reasons I have mentioned, I am perfectly agreeable to modify my views in accordance with your directions, but in that case, I would certainly like to have my views recorded as of possible future interest, should the enemy get through at the spots referred to.

Re Reply to Complaint (2):

I would like to directly contradict this statement but the plan of the wire and Machine Gun Posts as they exist - and this plan was prepared by the 8th Field Company Engineers - certainly suggests this possibility to me.

Re Reply to Complaint (3):

I will only remark that the siting of Machine Guns in the main trench line is contrary to all the teaching of the recent books on the subject and for the reason that the enemy naturally puts a heavy barrage on the main trenchline and an extra special barrage on forward -- traverses and other spots that look likely to hold Machine Guns. Thus I could expect in defending this line to have the majority of the guns knocked out before the Infantry attack develops. The further reply that such positions were selected in conjunction with the Divisional Machine Gun Officer, Battalion Commanders and Brigade Major only goes to prove the correctness of my original proposition for, when I pointed out to my Brigade Major and Battalion Commanders that they were -- obvious defects in the siting according to the book and in the light of reason, they all with one accord began to make excuse "It was the C.R.E. and the Divisional Machine Gun Officer" that thou gavest us that led us astray.

My power of criticism was thus short circuited and the difficulties of the present system brought home to me. It is the hopelessness of making anyone at all responsible for any error that forced from me the criticism that its very continuance appears to me to be courting disaster.

Re Complaint 4.

I regret that by an undetected typographical error the word "West" was substituted for the word "East" in my report. Consequently I have nothing to say to this reply. My original criticism was directed to the "amended" line East or rather South of the Village.

In regard to the remark that this latter line was sited in consultation with the Brigade Major and Battalion Commander on the spot, I can only say that when I criticised them for certain defects they put it on the C.R.E. and pointed out to me the paragraph in your orders which said he alone was responsible for siting the line and that they had to follow his direction, although they admitted he had consulted them.

Regarding Complaint 5.

I have nothing further to add.

Regarding Complaint 6.

I have nothing further to add to my previous comments. I would say that I am by no means sure that the reply of the C.R.E. does dispose of my difficulties in this matter. Judging by what has happened on occasions in the past, even the few minutes required for its destruction might not be available at the critical moment. The fact that construction of a ~~Bridge~~ in a place which could not be criticised would cause additional labour is beside the point. If it was absolutely impossible to construct a bridge in a less exposed place, then, I submit, I should have been at once requested to place a special permanent guard to protect it.

I don't think that the remark of the C.R.E. that my report condemns my staff more than Divisional Staff for reasons he mentions affects the matter one way or the other. I am not concerned with the

condemnation of anyone at all, least of all the Divisional Staff, but I do say that a system which allows each in turn to disclaim responsibility is wrong and its continuance "appears to me to be courting disaster".

I again assert that I had no intention of making any comparison between the present C.R.E. and Lieut.Col. or any other C.R.E. but merely gave that as an instance when the present system had more -- clearly condemned itself than any I could call to mind. The fact that by good fortune one may chance to find a genius as C.R.E. cannot in my opinion alter the radical unsoundness of the policy.

In regard to the remarks of the C.O. of the 5th Machine Gun Battalion I disclaim all idea of criticising him personally, but I do not agree that Machine Guns cannot be sited in rear of a continuous -- trench line and in rear of this line in particular. If arrangements are made to protect our men in the trench I see no difficulty. If, on consideration, you agree with Major MARSDEN'S contention I am perfectly willing to modify my views on the subject, but again I should like my views placed on record.

In regard to the remarks of the G.S.O. LL. I would again deny all intention of personal criticism. In this case I can claim definite evidence to the contrary. When Major WOOTTEN was a very junior Officer indeed I sought to get him as he knows transferred to my Brigade as 2nd in command of a Battalion. Had I any doubts of his capacity that would hardly have been to my advantage. I have had no reason since to change my opinion of his capacity unless to add to my admiration for it.

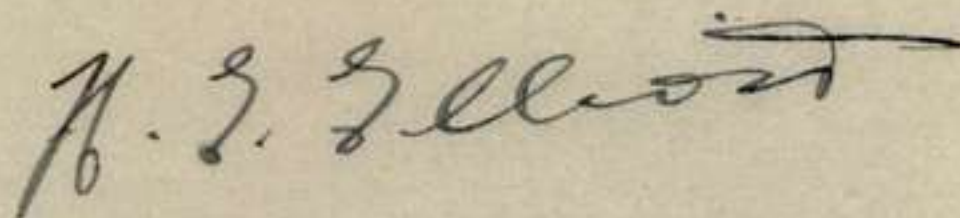
In point of fact I had no idea he was in any way concerned. My reference to "Junior Staff Officers" arose as follows :

I told Col. Peck on the telephone that I was not satisfied with the line. He said that he and the C.R.E. had sited it. I said it was impossible for him to do that satisfactorily unless he was there every day to check the work, which of course he could not do. He replied that he had juniors whom he sent there to have a look at it.

I had not seen any of the G.S.O.'s there at all in fact and was until then quite unaware that any of them had a hand in the matter at all.

I think this will make it quite clear that there was no personal reference to Major WOOTTEN at all.

I would also express my regret that the report was not made "Confidential". I can only say that no thought that the matter in it could possibly be regarded as offensive or injurious to anyone at any-time entered my mind.



Brig.General.
Commanding 15th Australian Infantry Brigade.

"Unmarried"

H.M.

15 Col G.E.M. Hill Force 1st
2nd Bn Royal Tank Regt

GOOD-A-MEAVY HOUSE,
ROBOROUGH, S. DEVON.

16th Oct. 1935

Dear Sir

I received your letter of the 11th Sept 1935
yesterday and will with pleasure give
you such information as I can.

I was born at Tavistock 21.2.1876.

Where my Father, who had been an Officer
in the 5th Fusiliers, then lived. This
property, now mine, belonged to my Father's
Uncle and came to my Father on the death
of his first cousin.

I was educated at Dulwich College and
abroad in Switzerland and Germany,
and went through Sandhurst obtaining
a commission in the East Lancashire Regt.

GOOD-A-MEAVY HOUSE,

ROBOROUGH, S. DEVON.

Sept 5th 1896. I served throughout the
 S. African War in the 1st Mounted
 Infantry being Adjutant of that Batt.
 during the latter part of the war.
 Later was Adjutant of the 2nd Bⁿ The
 East Lancashire Regt. At the outbreak
 of the war I was a Captain and employed
 as a Staff Capt. at the H^d Q^{rs} of the Southern
 Command Salisbury. I managed from
 there to rejoin the 2nd Bⁿ E. Lancashire
 Regt. and went to France with them in the
 8th Division on 4th Nov. 1914. I served
 in France with the 2nd Bⁿ for 3 years
 altogether, during which period I
 commanded the Bⁿ for 2 years.

GOOD-A-MEAVY HOUSE,
ROBOROUGH, S. DEVON.

I was twice wounded officially but very slightly on each occasion. I was captured at Berry-au-Bac at the end of May 1918.

I commanded the 2nd Bn for four years after the war giving up command in April 1925, was selected for further promotion but retired voluntarily in 1926.

I remember well the fight at Villers-Bretonneux in April 1918. The German tanks overran our line and my Bn was driven in to H^q H^q Q^{rs} where

GOOD-A-MEAVY HOUSE,
ROBOROUGH, S. DEVON.

I had considerable difficulty in holding a line, there were no trenches of any sort, and unfortunately the suit on my right gave way and the Germans got round my right flank and fired into us from behind with a machine gun. Just as things were looking rather blue a very cheery subaltern (or Captain?) of your people turned up with a patrol his name was Christian; he and his men helped to stop the Germans who attempted to rush us just after C. turned up.

GOOD-A-MEAVY HOUSE,
ROBOROUGH, S. DEVON.

I was entirely without communication
with my Division, wireless and
telephone had been smashed and the
runners failed to get through - however
Christians got back and I had later a
note from him saying "Hold on help is
coming". I was very grateful to him for
what he did and also to his men.

I heard from him only this summer
and was glad to know he was going
strong.

Yours truly
J. R. Hill

20 Parkstone Avenue,

Parkstone ,

DORSET. 12/12/1935.

Dear Sir ,

Your letter of the 25th September reached me two days ago .

I regret I cannot furnish you with the addresses of the Officers you named , only one , Capt Hunniken came into Villers-Bretonneux on the day following . My Tank was the only one that took part in this actual engagement .

I enclose particulars of the part I took in this affair , details of which I have in my diary in respect of this incident.

The first Battalion, Tank Corps was practically the only one that brought their Tanks out of the Retreat in this Sector, and took up positions on the South side of the Somme and were with the A.I.F. for some considerably time , at Maricourt , Bray , Bonnavy etc.

I hope the enclosed particulars will arrive it time to be of use , and I shall be pleased to know where I can obtain the Official History when completed .

Yours faithfully,

J Butler

C.E.W.Bean Esq,
Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
Paddington, N.S.Wales.

*Send to
Trebar.*

I first received instructions for the Villers-Bretonneux affair at midnight on Thursday 25th April , with orders to set out immediately on a given Map Reference.

My Tank was an old Mark IV six pounder , one of our Battalion that survived the Retreat in March where we were stationed in front of Peronne a few weeks previous. We had trekked continuously for six days and nights and had no time to recondition , which our Tanks sadly needed .

I arrived late in the afternoon on the out-skirts of Villers-Bretonneux . My Tank was severely tested by this continuous trek and to make matters worse it was necessary to take my Tank up the Railway Embankment and over the metals to take up my position on the Map Reference.

When I eventually stopped my Tank we had been on the go without a stop for 15 to 16 hours .

I found the troops in the vicinity of this spot were a fresh detachment of Yorkshire Boys just arrived , and I was immediately called upon to "put them wise" to the workings of a Bosch Minniwerfer Machine Gun they had captured, with stacks of ammunition . Shortly afterwards an Officer from the A.I.F. Brigade Headquarters came for me with a spare mount , and we made our way to the C.O. by way of the Tunnel under the Railway, to his dug-out.

He explained the position briefly , that the Bosch were still in the Village and that a machine gun nest was still hanging on in the Cemetery, and would not be dislodged . My orders were to go into V-B and clear them up .

On returning to my Tank I immediately got her going again , after having ^{HAD} only something under an hour to cool down . The best way into the Village from this spot was to go along the Road running almost parallel with the Railway . It was lucky for me and my crew that I decided on the Road route, because soon after I started the Bosch put over a Barrage on the alternative route, ~~and~~ BUT by great good fortune the road was not shelled.

Travelling on hard road surfaces ^{ALWAYS} was a strain on the tanks , and , after the gruelling test of long hours travel this last bit of road proved almost too much . I managed to gain the entrance to the Village at 8 p.m. and manoeuvred the Tank to give me an

opportunity to enfilade the two main streets , and by this time she literally "Petered out"

Realising it was quite impossible to move further , I decided to use my two six-pounders on the buildings from where the Bosch were still sniping. Unfortunately the extraordinary heat that had been generated in the Tank by this continuous trek, had actually affected the ammunition to such an extent that it was found impossible to fire a shot . The Breachs of the two six-pounders could not be closed and the cartridges could not be forced into the Hotchkissguns .

At this stage I left my Sergeant in charge of the Tank, and taking a Runner I set out to report to the C.O. at his dug-out where I had previously seen him.

By this time the Bosch ^{were} ~~were~~ shelling heavily and also sending over Gas shells .

I returned to my Tank and remained inside during the night where we were forced to wear our gas masks the whole time.

The next day a fresh magneto was brought up and we were able to withdraw , the Bosch by that time having cleared off .

War Veterans' Graves at Albury

How the death of a Digger tramp on the roadside gave inspiration to the Albury Sub-Branch of the R.S.L. in its decision to trace and maintain the graves of war veterans buried in the local cemetery has been told in *Reveille*; but the ramifications of work which the decision entailed may be judged only from the following facts:—



The first move of a sub-committee, consisting of a member each from the C. of E., R.C., and Presbyterian denominations, was to secure the names of all Great War veterans buried in the Albury Cemetery. Search of hospital, cemetery trust, and undertakers' records were without result, so, with the permission of the proprietors, search was made of the files of "The Border Morning Mail" from 1915 to 1933, and from 6120 papers the funerals of 44 Diggers were noted. In addition the names of eight Diggers were discovered who had been buried in Albury Cemetery from outlying districts, their funerals not having been advertised in the local paper.

This made the total of known burials 52, and with the assistance of the sexton, each grave was located and a note made as to condition: 27 were neglected and 25 in good order. The next work was to obtain the actual date of death, and this was done with the assistance (gratis) of the local registrar.

In order to obtain accurate regimental particulars of each man, application was made to the Repatriation Department for a headstone on each of the unattended graves. The outcome was that the Repatriation Dept. agreed to supply headstones over two graves, where death was due to war injuries, and it furnished regimental details in regard to the other deceased soldiers. The roll was then drawn up in an alphabetical book, and the first stage of the work was completed in eight months.

As each grave was the absolute property of the purchaser, no improvements could be carried out until sanction had been obtained. From Repatriation and undertakers' records the next-of-kin were located, and to each a letter was sent explaining that the Albury Sub-Branch had decided to place headstones on each of the unattended graves, and seeking their permission (as owner of grave) to carry out the work. It was intimated to them that on receipt of favourable reply a photo of grave as it would appear when finished, also a copy of the inscription proposed to be placed on headstone, would be forwarded; any extra lettering on headstone they desired to be paid for by them at 8/6 per dozen letters. Two of the 27 letters were sent to England, and the heartfelt replies received from relatives amply repaid Albury for its efforts. Three of the people communicated with decided to equip the graves at their own expense.

From a local monumental mason headstones were secured free, the cost for inscription and erection being £2/17/6 per stone. The Defence Department, as the result of personal representations, granted permission to have "Rising Sun" inscribed on the headstones, provided the top of the stone was rounded instead of squared, in order to distinguish it from the official stone.

To finance the scheme £150 was required, and so well was the appeal organised that it was closed in three weeks, with £200 in hand. It was agreed that a headstone alone would not be sufficient to protect the graves, and tenders were invited from three local monumental masons for 8ft. x 4ft. x 12in. x 7in. kerbing round each grave, covering each grave with three inches concrete, and on top with marble chips.

The tender of the monumental mason who donated the headstones was accepted at £4/15/- per grave, making a total cost of each grave £7/12/6, and total price of contract, approximately £170/15/-, leaving a handy balance for further use on unattended graves.

As planned, all graves were completed by Anzac Day, when a service was held in the Albury Cemetery, presided over by the Mayor, assisted by the President of the Albury Sub-Branch. The Albury Town Band, combined choir, and a firing party from the 40th Battery were present. Each war veteran's grave was covered with an Australian flag or Union Jack, according to place of enlistment, and was removed by a Boy Scout on the last note of "The Last Post," and replaced, together with a wreath of rosemary, on the first note of "Reveille."

The expenses incurred in placing the appeal for funds before the public, and in organising the dedication service, were met by donations from two Diggers.

LIEUT.-COLONEL NEELY.

Lieut.-Colonel G. H. Neely, D.S.O. and Bar, M.C. and Bar, French C. de G., who died at the Naval and Military Club, London, on March 31, aged 48, had the distinction of having served almost continuously in the front line from early 1915 until the Armistice. He fought with the 6th Bn. London Regt. at Loos, and being promoted major at the end of 1916, commanded his battalion in the worst of all battles on Passchendaele Ridge. He also commanded the London Irish, and after the war received a regular commission in the Highland Light Infantry, retiring in 1933.

In Memoriam : Our Pals

"We Will Remember Them"

BLACKLER, Pte. John Cecil (2110, 17th Bn.), killed in action at Bois Grenier, June 13, 1916.

KENDALL, Pte. George William (5169, 49th Bn.), killed in action at Messines, June 7, 1917.

MITCHELL, Gnr. John (20845, 12th A.F.A. Bde.), drowned at sea, June 4, 1919.

WEINGOTT, Pte. Samuel (127, 1st Bn.), died of wounds received at Anzac, June 5, 1915.

3rd Battalion.—Killed in action: Lieut. Colin Smith, M.C.; Cpl. Norman Lee, M.M.; Pte. W. Adams.—(Inserted by Lieut. P. Kinchington, Dunning Ave., Rosebery.)

Notice of death anniversary in respect of any soldier who died in July of any year, during or since the war, should reach the Editor of "Reveille" by June 23, together with remittance of 1/- for insertion. Address to R.S.L. Headquarters, Wingello House, Sydney.

G. W. WHITECHURCH.

The passing of George Willis Whitechurch, at the Repatriation Hospital, Caulfield, cast a gloom over the ward in which he had faced nobly with fortitude and forbearance the sufferings of a long and painful illness. Possessing a keen sense of humor and quick at repartee, George was responsible for many bright moments and friendly arguments in his ward; and this cheerfulness and good humor he evinced right up to a week or two of his death.



At the outbreak of war, then a sturdy lad of 18 years, he was working for his father on a farm at Avenel (Vic.), and was among the first to enlist, embarking in October, 1914, with original "B" Squadron of the 4th A.L.H., in transport No. 18 (s.s. "Wiltshire").

He served on Gallipoli until the evacuation, and later joined the cyclists' unit. He had over two years' service with the Anzac Cyclist Bn., for Corporal Whitechurch was not away from his unit on account of sickness or wounds until April, 1918, when he was gassed at Corbie.

Returning to Australia after the Armistice, he successfully conducted a dairying business in Melbourne, but this he was forced to relinquish owing to ill-health — an aftermath of his strenuous war service and the effect of gas.

George left a widow and three children, to whom he was devoted. That he was so highly esteemed by all with whom he came in contact, and that war service was the cause of his untimely death, must be some consolation to those he has left behind.

The writer of this paragraph is indebted to Lieut. Arno Symons and Lieut. H. J. Thornton, of the 4th A.L.H.R., for supplying particulars relative to Cpl. Whitechurch's war service.

—E. G. Blair, Ward 7, Repatriation Hospital, Caulfield.

Mr. JOHN CORBETT.

One of our most esteemed and constant readers, Mr. John Corbett, who lived in the Basses Pyrenees, France, and who always had glowing praise for "Reveille," died on March 22. Notice of his death was sent to us by Major C. H. Howell, of the Imperial Army, who lived in the same district. Mr. Corbett, who was 83, was formerly a bank manager at Ballarat (Vic.).

ANZAC EVE FESTIVAL.

The second Anzac Eve Festival Performance was given at the Sydney Conservatorium on April 24 in the presence of Lady Game. The programme included the winning choirs singing the Festival Song, "Anzac Day," and the verse-speaking choirs speaking the Twenty-third Psalm. The winning one-act play, "Scrubby Reforms," by Mr. C. Hansby Read, was played by the Junior Theatre League and gave a dramatic story of three returned soldiers in a miners' camp. Last year's winning play, "The Toast is Anzac, Gentlemen," by Miss Kitty Winter, was again produced by the Independent Theatre. Mr. Raymond Beatty sang delightfully, and the Lightfoot-Burlakov School brought the programme to a close with a beautiful tableau, "The Spirit of Peace." Lady Game distributed the prizes.

LEGACY AWAITS CLAIMANT.

Arthur Gordon Shand (N.Z.E.F.), who came to Australia in 1920, communicate with "Reveille." A legacy awaits him in N.Z. Roy Sharwood, who was a sergeant-major at Broadmeadows (Vic.) in 1915, training A.I.F. men, communicate with "Reveille."

Monument Wood and an Unofficial Armistice

(By Capt. G. D. Mitchell, M.C., D.C.M., late 10th and 48th Bns., A.I.F.)

JUST after midnight on May 3, 1918, we filed out of the reserve trench and over the railway. We were to attack Monument Wood at 02.20.

Was in a stinking bad temper. My platoon was 28 strong; and fourteen of them were new reinforcements—kids, dumped on to me twelve hours before.

Three months previously they were in Australia. Of poor physique, they were not intended for infantry units; nor were they trained. In the few hours of daylight I had tried to ram some musketry into them. It took a bottle of wine to stave off an epileptic fit, when I saw two of them try to ram the clips as well as the cartridges into the magazine. Why, thought I, should I be afflicted with an untrained rabble in my fourth year of war; and Anzac leave months overdue—and all for a rotten little attack on a narrow sector that would draw a concentration of all enemy artillery within miles.

Could visualise the big hefty artillery Germans swinging the trails of their 77's and 5.9's, saying, "Komm, we will blow these verdomt Englishers to Hell."

As we trudged over the sleepers to the rattle of equipment and the sound of bumping rifle butts, I pondered over Kipling's "Islanders":—

*"Sons of the sheltered city—unmade, unhandled, unmeet—
Ye pushed them raw to the battle as ye picked them raw from the street,
And what did ye look they should compass? Warcraft learned in a breath?"*

Knowledge unto occasion at the first far view of death?"

Reached the railway bridge near our hop-over point. A mob of elephants would have climbed the bank more quietly. The recruits had not developed their eyes to night work. They stumbled and fell over obstacles that we old hands could see clearly. Poor blighters—it must have been a black night of terror for them.

A guide met me. Led us over the front line trench. He immediately mixed my men with McDowell's in the dark. Then mixed us up in a lot of barbed wire. My language should have melted the wire.

Placed each man flat with his head pointing to Fritz. "When we charge, go that way."

Didn't take long, but the left platoon was moving about looking like haystacks in the light of the flares. They collected. Several machine-guns opened, and they went down like wheat before the reaper.

Flares were going up from the enemy like fury. He might just as well have issued us an invitation and made it quite formal. We found later that he had packed the line with Jaegers and had one machine-gun to every two of our men.

0200, we were settled down and the playful Jaeger was parting our hair with M.G. ricochets, just to show what he could do if he tried.

A flare dropped against my ribs and still burned. The hard white light must have shown me up to the wide world. The heat was penetrating, but I was scared to bat an eyelid. Started counting the tenth parts of seconds till a shower of bullets would arrive. But the flare went out and I was still whole.

0210. Comparative peace. 0213, 0214, 0215. The whizz of our shrapnel. Six eighteen-pounders fired for three minutes, then stopped.

The only harm they did was to blow up several of McDowell's men.

Nine platoon had had no casualties—yet. Found time to be sorry for the recruits. This would be hell for them. But was still sorrier for myself.

We were astounded at the poorness of the barrage. Just enough to wake Fritz up properly.

Zero hour was 0200. The illuminated dial of my watch showed 2.17.

We had failed already. Half hoped that someone with brains and sufficient authority would call the show off.

02.18. 0218½. Ten seconds to go. Blast these little hop-overs! Five-four-three-two-one. Zero.

Raised my head. Not a move anywhere. If we are wise we will lay low and say nowt. Ten seconds and no move. Imlay must be gone or he would have set things moving. Fifteen seconds. McDowell's voice. "Advance C Company." Blast it! That's torn it. "Advance nine platoon."

All the typewriters in the world going together. A dozen flares over our heads. A line of bursting bombs at the Fritz wire. Bullets sizzling, squealing and buzzing.

An enormous Fritz officer plain to the light, galloping along his parados, yelling fire orders in a voice that outdid the bombs.

"Ruddy little hero, aren't you," says I to myself, "cantering across shell holes to do battle for your King and Country when you would sooner be home in bed."

Arrived in front of the Fritz wire. It was picked out in showers of sparks from end to end by the German M.G. bullets. It was untouched and a perfect barrier.

Looked around for my platoon, to give Fritz some of his own medicine, but lo and behold!—there was not a man above ground.

"Well I ain't no thin red hero," thinks I, and slips into a juicy deep shell hole.

A sudden tattoo of bombs and rifle fire 40 yards to the right. It was Captain Cumming and three men who rushed vainly at the enemy trench. By the light of bursting bombs I saw them fall.

Took stock of the enemy line and what I saw made me rage again. He had had the cheek to hoist his machine-guns into the open in front of the trench. The crews sat and knelt around them—big black blobs. The riflemen stood between, firing from the hip. Every seventh or eighth man was throwing bombs like clockwork. They were bursting behind me.

Had brought a rifle and bandolier.

Bull Voice the officer was still dashing up and down giving orders. Took a snap shot at him before settling down to serious work.

The nearest gun was thirty feet away. No need for sights at that range. Gave them a magazine and another. They went out of business. Started on the next until the 50 bandolier was spent. Just at this stage Tom Davis, my batman, arrived with a bag of rations, a corporal, and a reinforcement. Sent the corporal back to dig up any rifle grenadiers he could find, keep them well back, and drop Mills into the line. He did so with excellent results. A Fritz screamed at the first burst.

Took the reinforcement's spare bandolier.

The reinforcement let out a yip and sat back in the shell hole. "What's up?" I asked, far too busy to knock off my 20 to the minute shooting to have a look. "I'm hit." "Where?" "In the arm." "You must have tin pants on. Five minutes in action and you get a Blighty. Hop it."

He hopped.

With a rush and clatter, my Lewis gunner arrived. "Now," I said, "we will really do something. Gimme the gun."

Flattened the bipod to keep it low, took a deep breath, then let go.

Shades of persecuted Loots! The stupid cow had put on a drum of anti-aircraft ammunition—tracer one in four.

A line of light from the gun muzzle showed our position to the world at large.

As the last bullet was leaving the barrel, I was sliding back on to my sit-down out of harm's way.

Dante knew nothing. Every gun converged on to our shell hole. One or two M.G.'s can make things unpleasant, but when 20 converge, it behoves the wise to emulate the rabbit.

Bombs landed all round the lip of the shell hole, but none came in.

(Continued on next page)



The attack at Monument Wood, as pictured by Rupert Barrie, D.C.M., of the 48th Bn., A.I.F.



Capt. G. D. Mitchell, M.C., D.C.M., who tells this thrilling story of the attack on Monument Wood, was a member of the original 10th Bn. He enlisted on September 5, 1914, and was transferred to the 48th Bn. on October 31, 1916, being commissioned on April 22, 1917. A native of Thebarton (S. Aust.), he now lives in Queensland.

Began to think that perhaps we had outstayed our welcome. Also to worry about what daylight—now not far off—would mean to our scattered remnant.

So scribbled a message to B.H.Q.: "Attack hopelessly held up on uncut wire. No chance of success. Can I have permission to retire the company?"

When the M.G. fire eased I sent Tom off with it.

Left alone again I began to worry hard. Not much time left, and only one thing to do. I know. I will find another officer and share the responsibility with him.

So hopped out and down the line.

The things I saw would make an angel weep. One reinforcement was using a small mound for cover, but he was on the Fritz side of it. Rectified that. Another was lying side on to Fritz. Another was as flat as a snake alongside a deep shell hole. Suggested he get in the hole. He did. Next time I passed he was as flat as a snake in the bottom of the shell hole.

But not a sign of any officer.

Stopped in amazement in an open space at the sight of a man who had been torn to rags by M.G. bullets. What I might have done then was problematical, but Fritz intervened.

A sledgehammer hit my left foot and knocked it off. "What Ho!—a Blighty," said I, and hopped on my good foot to the old front line.

"Any officer," I asked. "Here's Mr. Clarke," said a voice.

There was "Ginger" Clarke all right, flat out on the floor of the trench, shot through both arms. He looked very pale and done. "You hit, Mitch?" he asked. "Yes," I said. "I've got one in the foot. Can you walk?" No, he could not. Spied long Sam Siekamp. "Carry him out, Sam."

Enquired again for officers, but they were all gone. Even the 45th officer in charge of the front line garrison had been shot through the head watching us go over.

No wonder there had been no impetus in the attack. All of our officers and most of our men chopped down before they had gone ten yards. I had lost Sergeant Rundle—a splendid soldier and man.

All right, I must be the boss here now. I will bring the men in and face the music after.

A runner: "Any officer?" "Yes; here." "Message." Got down into the trench and read it. "Advance at all costs. D. A. Twining, Adjutant."

I turned the air blue, pink and saffron, and threw the message away.

Was heaving myself out of the trench to withdraw the company when there was another voice.

"Any officer?"

"Yes. Here." It was young Arnold, M.C., D.C.M., M.M., our intelligence officer, nicknamed Ickey. "That you, Mitch?" "Yes." "Where is Captain Imlay?" "Hit." "The others?" "All gone." "You hit?" "Yes."

"I've brought orders for you to withdraw the company."

"Just what I'm — well going to do."

"All right," says Ickey, "I'll help you."

"You — well won't," I said. "You don't know where to go and will be killed."

The east was very light now.

So out again. Stirred each man with my toe. "Hit?" If he answered and it was "no,"—"back to the line."

Half light and a shower of bullets ended the business, so I dropped into the front line.

Then it dawned on me that I had a Blighty. Carefully, like a mother with her first babe, I took my left boot off.

Another blanky sell. The bullet had struck the iron heel plate and I did not have a scratch.

Consoled myself with a slab of chocolate and wine out of my bottle.

* * *

After setting day posts I was dozing peacefully, when a tattoo of shots and a call caused me to look over the top. A man had hopped out of a shell hole and into the front line.

Some more shots. A dazed looking, bespectacled reinforcement ambled obliquely across our line. He was about eight feet from my section of the trench but seemed to have no inclination to get in. Called out and beckoned him furiously to come in. Half a dozen Jaegers were potting at him.

He stopped with his mouth open and looked at me. Then he collected, spun round and dropped. A sergeant with an expression of vast disgust reached out and hauled him in by the foot. One through the shoulder. Nice Blighty. Little wounded hero. They could only hit the heel of my flaming boot.

Thoroughly peeved, I yelled to the shell-holes: "If anyone else tries to move before dark, I will shoot him myself and save Fritz the trouble." No one else moved. Must have taken me seriously.

* * *

The sound of voices awoke me once again. A party of our stretcher-bearers appeared over the railway bank. The leader carried a white flag. Held my breath for fear they would be shot down. The Fritz was a gentleman. They went unscathed.

Then an astonishing thing.

Full length out of the German line rose an officer — our old friend Bull Voice. He called, "Do you want to surrender?"

A chorus: "Surrender be buggered!"

Again our friend: "I do not speak French. Speak in English."

And he marched toward our line, large as life and twice as natural.

My brain fairly buzzed.

"Can't let him come here and see our weakness. Can't shoot him because our stretcher parties would be shot in turn.

He must be met in the middle. Who by? You, of course, you silly cow; you are the only officer left!"

With a sigh of resignation I heaved myself out of the trench and met him in the middle.

We saluted. He—flat handed in the German style. Both very formal.

"What is it that you want?" he asked with the air of a god dispensing an

(Continued on page 32)

THESE LAST FEW YEARS

These last few years have, in a marked or lesser degree, proved to all the wisdom of making some provision for the future. All of us have experienced the unexpected financial calls of every-day life, and, while it is impossible to gauge accurately the needs of the future, it is possible to provide for them.

A Savings Account costs nothing to open, and can be opened nearly anywhere in Australia. With it and the regular saving of money, however small the amounts, adequate provision for the unexpected calls will be made.

Commonwealth Savings Bank of Australia
(Guaranteed by the Commonwealth Government).

"Mena and Moonlight"

(By Major H. C. H. Robertson, D.S.O., p.s.c. Australian Staff Corps)

(For obvious reasons, the names of the principals in this story are not the true names. Both the persons concerned were popular and respected members of the A.I.F. The story was well known in Cairo at the time, and it throws some light on how law-abiding and respectable citizens can, when enlisted in an army during a war, get into a nasty predicament through a single act of thoughtlessness).

The scene opens in the Nurses' Quarters, No. 3 Australian General Hospital, Abbassia, Egypt. The time is after midnight, and the Sister on duty (Jones) is dozing over a book.

A car stops outside the gate, and an excited nurse (Brown) stumbles into the room where Sister Jones is sitting. The conversation opens:—

"Jones, I'm shot!"

Sister Jones' eyes open with astonishment, but the nurse in her rises to the occasion.

"Well, what would you like — some soda water?"

Sister Brown's tone rises and gets rather hysterical.

"No! No! I'm really shot!"

"Now sit down for a minute while I get you some soda water, then you can take some aspirins and go to bed."

Sister Brown crumbles into a chair, and, bursting into tears, mumbles:—

"I've been shot by a bullet."

We will now leave the two nurses while we relate the circumstances which led up to the scene just described.

If the Australian troops in Egypt and Sinai missed something of artillery barrages, they found equivalents in the long years of sand, heat, and natives. The troops in France could have leave in England—a delight in spite of the privations of war—and, even in France, there was plenty of smiling countryside, peopled by pleasant people.

In Egypt there was scant comfort, even when away from the line. The only changes were to Cairo, Port Said and Ismailia, with, for those who were lucky, a trip during the winter to Luxor and Assouan. But, wherever one went, one met the same native population, with a sprinkling of cosmopolitan Levantines, and only a few English people.

The English residents of Cairo and Port Said were kindness itself, and their homes gave relief to many tired Australians. There were, however, so few English homes that they could not cope with more than fragment of the multitude composing the Egyptian Expeditionary Force.

Shepherds, the Continental, and Heliopolis House Hotel therefore became the resorts of most officers of the E.E.F., while Australian soldiers monopolised the National Hotel. Even in hotels, however, there were few Europeans, so it was not surprising that many soldiers turned to places like the Ex-Continental for sight of a European female face.

Probably the most refreshing tonic for the soldiers came from the hospitals. Here officers and men (many of whom had been patients), meeting a member of the opposite sex, had to discard their camp manners for ones with some semblance of home standards. The British hospitals had V.A.D.'s as well as Nurses, but the Australians were quite content with their grey-frocked Nurses. Many an officer or soldier had his short leave

made pleasant by a dinner party and motor drive with some cheerful Australian Nurse, and many a happy home in Australia owes its genesis to a romance born in those days.

In April, 1919, the Egyptian rebellion broke out, and the tired Australian troops, waiting for ships to carry them back to their homes, had to re-arm and equip themselves, obtain horses and vehicles, and move through the Nile Delta restoring order. Cairo became a very dull city, as there were restrictions on all amusements. Visits to the Pyramids or the Nile Barrage, or trips to the desert could only be made by day and in parties — all troops had to be back at their stations before dark. Officers were ordered to carry revolvers when out of doors, and guards and sentries were posted at all strategic points. The native part of the city was placed "Out of Bounds." Within a few days of the outbreak, order was restored, bridges rebuilt, lines repaired and rail traffic resumed. For some weeks afterwards, however, special precautions remained in force.

A few weeks after the rebellion a well-known Australian Officer (whom we will call Captain Green) came to Cairo for a couple of days' leave. The day after his arrival he invited an attractive and popular Nurse (whom we will call Sister Brown) from No. 3 A.G.H. to dine with him at Shepherds. I believe it was not the first dinner party these two had had together. After dinner the two sat talking, until an Officer belonging to the A.I.F. Headquarters arrived to see someone on duty. Seeing the Sunbeam car in which the Officer had arrived, Captain Green, who knew the Officer well, asked if he might borrow the car to take Sister Brown back to the Hospital. (Cairo taxi drivers could not be trusted at this period.) Although the car was an official one, and not available for private use, the Officer, knowing the dangers with Cairo taxi drivers, consented, and told the driver to take his orders from Captain Green.

The driver was a native, as, when man-power strains became great in 1917 and 1918, all fit motor drivers in Cairo were transferred to fighting units, and their places taken by natives. These natives learned to handle a car reasonably well, but they had a mania for speed, and, given a good stretch of road, they forgot everything else.

Captain Green and Sister Brown got into the car and started off. Then as it was a moonlight night, Captain Green suddenly suggested that they might take a run to the Pyramids before going to the Hospital. Sister Brown agreed, and the driver took the Mena road.

Now Captain Green, being on short leave to Cairo, did not know of all the guards and sentries, and he probably had neglected to look up all the orders about restrictions after dark. The rising was already several weeks past, and everything appeared quiet. Sister Brown, being a woman, was probably thinking of the moonlight. There was, however, a definite order forbidding visits to Mena after dark, and a guard was posted on the road at the outskirts of the city to stop cars and examine the occupants. At this time, the guard happened to be found by an Indian Battalion.

When the driver reached the straight stretch of the Mena road he "stepped on it," and sat back to enjoy himself—those Sunbeams could cover the ground. Without any of the occupants noticing it, the car whizzed past an Indian sentry who challenged and called on it to stop. Receiving no response, the sentry drew his revolver and fired a shot after the car. The shot did the trick. Captain Green heard it, but he was more concerned at a scream from Sister Brown, who said she had been hit. The bullet had come through the back of the car, and, losing most of its momentum on the metal panel and seat



P.M.G.'s Department

Over 200 members of this sub-branch paraded at the Cenotaph on Anzac Day, when Sister Drewett (ex-A.I.F.) placed a wreath. The sub-branch patron (Mr. J. W. Kitto, Deputy-Director of Posts and Telegraphs), and Mr. Peter Kennedy (supervising engineer), attended.

An excellent lecture on the customs (not to be confused with the Commonwealth Customs) of the Papuan natives was delivered recently by Mr. A. E. Austin, Resident Magistrate of Loueua, Papua. A touch of the real Digger spirit was in evidence. The lecturer gave his lantern slides and learned discourse gratis, and Colonel Milne supplied (bachsheesh) his lantern and screen, and assisted Mr. Austin.

Our "smoko," featuring artists from the public service, was an unqualified success. Messrs. Hutton and Hollier (Railways Sub-Branch) delighted the audience with duets from Gilbert and Sullivan. Jack Brophy (Defence Dept.) manipulated his cards and box of tricks; and Telegraphist Bob Crosby caused a riot of laughter with his humorous German, Dutch, and Jewish characterisations. Wally Gardiner, from the Lines Branch, performed admirably with his platoon of concertinas of various shapes and sizes, and conducted community singing.

Assistance from our funds has been given to Furlough House (£2/2/-), League Distress Fund (£4/4/-), League Hospital Comforts Fund (£3/10/-), two members absent on sick leave without pay (each £3/3/-), Anzac Day march (10/6), inter-sub branch concert party £2/2/-). On the Anzac Memorial appeal letter, the contention was raised that anti-soldier organisations would not hesitate to point out that in the building of a memorial to the soldiers who sleep overseas, the remnants of the A.I.F. had to subscribe owing to the disinterestedness of affluent citizens. Thus the motion to subscribe was lost.

The next social hop-over will take place early in July. Equipment to be carried will be a large thirst, with appetites at the alert, dry whistle on the shoulder, chin-strap, fixed firmly under the chin to prevent spills. Stretcher-bearers will be detailed for duty by Jock Fernley, social secretary.

President Bob Swan has issued an appeal to all members to attend meetings held on the first Monday night in each month, in the Postal Institute Cafeteria at 8 p.m.; lift from basement. The idea that committeemen only are admitted to meetings is incorrect. All members are welcome, so come along and air your views.—W. Ireland, Publicity Officer.

"Dad" Owen —(From previous page)

man, told me of Sergeant Bourne, formerly of the "Buffs" (cook-sergeant, you remember, he was, with us—a fine man, with a pair of the nicest blue eyes I ever saw), and how he was lying in great agony, dying I think, shot through the pelvis and with general peritonitis—I crawled round and saw poor Bourne myself next day or so. He was nearly "through with it," then. Well, the moment he saw Jenkyns he gasped out, "Have you seen the Old Man? Is he all right?" "Yes!" said Jenkyns, "right as rain when I last saw him, 'going strong.'" "Thank God!" said Bourne, and sank back with a look almost of peace on his face.

Wolsey told me one last little incident with which I must finish these reminiscences of "Dad": My little sanitary sergeant told me how the Colonel had given orders to keep the trenches swept scrupulously after meals to keep the flies away. Like myself, he loathed and hated flies with all his soul, and I expect for the same reason, that we both realised how they ruined the men's "fighting chances," both by giving them fly-borne disease and by settling in swarms on their wounds and making them go septic. Anyhow, Wolsey told me that for love of the Colonel and because they knew that the flies absolutely "got on his nerves," the men kept those trenches scrupulously clean—ideally perfect—in a way I couldn't get them to approach, once he had gone, though even then they were really very good.

So much for our first C.O., "Spiritual Father" of the battalion and of its traditions. Well on in his fifties, he was not constitutionally strong enough, nor tough enough—hard enough, perhaps I should say—for the unrelaxing strain of modern war; but he was a great lover and a great maker of men, a great creator of "spirit" and "noblesse-oblige." Any weakness that he had concerned not himself at all; but to lose "my poor boys," as he called us, that harrowed, unnerved, and finally undermined him as if we had been indeed his own "flesh and blood" sons. Take him for all in all, I think many of us have him enshrined in our hearts as the finest gentleman we ever met.

(To be continued)

Diggers Abroad—No. 41

CAPT. V. C. GRIFFIN: Born in Granville (N.S.W.) in April, 1898, he enlisted in the A.I.F. in June, 1915, leaving Australia as a private (No. 2600) with the 8th Reinforcements for the 3rd Bn., which he joined at Anzac at the beginning of October. In September, 1918, after service in France, Griffin transferred to the Indian Army; in April of the following year, having completed six months' training at the Quetta Military College, he received his commission in the 10th Gurkha Rifles, and almost immediately took part in the Afghan War. Transferring in 1923 to the 5th Mahratta Light Infantry, he was some years later (1929) appointed adjutant of its 2nd Bn., which served in the Burma Rebellion from July, 1931, to March, 1932. Since 1933 he has been a company commander in the 10th (Training) Bn. of the regiment. Griffin married, in 1925, the daughter of Sir Louis Rieu, K.C.S.I., member of the Executive Council of the Governor of Bombay. Last year they both visited Sydney. At the present time Capt. Griffin is stationed at Belgaum, in the Bombay Presidency.

CAPTAIN W. KRUGER (11th Bn.): Born at Noradjuha (Vic.), in 1887, he left Western Australia with reinforcements for 11th Bn., serving with that unit until invalided in 1918. On arrival back in Australia he was made staff-officer for returned soldiers at Perth, and retained this appointment for several years, after which he resumed his profession as surveyor. As a result of war disabilities he had to relinquish his calling, and is now a draftsman in the State service. Prior to the war Kruger was an outstanding tennis player, he and his brother being State doubles champions for several years. War injuries necessitated his abandoning this sport, and he has now taken to bowls with conspicuous success. It was mainly through his efforts that the 11th Bn. Assn. was resuscitated in 1925, and since 1930 he has occupied the presidential chair. Captain Kruger left Australia on April 21 to visit England and the Continent, and will be absent for several months. His address is c/o Agent-General for West Australia, Savoy House, The Strand, London.



Capt. Kruger.

COLONEL T. A. J. PLAYFAIR, O.B.E., D.S.O., V.D. (Arty.): Member of a well-known providoring and meat exporting firm of Sydney, he was born in that city in October, 1890, and educated at the Sydney Church of England Grammar School. Joined the militia in 1910, and on enlisting in the A.I.F. in August, 1914, was appointed a section commander in the 1st Battery of the 1st Div. Artillery. Embarked in the troopship "Argyllshire" in Oct., 1914, for Egypt. Landed at Anzac on the night of April 25, 1915, with four telephonists, to act as right flank observing officer for H.M.S. "Bacchante," a job that he continued to do until, on May 19, he was wounded in the head and chest. Early in July, Playfair rejoined his battery, at Cape Helles, but on August 6 received a wound in the head, which resulted in his being invalided home the following month. In April, 1916, he was promoted captain and given command of the 26th Bty. (3rd Div.), with which he sailed for England in May, going to France in November. Promoted major in January, 1917, Playfair on several occasions left his battery to act as brigade major of the 3rd Div. Arty., until in March, 1918, he was transferred to the 4th Div. Arty. as brigade major. Since 1927 he has been a member of the N.S.W. Legislative Council. In Feb. of this year he left on a business trip to Java, Singapore, Federated Malay States, Shanghai, Japan, and expects to return to Sydney at the end of June.

MAJOR E. E. LONGFIELD LLOYD, M.C. (1st Bn.): Born in Sydney in Sept., 1890, and educated in Sydney and Dublin, he was a clerk at the Union Bank in Sydney at the outbreak of war. Having served in King Edward's Horse and the 29th A.I.R., he received a commission in the A.I.F. in August, 1914, and embarked in October with the 1st Bn. Promoted lieutenant at Mena Camp in Feb., 1915, and captain at Anzac in July. Took part in the Landing, and early in June led a raid against a Turkish machine-gun in German Officers' Trench, for which he received the Military Cross. Evacuated, ill, from Anzac in Oct., 1915, he was invalided home from Egypt in the hospital ship "Kanowna" three months later. From the end of 1916 until Oct., 1920, Lloyd was attached to the Intelligence Section at Victoria Barracks, Sydney, after which he received a temporary appointment in the External Affairs Branch of the Prime Minister's Department. Since May, 1921, he has been Inspector-in-Charge, Commonwealth Investigation Branch, Sydney. At the present time he is on his way back to Australia with Mr. Latham, the Commonwealth Attorney-General, who has just completed a "goodwill" visit to China and Japan.

LIEUT.-COLONEL A. J. G. SIMPSON (4th and 56th Bns.): Born in Devonshire in 1888, a B.A. of Cambridge University, he was an articled law clerk in Sydney at the outbreak of the war. Joining up immediately, he was given a commission in the 4th Bn., and left Australia as a captain. Served in Egypt, Gallipoli, and France, being transferred to the 56th Bn. in Feb., 1916, during the expansion and reorganisation of the A.I.F., and promoted major in May, before the unit left for France. For six weeks or so after the Battle of Fromelles Simpson temporarily commanded the 54th Bn., and from Oct., 1917, to March, 1918, he had charge of the 56th. Returned to Australia in 1919. At the end of February of this year he left Sydney in the "Otranto" on a six months' visit to England.

Monument Wood —(From page 19)

inconsiderable favour. "These," I said, pointing to our wounded all about us.

"Very well," he said. "I will give you twenty minutes. If we fire three shots in the air we will continue war."

"Three shots," thinks I, "time to dive into a shell hole."

"Very well," I said, "I will not go further toward your line than here, and you do not come closer to us."

"Yes," he said.

My troubles were not over. The new hands seemed to think this was a regular occurrence, and that the hatchet was buried. So they started to swarm out of the trenches.

Made some pointed comments and they got back in again. Keeping Bull Voice away from our line, and wrecked "C" Company and a platoon of the 45th in hand was trying.

But to do him justice, Bull Voice was the soul of honour, integrity and generosity throughout the whole proceeding. He was tall and handsome. Well over six feet. Did not look more than 22. He sought no small advantage—as I would have. I would probably in his position, have stipulated that I take the lightly wounded and he the severe cases.

However, "One man," he said, "I will keep. He is on our parapet, shot through the foot."

He then changed his mind and gave him to us. He gave us Captain Cummins' body—wrist watch and papers intact.

Shades of Ned Kelly! Can you imagine an enemy officer in our lines being unrifled?

Fritz started stretcher-bearing too. Counted with satisfaction eleven being carried away from the scene of my operations.

Stretchers had all gone and not yet returned. So set a party to work to rip the doors off the cottages behind us, use them for stretchers, dump the casualties at the railway bridge, and return.

In this way the work went on swiftly. Bull Voice and I strolled up and down together. We talked of Cabbages and Kings. He led me to one of our men near his parapet.

Looked down into the trench full of square-built, stocky looking Jaegers. A queer sensation. They looked at me in apparent curiosity and friendliness.

Then, thinks I, "All this generosity going to waste, and nothing in return. Must do something."

"Oh," I said, "There is a dead H—German near our lines that you can have." (Nearly said "Hun" to him; just caught myself in time.)

His eyebrows went up in surprise. "One of my men?"

"I don't think so." He was a fortnight dead and humming to high heaven. I was getting rid of him for our sakes.

"If you will give me four of your men, I will get him for you," I said.

A volley of German words, and four Fritzs climbed out and came to me with friendly grins.

So I marched off in charge of a party of enemy.

My boys vastly enjoyed the joke. Out of earshot of the officer, they turned to me eagerly, and said, "Cigarette?"

Give them a packet of Red Hussars.

"Damn lousy trick even to play on Fritz," commented the boys.

With crinkled noses they rolled the corpse on to the ground sheet and marched off. I could get on with those Jaegers.

On patrol with Bull Voice again. One of our men came up. "There is a wounded man just over the road."

Over the road might have been the next country for all we knew of what had gone on there.

As a matter of fact, Charlie Stoerkel, M.C., our battalion fire-eater, had broken through and captured a battalion headquarters there.

B.V. and I stood by the road. I had many qualms, but stuck close to him. A new vista of firing line opened up, both Australian and German. And they did not open on us. We stood sentinel while our bearers raked in some more wounded from over the road.

The twenty minutes of grace had stretched to two hours. All the wounded had been removed long since. Unwounded men in shell holes had been solemnly rolled on to doors and carted in.

Now even the dead were removed and placed behind the buildings.

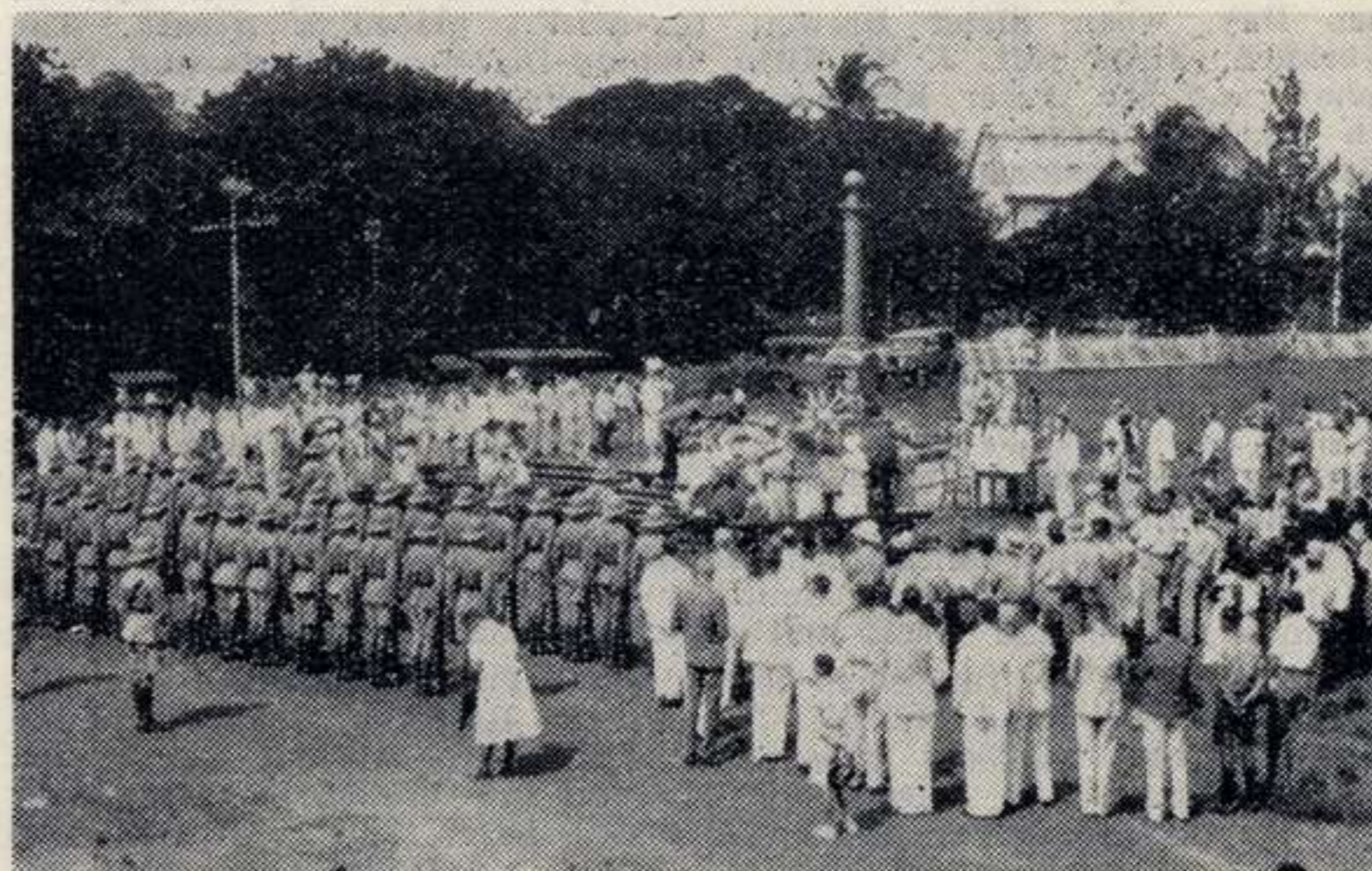
I turned to B.V.: "I thank you for your generosity. We have all our wounded. We had better continue the war."

"We need not stop yet," he said.

Visions of 18-pounder shrap. crossed my mind. Everyone but ourselves on both sides was now under cover and standing to arms.

And also visions of some inexperienced youth on either side wishing to pick off an enemy at forty yards.

Anzac Day at Darwin



Like in other outposts of the Commonwealth, Anzac Day was impressively celebrated at Darwin.

—This photo by courtesy of Mr. Justice Wells, who served with the A.I.F.

"No thank you," I said, "I think it better that we continue the war." We stood to attention—face to face. He saluted flat handed—I with the palm outward.

We turned right about and marched slowly back. Took my time. No flaming Fritz was going to make me look windy. Reached the parapet. Out of the tail of my eye I could see B.V. gazing around. I gazed round again. Fritz was still standing there. "Blast you!" I said, "you win."

So I stepped down.

Then, and not till then, did this German Imperial officer step down.

I hope, B.V., that you have seventeen kids and a cellar full of beer.

* * *

I led the remnant out that night. Anticipated court-martial for fraternising with the enemy. But was quite satisfied in view of the wounded that were saved.

But nobody knew anything—officially. Heard later that our artillery observers were worried to bits. They could see German tin-hats in No Man's Land, then British. So they held their fire. Or B.V. and I would be pushing up the daisies.

Now, Pottsey, Norm, Clarke, Allen, and you other blighters, what about hearing from you in *Reveille*? There was a 48th Battalion in France.

WALLSEND.

"Abandon rank all ye who enter here" was a conspicuous sign at the official opening of the new club room of the Wallsend Sub-branch of the R.S.L. by the manager (Mr. H. D. Hill). The occasion was notable for the very impressive tribute to comrades who did not return, and the spectacular way in which the aims, objects and ideals of the League were emphasised. All lights were dimmed and an illuminated scroll was evolved in which twelve points of the League policy were prominently inscribed. This scroll, at the end of which was a most impressive sketch of a soldier's grave in the war areas, was the work of Artist Don Bicolow. Guests included Messrs. G. Shaw (State Councillor), W. Newburn (Newcastle Sub-branch), Captain Kelly and Lt. Curvis (35th Bn.); T. H. Copwell, H. Scott-Daisly, H. F. James, H. Peters, and A. Evans. Mr. H. Raine, the Wallsend secretary, emphasised the value of the League. "No returned soldier," he said, "who realised his obligations to those comrades who made the supreme sacrifice, and to those who returned to make great sacrifices in post-war, would decently stand outside the League." Alderman S. M. Neat (Mayor of Wallsend) assured the sub-branch that it would have the full support of the local Council.

35th BATTALION REUNION.

The first Sydney reunion of the 35th Bn., A.I.F., will be held on the night of June 15 at the Dungowan Cafe, Martin Place. Tickets 3/6. As catering is being arranged on the basis of those who propose to attend, early application should be made to Capt. Gordon Coghill, the secretary, at 75 Whistler Street, Manly; tel.: YU 1511.

COPY.

Derrima

Collarenebri.

8th Nov. 1937.

Dear Morris,

I have been out here for the past two weeks working in a sheep yard marking lambs and swabbing all other sheep.

Yesterday being Sunday, for recreation I wrote a brief account of the German attack on our part of the line near Villers Bretonneaux.

I was prompted to do this as our official records appear to be somewhat twisted here judging by the History of 5th Div. (Ellis) and the Official History (Bean). And you once asked me to contribute something to the Battalion History and I judged from a remark of yours recently that you are still trying to get a Bn. history going.

I consider that I should know just what happened on our sector on 24th Apl. but I may not write it down well so I send it to you to hand on to your Historian if you think fit. The story may be touched up a bit to advantage. I have largely stated facts. You can be sure of my facts being right.

I will be returning to Sydney in a few days time.

I trust Mrs. Morris and family are well.

Very best wishes to you all and also my thanks for hospitality shewn to me in the past.

Yours sincerely,

(Sgd). J. H. Barton.

P.S. I know that something went wrong with reports of the day viz. 24th April as some weeks after that day I was accompanying our Brigadier Gen. Stewart along the front line during a fog when he asked me a question in connection with events of that day: When I told him the Tommies remained there until after the counter attack, he said - "I wish I had known that before Barton."

(Init.) J.H.B.

VILLERS-BRETONNEUX 24th April, 1918.

Facts are C Coy. of 54th Bn. in supports came under very heavy minnie werfer and artillery fire after the break had been made through by the enemy on our right flank towards Villers Bretonneux. Our front line received very little of this shell fire.

An outstanding officer that day was Capt. McNabb M.C. he had returned from visiting the half of A Coy. which occupied the front line before the heaviest of the shelling had commenced.

The retirement of the half of A Coy. and of C. Coy. to a trench in our rear was automatic every man was badly shaken by the heavy fire from medium minnie werfers. That Capt. McNabb ordered the retirement should be fostered, as no doubt he would have ordered it but at the time all the men, excepting a few near to him, thought he had been killed. A minnie blew the traverse in on us. I being on the flank of the party of about eight who were partially buried by the explosion was easily able to extricate myself and also could Finlayson who had been lifted on to the parapet. Together we commenced to pull the remainder out amongst them was Capt. McNabb. By the time McNabb was free from the earth practically all able men had retired to the rear trench. McNabb and I followed and in order to steady the morale of the men we walked quietly back and then it was that McNabb inspired everyone by remaining on top of the trench quite ignoring all shell fire and long range rifle fire. On regaining my platoon I suggested a return to our true position. My suggestion was promptly backed up by Sgt. Larkings whose words were "Too bloody right". This support from Larkings stimulated my action and we immediately clambered out followed by all that were left of C. Coy. (about 20 men) and our action was followed by A. Coy. who were led by Capt. McNabb and ably supported by Lieut. Dickenson. Dickenson kept his head throughout, and acted admirably.

We did not regain our trench at quite the same place as we had left it, but aimed for that portion to the right of the part we had vacated as here the shell fire was lighter.

Our action in going forward had awakened the morale of all men and by this time they were at the highest pitch of fighting humour and we immediately opened up boxes of S.A.A., reserving that which the men carried, and opened a steady fire on the distant enemy who were advancing in large numbers of sections in artillery formation towards Villers Bretonneux, while those of his sections nearest to our flank would wheel to their right and advance down the slope towards us in single file until our rifle fire made them take ground cover.

Factors which played a part in shifting the enemy attack that day were

(1) Capt. Cromby O.C. of C. Coy. from his headquarters on Hill 104, having been an artillery officer before serving with the infantry, used his very alert brain to good advantage and had obtained telephonic connection with an artillery battery and became, for the time being, the observer, and directed the artillery fire from his headquarters. Well directed artillery fire did much to hamper the enemy supports as they moved towards the break in the line.

(2) The advance of our infantry A. and C. Coy's out of the extremely heavy shell fire and which advance carried us to the enemy side of this shell fire. Naturally enough, instead of having shell shocked troops to oppose them they were met by an advance of infantry in high morale looming out of the dust clouds of shell fire, and this I feel sure did much to call Fritz's bluff.

Up to this point I have only mentioned Capt. Cromby of C. Coy. Lt. McArthur M.C. was the only other officer in C. Coy, he was with No. 12 platoon and this platoon was almost exterminated by minnie werfer fire & McArthur was for a time badly shaken. McArthur was always an outstanding officer and at a later hour in the day he had recovered from his shaking and his clear vision again came to our help.

Now I come to the main object in my narrative, namely, one company of Rifle Brigade who have been ignored in all our records remained firm. Certain reports must have been lost or ignored and assumption based on

reports not wide enough in their detail. This particular company of Rifle Brigade deserves much credit and it was they who were largely the pivot on which our defensive flank swung.

From the part of the action in this narrative where I left off we had regained our true support position which gave excellent observation and good field of fire from the forward slope of the hill, and after the enemy shell fire had lessened somewhat in its intensity an order came to me in writing from Captain Cromby and which originated from Acting Lt. Colonel Holland O.C. of Bn., which read "Take 9, 10 and 11 platoons to a point on the road which runs from our side of Bois de Verre towards Villers Bretonneux, get touch with A. Coy's right hand post (Lt. Harvey) on your left, and touch with the Tommies on your right." I immediately called the remainder of C. Coy. together numbering then only 18 men all ranks and prepared them for an advance by sections from shell hole to shell hole, but before putting such an advance into execution we would make what headway we could along a broken and shallow trench which lead to our right front and in the direction we required to go. This trench led us to within about 40 yards of the Rifle Brigade Head Quarters and forward of them between their headquarters and their right hand (No. 1) post. Since the enemy advance had automatically converted the R.B. Head Quarters into a front line post we were now in a very effective position and had a good field of fire to right and front and also across A. Coy's front on our left.

I sent Corporal Carr with a message to the captain of Rifle Bn. Coy. to advise him of our position. Carr, ever an elert and conscientious soldier immediately set off to cover the short intervening space with short runs from shell hole to shell hole. The sending of a runner to Lt. Harvey about 150 yds. to our left was a more difficult matter and I questioned if the risk of a man's life was worth while when Harvey's post would no doubt already be aware of our advance. Also it seemed to me much less risky to get a runner to Lt. Harvey from the rear. Accordingly, I sent Pte. Clunes with a message back to Capt. Cromby advising him of our position and suggesting to him that if he thought it worth while to send a message to Harvey he could send one from the rear, a much safer run I thought than direct across the open stretch of front with very few shell holes for cover.

During the remainder of the day we were molested more by our own artillery than by the enemy and the posts of the Rifle Bde. on our left front came right under the fire of our own guns and the shells were much heavier there. The position of our front was now as shown in the accompanying sketch.

Towards evening Capt. Cromby and Lt. McArthur visited me and brought with them the news that our counter attack was going to happen at 8 p.m. and there was nothing for me to do but hold on and wait. This counter attack as we well know did not take place owing to various delays until 11 p.m. or nearly midnight. Before daybreak on the 25th a connecting party under an officer of the 60 Bn. entered my post. The counter attack had been a great success, but the attackers had closed a little towards Villers Bretonneux and had left some enemy posts between their left flank and our right. I asked if we could assist in any way but the officer in charge of the party said no, hold on where you are and we will push a post over towards you and bridge the gap. No doubt he thought all opposition had been cleared away. Daylight was approaching and they must go and I pointed out that there was an enemy machine gun post not two hundred yards from us and directly between us and the left flank of the counter attackers (60 Bn.). They became aware of the presence of the enemy gun on their return as daylight was fast advancing and we had a view of the connecting party lying flat while the German gun raised the dust over them. Visability was poor enough however to enable them to make their escape.

During the night of the counter attack I had visited and been visited by the captain of R.B. Coy. and now on the night of the 25th this captain received orders to withdraw his Coy. as the Australians, so the order said, had linked across in front of him, but he said you have not done so with which of course I agreed and he reported to his Bn. Commander this fact and asked that the order for his retirement be postponed. Three times did that same order come to him to withdraw his men and twice he sent back and asked that

the movement be postponed. Upon receiving the order the third time he said there was nothing else for it but to obey, but he regretted leaving the situation as it was, and during that night and the night before he had been active constructing a defensive flank. We regretted losing his support although we felt that the position was 100% safer than it had been before the counter attack occurred.

As the R.B. Coy. withdrew Capt. Cromby sent word to me to occupy their positions, three big posts each of which had held a full platoon of Tommies (about 30 to 40 men) we occupied with 6 men in each.

One incident of the relief I may mention. The Tommies had, as I thought, all marched out and we had taken possession of their posts. I had visited both the left and the right posts and had loitered and talked in each one thus passing away a full hour of the night then back to my own post in the middle where again I had been casually talking killing another half of an hour of the night when someone said, there is a Tommy waiting to speak to you sir. This Tommy only wanted the list of trench stores signed as being handed over and he had not ventured to interrupt me and had waited a full hour and a half after his company had gone out. I said - What, you still here - what is it. Trench stores sir, will you please sign for them. I said I'll sign anything you like old man - go for your life or you'll be lost. I thought you had gone long ago and I scrawled my name right across the page in the night. Trench stores gave us little concern.

One contrast between the Tommies and the Australians was the Australians always attended to their dead and carried them out of the line wherever possible but the Tommies as in this case left their dead in the trench and had not even removed their paybooks. Australians would always send the pay book back to the next of kin.

From my two nights and a day's association with the coy. of R.B. I could say something of some individual acts of coolness on the part of their runners and the coolness of their captain but all I wish to say here is that the company of Rifle Brigade were a large portion of the pivot on which our defensive flank swung at Villers Bretonneux and for such they deserve credit.

The great counter attack which regained Villers Bretonneux saved Amiens and much more besides but if the enemy had widened the break on our flank as he had planned and endeavoured to do, then, a successful counter attack would have been a much more difficult undertaking.

I might truthfully say for the supporting companies that it was their day out. The supports always dominated the situation and gave adequate protection against the attacks on the front line. The front line posts escaped the shell fire and the only casualties were amongst the Tommies and these caused by our own artillery fire.

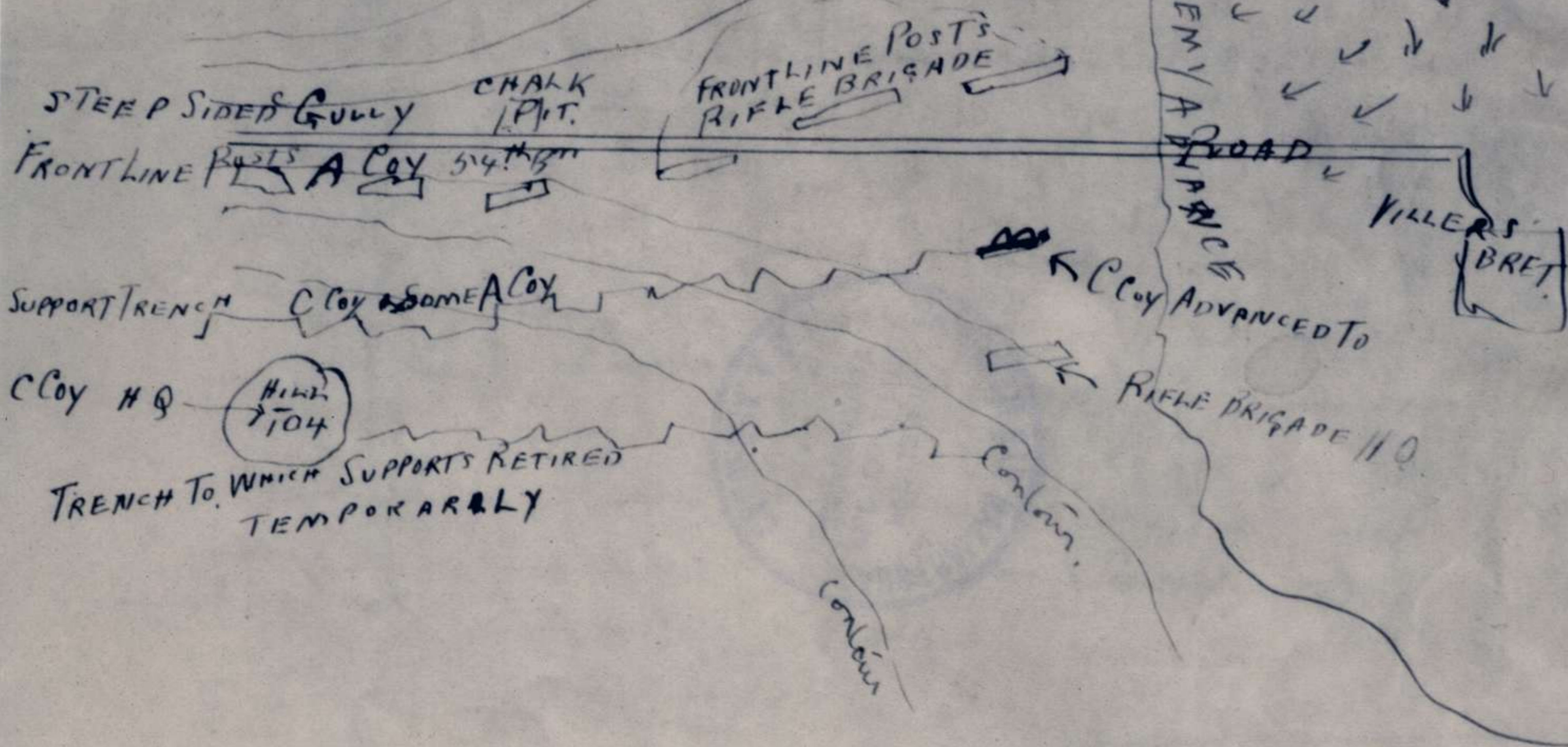
I hesitate to mention the names of men who shewed such courage and devotion to duty that day as my memory might prove false to some and leave them out, but all men of C. Company who advanced to the extreme flank knew that we had burned our boats behind us.

7th Nov. 1937.

(Sgd). J. H. Barton.

ENEMY SUPPORTS ADVANCE
SHELLED BY DIRECTION
OF CROMBY

BOIS DEVERRE
ENEMY LINE



Fourth Army.

Monument Wood Offensive.

1. I beg to submit in outline a plan for offensive action, involving the capture of ground on a frontage of about 4,000 yards, to an average depth of 700 yards east of Villers-Bretonneux. It is submitted, however, that this plan should be considered only as the first stage of a comprehensive operation to eliminate the enemy salient to the east of CACHY and VILLERS-BRETONNEUX. As it may be very difficult satisfactorily to arrange for synchronised action by this Corps and the 31st French Corps d'Armees, it is suggested that the objectives proposed for the respective Corps should be considered together, i.e., as a complete operation; but that the carrying out of the task for this Corps should take place first in order of time, the action of the French Corps (which would thereby be greatly facilitated) following after a very short interval of time.

2. It is further pointed out that action by this Corps alone, without any subsequent action by the French, would form for us an awkward, and in some aspects, a very undesirable salient; disadvantages which would largely counteract the advantages to us of the proposed operations.

3. The advantages to us are:-

- (a) shortening and straightening of our line
- (b) deepening our defences east of Villers-Bretonneux
- (c) ejecting the enemy from the remainder of the high ground which he still holds in P.31 (hill 105)
- (d) maintenance of our initiative.

4. Accompanying map shows:-

- (a) in black, approximate present British and French front line
- (b) in red, proposed final objective for Australian Corps, in the first stage
- (c) in blue, proposed final objective for the French Corps, in the second stage

5. The red objective will involve the capture of the Monument and Wood, and the remainder of Hill 105 in P.31 and P.26. The new frontage will be 4,550 yards, until the completion of the second stage, when it will be reduced to 3,000 yards. A temporary encroachment of about 150 yards upon an south of the French Corps tactical boundary is also involved.

6. The red objective task will involve the employment of one Brigade of Infantry of the Second Austr. Division, with three battalions in first line, and one battalion in immediate support of the Monument Wood flank. An additional Battalion of the 2nd Division would be placed at the disposal of the attacking Brigadier, as a reserve to deal with any unexpected emergency. The Brigade allotted for this task to be the 5th Aust. Brigade, (Brig.Gen. Martin). This Brigade is at present in the line.

7. In view of the occurrence of an inter-divisional relief in B Division sector, of the fact that one other Brigade of the Second Division was employed in the Battle of July and urgently requires a few days' rest, and of the fact that at least 4 days will be required to prepare the 5th Brigade for the operation, it is considered that the operation cannot take place before July 15; but that it would be better to plan it to take place on July 17, so that proper co-ordination of all arms can be assured.

8. It is proposed again to employ tanks, in order to reduce casualties to the infantry. It is considered that one Battalion of

Tanks should be held in readiness for employment, including supports and reserves, and counter-attack tanks. Probably 21 or 24 Tanks will be sufficient in the actual advance with the Infantry.

9. It is also proposed to employ a normal advancing Artillery Barrage. The frontage will require 9 Brigades of Field Artillery, all of which could, if obligatory, be provided from Corps resources, but the loan of 2 Brigades of Field Artillery from Army resources would materially simplify the Artillery dispositions, and obviate any encroachment upon the ~~normal~~ normal Artillery defences of the Corps.

10. All other subsidiary arrangements would be on normal lines, i.e., Counter-battery work, M.G. barrages, use of smoke, employment of aircraft, etc. etc. None of these matters would present any difficulty.

11. Very special attention will have to be given to the working out of plans to disguise our preparations, and to conceal during battle the actual frontage of the attack, with a view to dislocating the enemy Artillery reaction. It is hoped that, in this, novel expedients will suggest themselves, after fuller consideration of the matter.

12. As, in view of the necessity for secrecy, I have refrained from discussing these proposals, in detail, with any of my subordinate commanders concerned, they must be regarded, for the present, as tentative only, and subject to modification in detail.

Lt.Gen.

PROPOSED OUTLINE OF PLAN OF OPERATIONS

MONUMENT WOOD OFFENSIVE.

1.-OBJECTIVE. The attached map shows in BLACK the present frontvline south-east of VILLERS-BRETONNEUX. The proposed objective of the operation is shown in BLUE. The total frontage at the present date (11th July) is 2,750 yards. The average depth of the proposed advance is between 500 and 600 yards.

2.-TROOPS REQUIRED.

Infantry: The total number of Infantry required for the operation is estimated at 2 battalions. It is proposed to employ the 5th A.I. Brigade for the operation.

Artillery: Total artillery required will be 7 Artillery Brigades. These are available from present Corps resources.

Tanks: The total number of tanks required will be 2 or 3 Sections (8 to 12 tanks).

3. NATURE OF THE OPERATION. The general method of attack will be to place an artillery smoke barrage covering the whole objective. An artillery creeping barrage will be employed to move through the depth of the area of advance rapidly and establish itself on an S.O.S. line beyond the line of the proposed objective. Under cover of this the tanks allotted for the operation will move out along the pre-determined routes and clean up MONUMENT WOOD, ASSYRIA Trench and remaining portion of the enemy's defensive system.

The total number of Infantry actually employed in the advance will be reduced to what is considered the necessary minimum.

In the southern portion of the operations each party of troops detailed to the objective will move with its own tanks. It remains to be determined whether any tanks will move out direct against the northern portion of the objective, as this presents difficulties in finding concealed positions in which tanks can lie up during the day and which are near enough to the infantry bases of departure.

It is proposed to carry out the operation in the early evening at such an hour as will give the infantry every facility for determining their position and consolidating the posts which will be established before dark. It is anticipated by doing this the infantry will have the whole night to consolidate and the enemy will be unable to determine where to place his barrage.

This involves the necessity of placing the infantry in their start positions on the night prior to zero and retaining them in these positions throughout the day. It is essential that there shall be absolutely no movement on this portion of the front throughout the whole of the day prior to zero hour.

4. -ARTILLERY. Artillery positions will be selected in advance and careful registration carried out under cover of the normal harassing fire.

As soon as details of the attack are determined it is desirable that there shall be a complete cessation of the present nibbling tactics on this part of the front in order to give the enemy a feeling of security and lull his suspicions.

A complete counter-battery scheme must be employed similar to ~~that~~ that employed on the 4th July. This counter-battery scheme must commence at zero hour.

5.-TANKS. A careful reconnaissance must be made on the eastern

portion of VILLERS-BRETONNEUX and definite places selected for every tank which is to co-operate in the operation where it can lie up through the whole of the day prior to zero hour. These places must be selected in accordance with the detailed plan of action for each individual tank.

6. PRECAUTIONS ON OTHER PARTS OF THE FRONT. It is proposed to use a dense smoke screen on MORLANCOURT and SAILLY LAURETTE with the idea of inducing the enemy to believe that an attempt is being made to capture these places. Smoke mortars will be used for this and details will be worked out.

A barrage will be placed as far as possible upon the whole of the remainder of the Corps front and the III Corps will be asked to place a similar barrage on their front. In this barrage it is proposed to use a large proportion of smoke shell. The object of the barrage is more to raise the enemy's suspicions than to inflict casualties or damage material.

COPY.

Headquarters,
2nd Australian Division.
(General Staff)
G1/932

CONFERENCE WITH ARMY COMMANDER AND M.G.G.S. AT 5 P.M.
ON 15TH JULY, 1918.

After explaining to the Army Commander the situation in the neighbourhood of Monument Wood, the existence of the Mound in Square V.1, and my proposals for further exploitation, easterly, along the WARFUSEE railway, also the attitude of the French on our right flank, he agreed to the following plan of action:

1. The trench line captured by us to-day from U.5 cent. to U.6 cent., is to be jointly held by us and the French as an "International French", the French digging that portion which crosses No Man's Land.
2. We are to induce the French, with our help, to work southward down Stamboul Trench and Craft Trench, with a view to seizing and holding it.
3. After the occupation of this trench, the French are to be asked to take it over and hold it without our help. The French will also take over and hold, without our help, the trench from U.5 cent. to the junction of Stamboul and Syria trenches, this section then becoming merely a C.T.
4. We will then hold only the portion from the last-named intersection as far East as U.6 cent., as an "International trench".
5. The French to have suggested to them that they should shorten their line by establishing a line of posts from the southern end of Craft Trench, south-westerly to their salient in U.16.a, North of Hangard Wood.
6. Our final objective line is to run from U.6 cent., easterly to V.1.b.6.5 and thence north-easterly to join our present front line at the Warfusee Road at P.27.c.2.5. The territory enclosed by this objective line which is still unoccupied by us is to be taken by a process of minor operations and offensive patrolling, employing no resources beyond those at the disposal of the "A" Division. This objective line is to represent the furthest advance to the eastward and south-eastward that we are to make for the time being, and we will consolidate on this line and organize defences thereon.
7. All negotiations with the French troops, to ensure their co-operation, will, for the time being, be made by the "A" Divisional Commander ~~in~~ direct with the Regimental and Divisional Commander of the French on the immediate flank, seeing that the Army Commander considers it hopeless to induce the French Army Command expressly to order these operations and arrangements.

(Intd.) J.M.
15/7/18.

COPY.

Telegram Received at Aust. Corps HQ, 2.5 p.m., 10/7/18.

To AUSTRALIAN CORPS.

Following cable received from DEFENCE Melbourne begins as follows: WS.262. Commonwealth of Australia desire to congratulate Monash and all ranks in his command on the splendid success attending the recent operations at Hamel and Vaire Woods. That the casualties sustained were slight in character is especially pleasing, and adds to the gratification with which the news has been received.

From DAG, A.I.F.

Circulated 4.15 D.R.L.S. down to battalions and similar formations throughout Corps area.

4 July 1918.

Handed in at Versailles, 4.45 p.m.
Received at Aust Corps HQ, 5.42 p.m.

MAJOR-GENERAL MONASH,
AUST. ARMY H.Q.,
B.E.F., FRANCE .

On behalf of Prime Minister of Britain and also of Prime Ministers of Canada, New Zealand, and Newfoundland attending Versailles council I am commissioned to offer you warmest congratulations upon brilliant success of Australian forces under your command and to say that the victory achieved by your troops is worthy to rank with greatest achievements of Aust. armies.

HUGHES
Prime Minister of Australia.

Handed in at Versailles, 4.45 p.m.
Received at Aust. Corps HQ., 5.50 p.m.

MAJOR-GENERAL MONASH,
HQRS. AUST. ARMY CORPS,
B.E.F., FRANCE.

My personal congratulations and those of the Government of Commonwealth on brilliant success of battle. Please convey to officers and men participating in attack warmest admiration of their valour and dash and manner in which they have maintained highest traditions of Australian Army. I am sure that achievement will have most considerable military and political effect upon Allies and neutrals and will heighten morale of all Imperial forces.

HUGHES
Prime Minister, Australia.