

14th Australian Infantry Brigade

5th Australian Division

Australian Corps

56th Infantry Battalion, A.I.F. 2965 Sergeant Alexander Ignatius O'CONNOR

On 1-9-18 during an attack on PERONNE Sergeant O'Connor ("D" Company) was in command of a Platoon. While in the start line and during the advance the enemy barrage was very intense. He exhibited splendid leadership in the advance by keeping his platoon under control and avoided many casualties by diverting his men through gaps in the barrage.

On 2-9-18 during the second attack all his Officers became casualties whilst moving to the start line and he assumed charge of "D" Company. The artillery barrage was exceptionally intense and the whole Battalion was subjected to enfilade machine gun fire from the PERONNE Ramparts from the very start. Despite this he led his men in the face of terrific machine gun fire to a position 400 yards in advance of start line on the northern Ramparts. At this stage the casualties had been very heavy and companies averaged about 30, and realizing that the remainder of the Battalion was held up on the start line and that the situation was a critical one, he at once engaged enemy machine guns firing from the right with his Lewis Guns and drew their fire. At this time he had only 30 men left. At great personal risk he reconnoitred the ground on his left and located a Company of the 55th Battalion in the vicinity of the Sugar Factory 350 yards away. He then went back to the start line over ground which was swept with M.G. fire and issued instructions for the remainder of the Battalion to dribble and fill the gap between the 55th Battalion and his Company. This was done with comparatively few casualties as his Company was drawing most of the M.G. fire from the right.

He personally saw that our left flank was in touch with the 55th Battalion. He then saw a party of the 58th Battalion coming up through the northern portion of PERONNE on his right. He at once pushed four Lewis Guns out to a small trench in front of his

Lieut-Colonel J. Mc F. Harvey A.C.S. Holland 56th Bn. Capt. K.G. Mc Donald 58th Bn.  
Lieut. J. Mc F. Harvey do do  
2-Lieut. W.E. Nancarrow do do

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