

Appendix 5.3

December 1917 War Diaries of the 12th Australian Field Artillery Brigade WW1



Confidential Original

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title Pages will be prepared in manuscript.

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY
(Erase heading not required.)

12th A. Bde AFA

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1st.	- 18th.	<p>inclusive.</p> <p>The brigade remained in Wagon Lines between NEUVE EGLISE and the STEENWERCK - BAILLEUL Road, resting.</p> <p>The Brigade benefited very much from this period of rest great improvement of the health of the men, the condition of the horses, the state of harness and equipment generally was very noticeable. On the 16th. December the Brigade was visited in Wagon Lines by Brigadier General COXEN D.S.O. B.G.R.A. 1st. ANZAC, who expressed his satisfaction on the general improvement.</p> <p>On the 17th. orders were received that this Brigade would relieve the 6th. Army Brigade in position North of the WYCHARTTE Ridge, with Wagon Lines between KEMMEL and DRANOUTRE (N. 32 central Sheet 28).</p> <p>The C.O. accompanied by Battery Commanders and Orderly Officer went forward and inspected the positions to be taken over. The C.O. remained at Group Headquarters pending the taking over of tactical responsibilities.</p>	
	19th.		<p>Two Sections of each Battery of this Brigade relieved two sections of each Battery of the 6th. Army Brigade Aust. F.A. The move was carried out satisfactorily.</p>	
	20th.		<p>The remaining sections of each Battery relieved the remaining sections of the 6th. Brigade, and the 12th. Army Brigade Aust. F.A. assumed tactical responsibility for the front covered by the HOLLEBEKE Group, 1st. Australian Div. Arty at 2p.m. The Group covers a portion of the front line, in territory won from the enemy in the Battle of MESSINES. The front shows little signs of activity; enemy artillery fire being very slight.</p> <p>The Wagon Lines of the 12th. Army Brigade and the 6th. Army Brigade Aust. F. A. changed over, this brigade being in the new lines by 3p.m., with the exception of the 45th.</p>	

1875 Wt. W593/826 1,000,000 4/15 J.B.C. & A. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118.

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	20th.	continued	<p>45th. Battery which occupied Wagon Lines just N.W. of KEMMEL. A heavy frost had set in the roads were very hard and slippery making horse traffic difficult and dangerous. The C.O. and Adjutant visited the Batteries in their positions, and "A" O.P. (east of RAVINE WOOD). The O.P. is between our front and support lines but is easily approached by day or night, by a track through DENYS WOOD and a trench through RAVINE WOOD, except that the track through DENYS WOOD is sometimes shelled.</p>	
	21st.		<p>Batteries carried out Harassing Fire on enemy roads, tracks, and centres of activity. The Brigade expenditure on this work being about 700 rds. each 24 hours. The frost continues but visibility is poor. Battery Commanders reconnoitred Battery Positions and O.P's to be occupied if Batteries had to fall back in defence of Corps Main Line, to conform with any retirement of the Infantry.</p>	
	22nd.		<p>A bright morning with good visibility. Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire on enemy roads, tracks, and centres of activity. At 7.30a.m. the Infantry, through the Liaison Officer Centre Battalion, asked for Artillery Fire on FLY BUILDINGS (O.23 b. 60.90 and CENTRE FARM (O.18 c. 40.20) sheet 28S.W. 50 rounds 18par. were fired by the 46th. Battery on FLY BUILDINGS and 40 rouds 4.5 were fired on CENTRE FARM by 112th. How. Battery.</p>	
	23rd.		<p>Visibility during the morning was fair and the 46th. Bty. fired on parties of enemy troops seen from "A" O.P. The Orderly Officer and Signal Officer visited the 46th. and 112th. Batteries and "B" O.P. during the afternoon. Visibility was then very poor and a good view of enemy country was not obtained.</p>	

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	23rd.	continued.	Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire, and also fired on two Farms, Enemy movement being reported there, by the Infantry. The 112th. Battery Position was shelled by 15 4.2 H.E. Shell during the night, but no damage was sustained.	
	24th.		Harassing Fire was carried out by all Batteries. 45th, 46th and 47th. Batteries and "A" O.P. was visited by the Orderly Officer; there was a heavy Ground Mist and observation very poor. The C.R.A. (Brig. General ANDERSON D.S.O.) and the Staff Captain 1st. Australian D.A. visited the Batteries accompanied by the C.O. of the Brigade and the Orderly Officer. It was decided to move the 45th. Battery, back and the 47th. Battery, forward, on to the Western side of a crest which is now at present between the two Batteries. This is being done, in order to give both Batteries a better field of fire, with less "dead" ground. A new position was also inspected with a view of moving Group Headquarters, on account of the distance the present H.Q. are from the Batteries. All Batteries carried out Harassing Fire as usual. Christmas was kept as well as possible, "extra Cheer" in the way of provisions etc. was provided for all ranks of the Brigade, and in spite of the cold and snowy weather, and being in the line, everyone seemed in good spirits. 45th. and 47th. Batteries have each prepared a position right forward near the front line; with the view to running guns into them if the enemy attacks with Tanks; Ammunition with delayed fuze, being stored in the Pits. All Batteries have been ordered to put up a line of barbed wire in front of the Battery Position, in case the enemy breaks through and the Guns have to be defended with Rifle Fire. This work is now being proceeded with.	
	25th.			

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	26th.		<p>Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire on Enemy Roads, Tracks etc. At 4p.m. the enemy commenced shelling the 45th. Battery with 4.2 and 77m.m. H.E. and Gas Shell. This bombardment continued until 5p.m. but no casualties have occurred unless Gas casualties develop. Counter Batteries were informed of this shelling and they opened fire on the enemy. The C.O. went forward and selected the two new Battery Positions to be occupied by the 45th. and 47th. Batteries. Alternative O.P's XXXX were reconnoitred in WYTCHAEITE. A splendid view of forward country can be seen from there extending as far back as COMMINES.</p>	
	27th.		<p>Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire. At 7.30 p.m. the 45th. Battery was again shelled by Gas Shell. The 47th. Battery was shelled at 7.30p.m. by 5.9 How. One man was killed and four wounded. The Counter Batteries were informed and on their opening fire the enemy ceased.</p>	
	28th.		<p>Orders were received from the C.R.A. 1st. Aust. Div. Arty. that the Group was to move its Headquarters to the position already selected and to occupy cement dugouts on the South Western edge GRAND BOIS, on the WYTCHAEITE - VIERSTRAAT Road. The Orderly Officer visited the place and found it being occupied by the 7th. Battalion and used as a rest post. Batteries carried out Harassing Fire as usual. Lieut. O. GAWLER was evacuated suffering from Gas Shell poisoning; the result of the Gas bombardment. As Capt A.L. RICKARD was also suffering from Gas poisoning Capt J.A. FLEMING was brought from the Wagon Lines and took over the temporary command of the Battery.</p>	
	29th.		<p>Capt. ALL. RICKARD, Lieut. J.P. BERTTIE as well as 4 Other Ranks were evacuated suffering from Shell Gas poisoning. Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire</p>	

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	29th.		<p>continued.</p> <p>Staff Officer for Counter Batteries rang the Orderly Officer on the phone and told him that the enemy shoot on the 47th. Battery on the night of the 27th. had been directed by an enemy aeroplane, and that they (Counter Batteries) had intercepted all the enemy's wireless corrections.</p>	
	30th.		<p>The G.O.C., A.I.F. accompanied by the C.R.A. 1st. Aust. Division and staff Officers visited all the Batteries in their positions. Capt. J.A. FLEMING and Lieut. M. BUZZARD were evacuated suffering from Shell Gas poisoning. Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire.</p>	
	31st.		<p>Batteries carried out the usual Harassing Fire on Enemy Roads, Tracks, and centres of Activity. Alterations and improvements are being carried out at the new Headquarters HOLLEBEKE Group are to occupy. The place was not left very clean and this has entailed a large amount of work. The Brigade as a whole had had a comparatively good month. Casualties, with the exception of the Officer and O.R. Casualties during the last few days, have been very light. The Men and Horses have benefited very much by the quiet time and good quarters. Total Casualties for the month. 5 Officers. 12 O.Rs.</p> <p><i>G. Raymond</i>Lieut. Adjutant, 12th. Army Brigade Aust. F. A.</p>	



[162] to [167] - Aust. War Memorial – War Diary HQ 12th Aust. Field Artillery Brigade Dec 1917