

**AWM4**  
**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,**  
**1914-18 War**

Infantry

**Item number:** 23/59/12

**Title:** 42nd Infantry Battalion

October 1917



AWM4-23/59/12

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)



Army Form C. 2118.

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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.

42<sup>nd</sup> Bn. A.I.F.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
Poperinghe	1/10/17		<p><u>Strength</u> Officers 43; O.R. 972; } S.O.S 6 casualties.                      } 10 to hospital  <u>Casualties</u> 6 O.R. wounded.  <u>Weather</u>: Cold &amp; fine visibility good. Bn preparing for operation east of YPRES. Enemy planes bombed vicinity of camp causing some casualties</p>	
Sheet: 28 N.E F	2/10/17		<p><u>Strength</u> Officers 43; O.R. 977; } 1 off to hospital                      } 6 D. New draft.  <u>Casualties</u> 1 O.R. wounded (Bomb).</p>	
YPRES	<del>2/10/17</del>		<p>Bn entrained at Poperinghe and detrained at YPRES - bivouac east of YPRES at I. 9. a. 2.5. near Cemetery.</p>	
YPRES	3/10/17		<p>Bn in bivouac preparatory to approach march.  <u>Strength</u> for operation 21 officers and 548 O.R.                      Remainder of battalion in B. Echelon (Transport Lines) 2 miles west of YPRES and C. Echelon at Morbecque.</p>	
Zonnebeke	4/10/17		<p>During night 3/4<sup>th</sup> Bn, det. approach march from YPRES to assembly position near Zonnebeke. At dawn attack began and objective taken (Red Line) by 8 am. 100 prisoners and 9 machine guns were captured. { For details of the operation see Appendix I.  <u>Casualties</u> Officers 3 killed. 2 died of wounds 6 wounded.                      O.R. 220 killed and wounded.</p>	
" D. 21. S.I.	5/10/17		<p>Battalion consolidated on Red Line as per attached map.                      C, D and B companies in front line and A. Coy in support.                      Front held about 600 yds. 25<sup>th</sup> Bn 7 Bde A.I.F. on our right and 38<sup>th</sup> Bn 10<sup>th</sup> Bde on our left. Enemy shelling very severe.</p>	



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
St Lawrence Camp. BRANDHOEK	6/10/17		<p><u>Strength</u> Officers. 32; O.R. 858.</p> <p><u>Weather</u> Showery. Grounds very cut up by shell fire and extremely difficult for movement. Bn was relieved on the morning of the 6<sup>th</sup> by 2/6<sup>th</sup> MANCHESTERS. 66<sup>th</sup> Brit. Div. and marched out via Ypres to St LAWRENCE Camp, distance of 10 miles. All ranks in exhausted condition owing to bad weather conditions and 60 hours fighting!</p>	
"	7/10/17		<p>Sunday — all ranks resting — Continuous heavy rain, roads and ground in a very bad state.</p>	
"	8/10/17		<p><u>Strength</u> Officers. 32; O.R. 773.</p> <p><u>Weather</u> Very wet and cold. Battalion preparing for another move to Ypres front. to take over the line from the 66<sup>th</sup> British Division</p>	
YPRES.	9/10/17		<p>A <u>behelon</u> consisting of 16 Officers and 400 O.Ranks, moved from Brandhoek Camp via YPRES and camped in tents on Western slopes of FREZENBERG RIDGE (Map POLOGON Wood) part of Sheet 28. Ed. 1.B. Camp about C. 29. C. (Commander Lt Col A.R. Woodcock D.S.O.)</p> <p>B <u>behelon</u> consisting of 12 Officers and 240 O.R. proceeded from BRANDHOEK and camped in tents E. of YPRES, about I. of a 2.5 near Cemetery. 2 Officers and 50 O.R. were detached for duty with 11<sup>th</sup> Engineer Coy.</p> <p>The weather was bad, ground very boggy, transport difficult and heavy showers fell at intervals.</p> <p>N.B. For a detailed account of operations from 10<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> October please see APPENDIX II.</p>	



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	References and references to Appendices
YPRES. Ref Map. Zonnebeke	10 <sup>th</sup> to 21 <sup>st</sup> Oct.		<p>See APPENDIX II.</p> <p>Strength varied from 34 officers and 773 O.R. on the 10<sup>th</sup> to Lt. Korman &amp; Lt. Knorr joined up as reinforcements. 32 officers and 608 O.R. on the 21<sup>st</sup>.</p> <p>During this period the weather was extremely bad and both men and animals suffered severely. During the first 4 days 64 men were evacuated to hospital, suffering from trench feet, exhaustion and shell-shock. The A. Echelon were gradually sent back to Transport Lines and their places were taken by men of B. Echelon. Even Cooks, brakemen, bandmen and G.M.'s details were used.</p> <p>The difficulties of transport were very great and 12 animals were lost. In spite of this, rations, water &amp; dry socks etc were taken up daily and after the first 2 days hot soup <del>and</del> stew and tea were taken up in improvised food-containers wrapped in blankets.</p>	
SHEET. 28. 1/40.000 Ed. 3. H. 16. Central	21 <sup>st</sup>		<p>Strength Officers. 608 (O.R.).</p> <p>Casualties in period were 2 officers wounded. 15 O.R. killed 93 wounded.</p> <p>The Battalion was relieved by the 50<sup>th</sup> Btl. 10<sup>th</sup> Bde. (Canadians) and moved back to H. 16. Central where they camped in tents for night of 21<sup>st</sup>/22<sup>nd</sup>. A. Echelon personnel arrived in a very exhausted condition.</p>	
Remilly Wizernes (Hazebrack map)	22/17		<p>Strength Officers. 32. O.R. 608.</p> <p>10 officers and 140 O.R. (A. Echelon) moved back to REMILLY by motor-buses. The remainder entrained at YPRES and detrained at WIZERNES, from where they marched to REMILLY.</p> <p>Men occupied old billets as on previous occasion in September.</p>	



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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
REMILLY. WIRQUIN.	23/10/17		Strength Officers. 32. O.R. 608. Lt. Waring from M.F.M.	
"	24/10/17		Strength Officers. 36 Lt. Wrenn } 2/Lt. Newman } Cadet 2/Lt. Dardent } Bty	O.R. 663. 55 new draft.
"	25/10/17		as for 24 <sup>th</sup>	
"	26/10/17		Strength Officers. 37 2/Lt. Boorman } from R. mtds. } Lt. Dunning off to hospital	O.R. 629.
"	27/10/17		Strength Officers. 36; O. ranks. 624	5 off to hospital
"	28/10/17		Strength Officers. 37 2/Lt. Stevenson } from sec. list } O.R. 628.	3 off to hospital 6 new draft from hospital
"	29/10/17		Strength Officers. 37	O.R. 627. 2 off and 1 on hospital
"	30/10/17		Strength Officers. 37	O.R. 631. 3 off to hospital & 7 new draft
"	31/10/17		Strength Officers. 40 2/Lt. Allan from recd. list. 2/Lt. Lewis & } 2/Lt. Leeds } from Cadet Bty.	O.R. 639. 2 transferred and 10 new draft.

The weather during the period 23/10/17 to 31/10/17 has been very changeable. Sharp frosts and cold rainy days were frequent. The Battalion was engaged in refitting and training which was interfered with by wet weather. A great number of colds, ~~soften~~ cases of influenza and chest trouble in the ranks. The C/O was on Paris leave from 28/10/17 to 1/11/17 and the command was administered by Major J Farrell.

J Farrell Major  
Adm. Command. 42<sup>nd</sup> Bty.







1455 In order to frustrate a possible enemy attack our Artillery at 5.15am put down an S.O.S. barrage which moved forward three hundred yards and remained down until zero hour.

In reply to this barrage the enemy put his barrage down along the ZONNEBEKE-BREMEN REDoubt LINE. Our rear troops <sup>which</sup> sustained a fair number of casualties during this stage, ~~then~~ to avoid <sup>which</sup> they moved forward up Hill 40 until the whole Brigade was crowded into a depth of a 100 yards.

At 6am. our barrage fell like a wall of flame on the appointed line and the whole Brigade rose as one man and moved forward.

An enemy machine gun kept firing for about five minutes from about D 21 a 6 4 and then stopped.

The 43rd. Battr. reached its objective without difficulty. The 42nd. advanced behind the 43rd. Two Officers, 2/Lieut. W.H.COMPER and 2/Lt. J.P. KELLY-NEALY were killed and one Officer, 2/Lieut H.V.CONRAD was wounded before Hill 40 was crossed.

At Zero plus 41 minutes the 42nd. Battalion leap-frogged through the 43rd. and continued the attack. No resistance was met with and the fortified orchard at D 22 a 7 3 and the ALMA Gave no trouble.

The enemy kept firing Very Light signals as our troops advanced and his artillery kept shortening the range. He also heavily shelled THAMES WOOD. We sustained nearly all our casualties at this stage. The 10th. Brigade, on our left, lost direction and drew ~~the~~ left Company over to the left about 200 yards.

This Company Commander immediately threw in his reserve Platoon to fill up the front. The ground was very marshy on this flank which rendered the going difficult and slow and the left Company fell 250 yards behind the barrage. The Reserve Company Commander, (Capt G.A.Dunbar.) acted promptly and threw his men into the gap. All went well and the left Company regained their position.

Large numbers of the enemy occupied the dugouts East of THAMES WOOD along the RAILWAY LINE, but they did not fight and surrendered readily.

Our objective was reached on time, protective posts were at once pushed out and the work of consolidation began. The barrage halted 200 yards beyond the RED LINE for 47 minutes and during this period a large number of prisoners came in, altogether about 100 were captured by this Battalion all in this area.

The dugout at D 22 b 36 was an AID POST and the whole medical staff was captured. This dugout also contained a Machine Gun.

Nine enemy machine guns were captured altogether, 4 of which were new but did not appear to have been fired from. The enemy had evidently been consolidating on the high ground in front of our RED LINE as many half-finished positions were discovered.

The consolidation of the RED LINE was commenced on the following plan. Each Company put out two Lewis Gun Posts, 100 yards in front; these posts were manned by the Lewis Gun teams and two snipers.

Each Company also put down two Platoon posts on its front and each ~~post~~ post being about 30 yards long. Three platoons of the reserve Coy. (One to each front line Coy.) helped in this work for two hours by connecting up the posts. The fourth Platoon of the Reserve Company dug in on a line 130 yards in rear of the RED LINE and after two hours the other platoons of the Company came back and also dug in on this line.

The ground was very wet and shell-torn, which rendered the work very difficult; but in two hours the men were under cover.

The work of the evacuation of the wounded <sup>was rendered very difficult</sup> by the long heavy carry and the enemy barrage kept down for (4) four hours after Zero, ~~was very difficult~~.

During the afternoon of the 4th. the enemy made repeated counter-attacks against the 41st. Battalion on our front, but ~~was~~ easily repulsed.

During the afternoon and night of the 4th. the enemy also shelled our consolidated line, the RAILWAY LINE, Hill 40 and the ZONNEBEKE LINE.

During the afternoon of the 5th. he also counter-attacked but was beaten off.

At 9a.m. on the morning of the 6th. the Battalion was relieved after (60) sixty hours in the line.

Our casualties were 4 Officers killed and 7 wounded.

Officers Killed. 2/Lieuts. W.H.Comper, J.R.Kelly-Nealy, M.Hart, A.W.Lambden

Officers wounded. - Capt. G.A.Dunbar, Lieut. S.H.Dent, 2/Lieut. A.E.Ballard, 2/Lieut. A.B.C.Wood, 2/Lieut. J.R.Albrey, 2/Lieut. H.J.Armstrong and 2/Lieut. H.V.Conrad.

Other Ranks. ~~200~~ Killed and wounded.

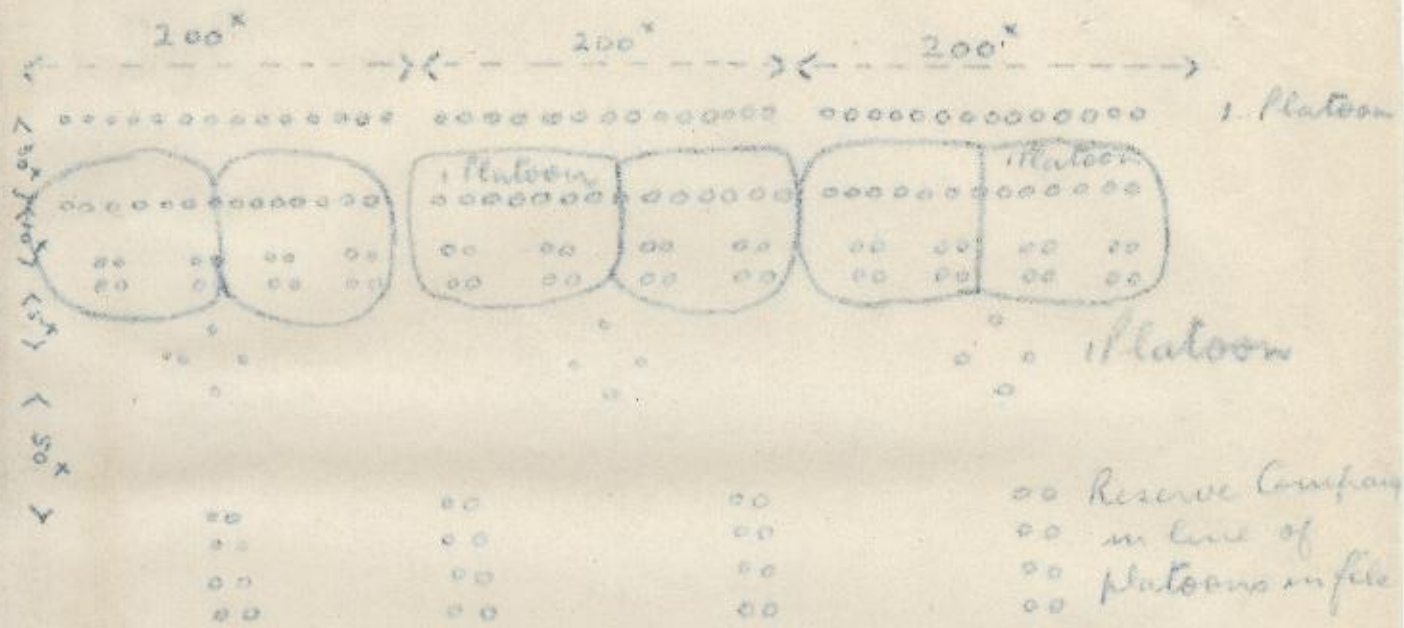
220.

David Hunter

Chart of wounds



Formations adopted









# Message Form.

.....Div

Map reference or mark own position on Map at

1. I am at.....
2. I am at.....and am consolidating.
3. I am at.....and have consolidated.
4. I need:—Ammunition.  
Bombs.  
Rifle Grenades.  
Water  
Very lights.  
Stokes shells.
5. Enemy forming up for counter-attack at .....
6. I am in touch with ..... on <sup>Right</sup>  
<sub>Left</sub> at .....
7. I am not in touch on <sup>Right</sup>  
<sub>Left</sub>
8. Am being shelled from.....
9. I estimate my present strength at .....
10. Hostile 

{	Battery	} active at.....
	Machine Gun	
	Trench Mortar	

Time.....a.m. (p.m.)      Name.....

Date.....      Platoon..... Company.....

Place.....      Battalion.....



## Operations of 42nd. Battn. - Period Ended 10th./21st. Oct. 17.

Map ZONNEBEKE 1.20,000

I

On the 9th. Oct. the 11th. Inf. Brigade received orders to move from hutments near BRANDHOEK and bivouac East of YPRES near FREZENBERG RIDGE, preparatory to taking over the new line from the 66th. Div., which was to attack the PASSCHENDAELE RIDGE on the morning of the 9th. On the morning of the 10th. the 42nd. Battn. was disposed as follows:

- "A" Echelon ( 16 Officers - 400 O.R. ) were camped in tents about C 29 C
- "B" Echelon ( Transport and Q.M.'s Personnel ) were camped in tents EAST of YPRES near the CEMETRY about I.9.a.2.5.
- "C" Echelon ( As per S.S. 135 )

2 Officers and 50 men were detached with 11th. Engrs. Coy.

II

The attack of the 66th. Division, on the 11th., was only partially successful on account of abnormal weather conditions and the condition of the men and the ground.

On the night of the 10th./11th Oct. the 11th. Inf. Brigade -A.I.F. was ordered to relieve the troops of the 199th. Brigade - 66th. Div. on the new front about 650 yards, extending from the RAVEBEKE about D 10 b 5.2 through AUGUSTUS WOOD to the ROULERS RAILWAY.

III

DISPOSITIONS. The 42nd. Battn and 44th. Battn. held the front line with 3 Companies in front and one in support.

The 41st. and 43rd. Battns. were reserves about 400 yards in rear.

The 42nd. Battn. took over from the 2/6th. Manchesters who had suffered severely and occupied the left front from the RAVEBEKE to AUGUSTUS WOOD.

The relief was carried out in daylight and the enemy planes observed the movement. His artillery put down a barrage which inflicted a good number of casualties to our troops and somewhat disorganised the relief. ( Capt. A.C. Moyes - M.C. - was severely wounded.)

IV.

There was no attempt at consolidation previous to our relief and our troops had to occupy shell holes and carry on the work of consolidation as well as conditions permitted.

The weather conditions were extremely bad; the ground was in a bad state and every trench soon filled with water and had to be abandoned for a fresh position.

During the first 12 hours of our occupation of this position, enemy snipers were very active and inflicted several casualties including Lieut. H.E. Josephs, ( severely wounded. ), but after our snipers got to work the enemy activity disappeared.

Our men suffered severely owing to abnormal weather conditions during the first 48 hours.

Very good patrol work was done by our men on the left front and one patrol under 2/Lieut. J.B. Wood penetrated 1000 yards towards PASSCHENDAELE without getting touch with the enemy.

V.

Battalion Headquarters was established at BOETHOEK at D 8 c 2 9.

The New Zealand Division held the line on our left and the 12th. Brigade on our right ( beyond ROULERS Railway Station.)

VI.

Attack of the 9th. and 10th. Brigades on the morning of the 13th.

On the night of the 12/13th. Oct. the 9th. and 10th. Brigades assembled on the front, from the RAVEBEKE to the ROULERS RAILWAY, the 40th. Battn. of the 10th. Brigade relieving the 42nd. Battalion.

The 11th. Brigade moved back about 1000 yards and became Divisional Reserve, the 42nd. Battn. occupying shell holes positions in D 15 c 13, Headquarters remained as above.

At this stage 30% of our men had to be evacuated mostly with feet



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trouble and the effects of mustard gas. The damage was done by men sitting or lying on ground on which shells had burst. The parts of the body in contact with the ground became blistered and painful. Reinforcements from "B" and "C" Echelons were sent up to replace ~~casual~~ casualties.

The attack of the 9th. and 10th. Brigades was unsuccessful. The 9th. Brigade reached their objective ( Blue Line) the 10th. Brigade was held up just West of PAASCHENDABLE RIVER, while the NEW ZEALANDER'S attack, on our left, was held up altogether on account of uncut wire and enemy machine guns.

The result was that the 9th. and 10th. Brigade troops retired to a position just in front of where they started and their casualties were exceedingly heavy.

VII. On the night 13th./14th Oct. the 9th. and 10th. Brigade troops were withdrawn and the 11th. Inf. Brigade once more held the line. The 42nd. Battalion was left support Battalion, behind the 41st. Batt., and occupying positions in the vicinity of ABRAHAM HEIGHTS. Here the troops had to hold on for 48 hours. No offensive action could be taken owing to the exhausted condition of the men and the weather conditions. The 9th. Brigade troops were in reserve in our former positions.

VIII. On the night of the 16th/17th. Oct. our Brigade was relieved by the 9th. Brigade, the 42nd. Batt. being relieved by 36th. Batt. A.I F. and we again became Brigade in reserve, occupying a position about D 14 D. At this period the Battalion strength was 11 Officers 180 O.R. in the line. The Battalion Headquarters shifted to LEVI COTTAGE. Here the Battalion remained until the night of 21st./22nd. Oct. when they were relieved by the 50th. Btn. CANADIANS and the men moved out to a camp WEST of YPRES at H.16 Central, a march of about 7 miles.

IX. The difficulties of transport were very great and all material and rations had to be carried on pack mules. To add to the difficulties of tracks and bad weather the enemy frequently shelled our lines of approach. In spite of these obstacles, hot tea, soup, and stew was sent up to the men daily as well as the ordinary rations, fuel and water. The work of the transport in this operation reflects great credit on the personnel of the Battalion 1st. Line Transport Section, which lost 6 men wounded and 12 animals killed. The men at all times showed the utmost grit and courage and upheld the reputation of the Battalion under the worst possible conditions.

X. Never since the Battalion has landed in France has it been called upon to face such abnormal conditions. Never have the men had to face such hardships or to show such endurance and never have the Officers and men risen so well to the occasion and upheld so well the honour of the Battalion and the best traditions of the AUSTRALIAN Forces.



Casualties.

Our Total Casualties during the period 4th. / 21st. Oct.

			Off.	OR.
Officers Killed	-	5		
" Wounded		9	-	15
" Sick		1		
Other Ranks. Killed		62		
" " Wounded		279		
" " Sick		73	-	
" " Missing		9		423
				-----
			Total	15
				423
				-----

*W. H. Hance*  
 Major,  
 42nd. Battalion - A.I.F.