

Historical Officers Report

Events of the Great War as reported in the Camden News
Cables from the European War. June 1917

7th June

Australian and Imperial cavalry reached a point within five miles of Beersheba, repulsing two Turkish cavalry brigades. General Chauvel's Engineers and Mounted Rifles destroyed 20 miles of railway south-east of Beersheba on May 23.

Correspondents at British headquarters in France report that a portentous quiet hovers over the west front, and that the Germans, in consequence, are visibly nervous.

The hospital ship Dover Castle was torpedoed in the Mediterranean without warning. Six of the crew are missing. The patients and staff were saved.

The American Secretary for State says that shortly before the declaration of war Germany endeavoured to involve the U.S.A. in a quarrel with Great Britain and France by a scheme for the deliberate violation of the foreign trading laws.

Reports from the Western front are meagre and uninteresting; Artillery fighting has taken place in some parts, but the infantry is having a quiet spoil.

Correspondents state that the British reached the third line of German trenches in a raid near Loos. Positions were stormed and occupied west of Cherisy.

7th June Captain Robert Cuthbert Grieves VC at Messines



7th June Messines Ridge mining operation (Hill 60) 1st Australian Tunnelling Company



10th June Private John Carroll VC at St. Ives, France



14th June

Sir Douglas Haig says. "Our operations southward of Ypres were continued, methodically all day long, and were completely successful. We stormed in the morning Messines and the Wytschaete Bridge, which for two and a half years has dominated our positions in the Ypres salient.

Mr Percival Phillips, a correspondent, says the casualties were light, considering the importance of the operations. The Australasian secured a triumph. "Apart from the Irish and Australasian," he adds "the battle was a triumph for the fleet of tanks engaged and the airmen and sappers."

Correspondents at British headquarters state that the Australians made a small local attack in Battle Wood on Friday morning rounding off Thursday's gains. The whole operation was unsuccessful that it was completed by 0.30 in the morning. The total prisoners now are at least 7000. More than 100 guns were knocked out. The Australian's and New Zealanders broke all records on Thursday, digging successive lines of trenches six feet deep.

During the morning attack the British success was so complete that even the heavy guns were able to move into the German lines in a few hours. The attack on Messines Ridge was worked out on an open Air model covering an area of four tennis courts, which included such minutiae as an isolated tree-stump.

Sir Douglas Haig says: The day was quiet on the battle front south of Ypres, save for mutual artillery fire. We slightly progressed on the right flank of our new positions. Over 7000 prisoners have been captured since Thursday morning, and a great number of guns, machine-guns, and trench mortars have been found buried in the debris."

The British retain possession of the whole of the ground captured since the battle commenced.

The British forces are reported to be using a new weapon called "oil cans" which throws boiling oil and a highly inflammable projectile. The Germans are said to have been terrorised by this new implement.

21st June

A carrier who was bringing up kerosene tins full of water met a group of Australians from the fighting line in a terrible state, suffering from wounds and sweat, but they only moistened their lips and passed the water on, knowing that the men in front needed it badly. That is a spirit common among our fighters says Mr. Philip Gibbs.

Mr. Philip Gibbs says that one of the signs of bewilderment of the enemy after the loss of Messines is that the German command appeared undecided where to make the next stand. Many groups of Germans in the neighbourhood of Warneton are in a hideous position, living an awful life in shell craters under our gunfire. Our advance on the west side of Bullecourt, says the correspondent, takes another piece off the Hindenburg line, of which little is now left. The Australians had some great adventures in the Messines battle. They took a big share in the fight, especially in the last phase, when they held a section of the new front.

Zeppelins over Kent carried out a raid over the east and south-east coast of England on Sunday morning. Some damage was done. Two people were killed and 16 injured. One Zeppelin was brought down in flames, after a thrilling fight.

28th June

In his latest report Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig reports:—"We have gained all the objectives of last night's operations north westward of Fontaine-la-Croiselles. Our losses were slight. We drove off two strong counterattacks. We extended our gains south-westward of Lena, and captured positions astride the Souchez River on a two-mile front for a depth of n thousand yards. We have occupied the village of La Coulotte. We carried out successful night operations north-westward of Fontaine-la-Croiselles, securing prisoners. We repulsed an enemy raid westward of La Bassee.'

Reports from Copenhagen show that two hundred and eleven bombs have been found in seven trunks at the Chrisiania railway station. Included in the collection were a great number of glass tubes containing acids of different strengths, which would cause the bombs to explode within from three to 150

hours. There were also found packets marked fountain pens, red-lead pencils stamped Johan Faber, and packets of tobacco labelled Scandinavian chewing tobacco. All of those were in reality different forms of bombs filled with high explosives. The smuggling of the bombs probably began in February. An extensive plot was suspected in May, but insufficient proofs were obtained until Saturday to enable arrests to be effected.

From the Home Front

The Werriwa recruiting train, which had been touring the electorate with the object of securing recruits, arrived at Camden on Wednesday, and the recruits in charge of Lieut. Littlejohn, marched to the Drill Hall, where they were supplied with refreshments by the Indies of Camden. At night the visitors were entertained at dinner.

Mrs. J. J. Chesham, of Mount Hunter, has received word from the military authorities that her son, Private Bartley Chesham, has been wounded in lighting in France. A later telegram says that Private Bartley was admitted to hospital on the 19th May, suffering from severe gun-shot wound in right leg.

Arthur John Legge, clerk of the New South Wales Government Savings Bank, was sentenced to five years penal servitude on Friday last on a charge of having stolen £14,000,



2nd Lieutenant Leslie Clarence Garling
Killed in Action, 7th June, Messines Ridge, Belgium.

Private Stanley Edras Williams
Wounded in Action 9 June, Prisoner of War, Died in German Hands
Bazeilles, France.

Lieutenant George Noakes Macaulay Goode
Died of Wounds 12th June, St. Omer, France

Ray Herbert
Historical Officer