

## **Historical Officers Report**

Events of the Great War as reported in the Camden News  
Cables from the European War. May 1918

### **2<sup>nd</sup> May**

The Australians recaptured Villers-Bretonneux, taking 600 prisoners. The attack commenced at 10 o'clock at night. It was a piece of skilful and daring generalship. Australians were sent out in the dark without artillery support. A couple of bodies of Australians encircled the village. Simultaneously the British fought through from the north. Then were the Germans entrapped. Heaps of German dead were left on the battlefield.

The Commonwealth Official Correspondent says, "After difficult and prolonged fighting the Australians retook Villers Bretonneux. No serious attempt has yet been made by the Germans to counter-attack.

Australians compare the massacre of Germans at Villers-Bretonneux with that of Polygon Wood. Sir Douglas Haig says he is fully aware of the gallant conduct and magnificent achievements of the Australians. He thanks them.

A naval raid was made on destroyer and submarine bases at Ostend and Zeebrugge on Tuesday. The forces employed consisted of auxiliary vessels and six obsolete cruisers. Five of the cruisers, filled with concrete, were used as block ships, and run aground. They were blown up and abandoned by their crews. Storming parties from the Vindictive landed at Zeebrugge Mole, This was done to distract the enemy from the main operations.

An enemy destroyer was torpedoed. The raiders lost a destroyer. Two motor boats and two launches are missing. It is believed that Bruges Canal has been effectively blocked. An obsolete submarine, filled with explosives, was blown up.

### **9<sup>th</sup> MAY**

Sir Douglas Haig reports active enemy artillery fire in the Villers-Bretonneux sector on Thursday morning. No infantry action has taken place.

The British have advanced south-west of Morlancourt (below Albert) on a considerable front. The Australians took part in the attack, and reached the lower slopes of the ridge in the neighbourhood of Vaux-sur-Somme an important tactical point. The enemy's losses were heavy. In these brilliant actions between the Ancre and Somme the Australians gained 1200 yards over-a front of more than a mile.

The Australians surprised the German garrison, took prisoners, and established themselves in the positions. On Monday morning they gained another 500 yards on a 2000 yards front, killing many Germans.

Mr. Philip Gibbs says that the Australians advanced the line 850 yards on a 2500 yards front. The Australians brought back several machine guns and a big trench mortar.

The British advanced troops, holding Es Salt (in Palestine) have withdrawn. Later the bulk of the troops withdrew across the Jordan. Strong detachments, however, are remaining on the eastern bank, securing the crossings. The British forces in Mesopotamia are within 120 miles of Mosul.

### **16<sup>th</sup> May**

The Australians pushed on 300 yards on a 600 yards front west of Morlancourt. They also advanced 500 yards on a 600 yards front near Saily-le-Sec, and 500 yards on an 1100 yards front north of the Somme. The enemy put up a tremendous machine-gun and shrapnel barrages, but the Australians held on.

British troops operating in Mesopotamia have entered Kirkuk without meeting any opposition.

19<sup>th</sup> May Sgt William Ruthven VC at Ville-Sur-Ancre



### **23<sup>rd</sup> May**

Only minor fighting is reported in the official communiqués from the Western Front. A prominent German politician admits that German offensive was a failure, too many lives having been lost. Following the heavy rain the Somme battlefields are again a quagmire.

A German plot has been discovered in Ireland. All loyalists are appealed to aid in the suppression of the conspiracy. The Sinn Fein executive has been arrested.

There is evidence that the Germans have completed arrangements for another great offensive. Forces of picked troops have been massed, and the blow may fall at any hour. It is reported likely that there will be a general rush over the greater part of the front.

### **30<sup>th</sup> MAY**

Paris newspapers warmly praise the Australians' splendid work in capturing Ville-sur-Ancre.

Mr. Philip Gibbs says there is heavy enemy shelling in the region of Ypres, Kemmel, and Poperinghe. The front between Albert and Villers-Bretonneux is also being shelled.

The Montdidier attack was a slight one, and was easily stopped. The thrust between Noyen and Reims, however, was heavier. Here the British were thrust back; and are now holding a second prepared line. The French in this vicinity are holding their line.

### **From The Home Front**

Matron McAnene, Matron of the Camden District Hospital who left Australia in July 1915, on active military duties, recently returned on account of ill health. On April 13<sup>th</sup> Matron McAnene paid a visit to the Camden Hospital where she was met by several of the members of the Board, she expressed great pleasure at all the structural improvements and additional equipment supplied to the hospital during her absence.

The Khedive of Egypt has conferred upon Lt. Col. Q. M. Macarthur Onslow, D.S.O., V.D., the Order of the Nile.

### **WELCOME TO RETURNED SOLDIERS.**

A welcome home and social was tendered to a number of local returned Soldiers' last Thursday night, when the Foresters' Hall was over crowded with the numbers that assembled to do honour to whom honour is due.

While the meeting was welcoming home Messrs. James Smith, Bartley Chesham, Edgar Henry Kirk Downes, George Longley, B. Coleman, John Wasson, Lewis Dunbar, Les Franklin and Arthur Holdsworth, the occasion was also one to bid farewell to Messrs. Cecil Clifton and J. Costello, two more of our boys who are leaving to fight the cause of the Empire.

### **SOLDIERS' THANKS.**

The Hon. Secretary of the Camden Red Cross Society is in receipt of a further batch of letters from Camden district Soldiers acknowledging receipt of Christmas parcels.

William Charles NETHERY,  
James Mervyn Stanley WASSON  
Clem GOODMAN of Elderslie  
Arthur HOLDSWORTH  
Walter HOLDSWORTH  
George BOUSTEAD  
Frank BROWN  
Charles WHELLER  
Frederick James Rideout SMALL  
Albert Victor WINDRED

I have met a lot of the Camden boys, I met Peter Hynes down at the hospital whilst I was in, and he told me that he had a touch or shell sock; he also

mentioned a lot of the boys that had been wounded, so they have all had a taste of old Fritz. Ray Devitt was also wounded.

KEITH RAE

I was very pleased to meet up with the boys from the Camden district, Gilly Chesham, Charlie Wheeler, Harold Fallon, Mervyn Wasson, and several others.



Private Henry Darlington  
Killed in Action 7<sup>th</sup> May 1918, France

Thomas Joseph Magner Maxwell  
Killed in Air raid 7<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Jerusalem, Palestine

Private James Bee  
Killed in Action 11<sup>th</sup> May 1918, France

Lance Corporal Hilton John Chesham



Killed in Action, 14<sup>th</sup> May 1918, Corbie, France

Ray Herbert  
Historical Officer