

Historical Officers Report

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

1st November

A French communiqué states —There was a general advance this morning beyond the positions reached yesterday evening, bordering the Oise Aisne Canal. The village and forest of Pinon, also the village of Pargny-Filain are in our hands. South of Filain, which our patrols penetrated we occupy the farms of St Martin's and Chapelle St Bortho.

The enemy, under our pressure, was compelled to abandon much material, including 20 guns, among which were several six inch mortars. Altogether 120 guns have been captured since October 23, and we have counted, in addition, several hundred mine throwers and machine guns. We took over 2000 prisoners during the day, while over 11,000 prisoners, including 200 officers, have been taken since the beginning of the operations.

The first communiqué issued by American headquarters in France says; some of our battalions, in continuation of their training, and with a view to the training of future contingents, have occupied first line trenches on the French part. We are being supported by seasoned French soldiers and French and American artillery. The first detachment of Americans went over the parapet into No Man's Land, penetrated craters and barbed wire entanglements and returned unscathed.

7th November 1917 Australian Light Horse in Third Battle of Gaza



8th November 1917

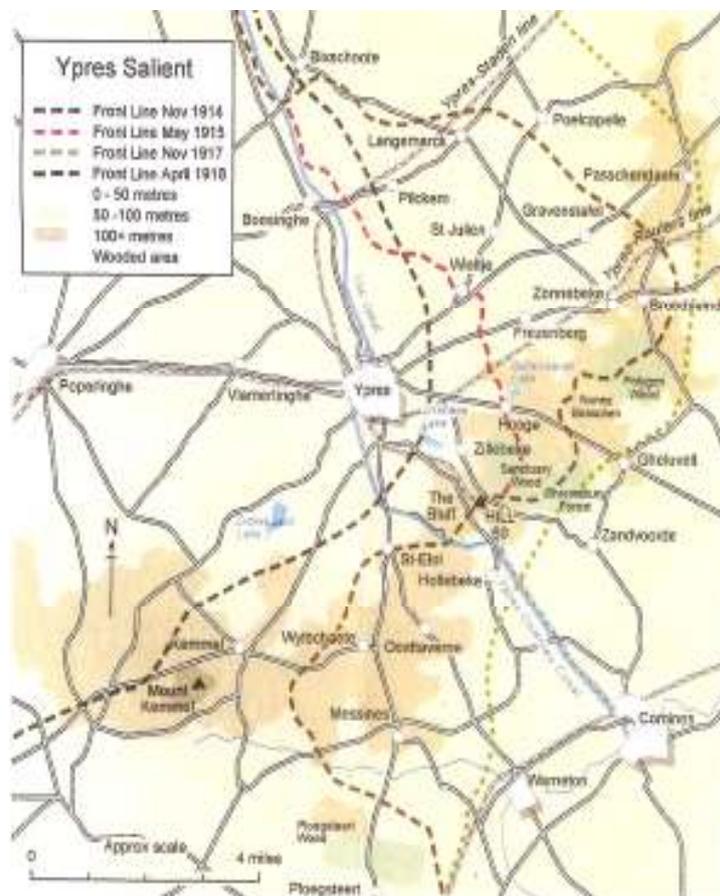
Beersheba, on the main railway to Jerusalem, was occupied by Anglo Australian troops on Thursday night. 1800 prisoners and 90 guns were captured in Beersheba. The British losses were slight compared with the results achieved.

Owing to the fear of air raids the valuable stained glass in the Cologne Cathedral has been replaced with ordinary glass.

HMAS Melbourne attack enemy flotilla



14th November 1917 End of Third battle of Ypres, Western Front



14th November 1917

ANZAC Mounted Division pursued Turks towards Jaffa



15th November

The British advance in Palestine continues, and latest advices show that Gaza has been captured. General Allenby captured Khuweilfes, eleven miles north of Beersheba at midnight on Monday. Mounted troops in Egypt captured another 400 men and 10 guns. The British have occupied Askalon. The captured guns, number over 70 of which several are 5.9's the enemy's casualty's number 10,000 exclusive of prisoners.

22nd November

A dispatch from Palestine reported that the line Ramichludd has been reached to three miles south of Jaffa. Over 9000 prisoners have been taken since Oct 31. General Allenby, Commander-in-Chief in Palestine, reports that the infantry and mounted troops continue to advance, and that the railway' have been taken. An official despatch from Palestine states that the Australian and New Zealand mounted troops occupied Jaffa without opposition on Saturday. The occupation of Jaffa crowns a week of wonderful success in Palestine and Egypt.

29th November

The United Press Agency's correspondent writes that in the morning the batteries were let Loose over more than 30 miles of No Man's Land. Then the Gargantuan monsters of steel crawled forward through a smoke barrage, trampling line after line of entanglements, whose wires were the size of a finger. The battle was the strangest in the world's history, and there has been nothing like it in this or any other war.

Only the wooden horse of Troy offers a comparison in tactical originality. Everything was absolutely normal until the flick-off. Then hell was turned loose, and guns bellowed. The tanks crawled forward, and the Tommies followed. The Germans crawled out of their dug-outs, dazed and terror-stricken. British casualties were few. General Allenby reports that Territorial infantry carried Kuryet-el-Enab, six miles from Jerusalem, on Monday, at the bayonet's point.

Seven hundred and ninety-eight Germans have been killed or captured in the East African campaign since November.

Field-Marshal Sir Douglas Haig reports severe fighting on Sunday westward of Cambrai. The enemy strongly attacked near Bourslon, pressing back the British from portions in the village. The British positions in Bourslon Wood and on the high ground however are intact.

From the Home Front

During the recent encampment of the 7th and 9th Light horse Militia Regiments in Menangle Park Camp, Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant W Hawkey was decorated with the long service medal Major McMahon performed the ceremony at a Sunday morning general parade.

R.Q.M. Hawkey joined the Camden Half Squadron of Light Horse over 20 Years ago when they were known as the Mounted Rifles. There were a large number of visitors at Menangle Park Camp on Sunday last to say farewell to a batch of Light Horse reinforcements for the 1st, 6th, 7th and 12th Regiments over 300 men in all, who entrained that afternoon for Melbourne. Tho men were heartily cheered as the train moved away, whilst the massed bands played "Auld Lang Syne."

Frederick John Betcke, who had pleaded guilty of unlawfully wearing a uniform of the Defence Force, was sentenced by Mr. Payten, S.M., to two months imprisonment with hard labour. Betcke, who had worn the uniform of a general had for six years masqueraded as an officer of high rank.

The following are extracts from letters written by Sapper Bob Sidman, received last week, the latest letter is dated October 6th. September 15th, Once again I am living as a semi-rabbit, my residence for the time being is cosy and comfortable, but all safe from shell fire, a foot of earth is dugout and sides and back sand-bagged, the overhead cover is an ordinary tarpaulin still I am perfectly content and very well. A few days ago, on account of being short handed, I had another man's job detailed to do as well as my own, of course in a time like this extra work is to a certain extent a pleasure, I am now Section Clerk as well, that is I have to attend to the needs of every man in our Section; with this extra work I find it impossible to go and see my mates.

September 22nd. Parcel just to hand, I was so much in need of a pipe and tobacco (Australian), at present am going like a steam engine. A few nights ago it rained (as it can rain here) and we had to turn out at 2 a.m., battle order, such a miserable hour to get about in the rain.

September 28th. Another mail just in, so now I have fifteen letters to answer, so I'll soon need a private secretary. There is nothing to wake a chap up as quickly as a bomb, the earth fairly heaved last night when one fell somewhere quite near. Of course we can sleep anywhere now, artillery fire, which is worse than thunder, makes no difference, but the bombs are beastly. One night last week I slept in a trench, no covering at all and jolly cold—that was after the big battle in which we were engaged in.

October 2nd. Thanks for the socks just received. Thanks for the socks I so often receive, have quite a good supply, but I cannot account for it, I often get odd ones. Please keep sending them, for there are lots that have no one to send them in my Section.



Private Alfred Barrett

Wounded in Action, 2nd August 1917

Killed in Action, 10th November 1917

Private Frank Ross

Killed in Action, 29th November 1917, Polygon Woods, Belgium



Ray Herbert
Historical Officer

NOTE

To reduce the cost of mailing out from the 1st January 2018 the Historical Officers report will be uploaded to the Camden RSL Sub Branch website, limited copies will be available at the meetings.

Our Website
www.camdenrslsubbranch.com.au

Ray