

As soon as it became known who he was, every machine in the air claimed to have shot him down. The scrap with our buses was at 7,000 feet and one of our scouts claimed to have had further war with him on the way down. Then the 5th. Australian Machine Gunners claimed to have shot him down. However H.Q. have not yet decided who actually shot him down, but both our squadron and the M.C. are well in the hunt. This is the absolute dinkum oil and it cancels all previous yarns or articles you have read. The remains of his machine were salvaged, and it was rather a difficult job as Fritz shelled it very heavily.

Richthofen's body was brought in here after a post mortem and identification. Our squadron buried him with full military honors; they were all Aussies who took part and six of our officers, self included, acted as pall bearers. Guess it seems queer to you that we should scrap him one day and bury him with honors the next. Although our worst enemy, he had eighty machines to his credit. He was a brave man, a clever pilot and a clean fighter. He played the game and came the proverbial thud which we must all do if we keep up the game long enough. So we gave him his due, a decent burial and more respect than any other Fritz to date."

On the 24th. April at 3.50 a.m. a violent bombardment of H.E. and gas was opened on us by the enemy in conjunction with an attack launched by him, some hours later south of the Somme and at Villers Brettoneux. Batteries, roads and back areas received particular attention and in headquarters alone, numerous casualties were caused, including Lts. Smith, Bates and Cook, Capt. Chaplain Marshhead and twenty three other ranks.

Fritz succeeded in driving the English Infantry Brigade out of Villers Brettoneux with the aid of his tanks, this was the first occasion that Fritz had used this new implement of war, and perhaps the only time that there has been a pitched battle between tanks. It is on record that one of Fritz tanks was killed by one of our Male tanks.

At night fall the retaking of the village was entrusted to 13th. and 15th. Brigades of the 4th. Australian Div. and 5th. Australian Div. respectively. They approached silently up the valleys on either side of "Bret", their objective was Monument Wood to the south east of the town. This "peaceful penetration" was truly wonderful and was entirely successful, they not only recaptured Villers Brettoneux, but took over 800 prisoners and 200 machine guns. All this was executed without the aid of the artillery, as not one shot was fired in support.

The same day, Lt.Col. James C.O. was evacuated, gassed, and Lt.Col. Allsop assumed temporary command of the 7th. and 8th. brigades.

On the 26th. April after a very enacting month, the brigade was in reserve, and on the 5th. May, Lt.Col. James returned to the brigade, taking over from Major Irwin who had been temporarily in command.

On the 9th. May, the guns were moved about four miles north to the Bresle position covering the 2nd. Australian Div. We stayed there till the 13th. May. During the month of May, the brigade took only a minor part in active operations. From 16th. May to 31st, the batteries occupied billets in Cocquereil, near Abbeville, and intensive open warfare training was undergone, while on 21st. May, the command of the brigade passed to Lt.Col. G.M.H. King C.M.O D.S.O., Lt.Col. James proceeding to England to take charge of the R.B.A.A. Heytesbury.

On 31st. May the brigade marched out of Cocquereil to enter the Villers Brettoneux sector. The march from Cocquereil to Glisty was completed on the 1st. June and the following day relieved the 10th. A.F.A.B. behind Villers Brettoneux. On the brigades immediate right was the 37th. French Div. Artillery, this being the first occasion on which the brigade had been in close proximity to the French. A very cordial relationship was soon formed between the two brigades. A splendid opportunity was also afforded the brigade of seeing French Artillerymen, especially their famous 75 m.m. guns at work, and of studying their methods.

A vigorous policy of harassing the enemy during these vitally important days was maintained. One sniping gun of the 26th. Battery in a forward position, did noteworthy work in engaging movement behind the enemy's lines. Each battery expended a daily allotment of 300 rounds on its own zone, irrespective of the number used for special tasks. Counter preparation was subdued on several occasions and at times when enemy attacks seemed perilously imminent. In addition, special bombardments and barrages were carried out in support of infantry minor operations and raids, the most important probably being the attack of the 2nd. Aust. Division between Morlancourt and Sully-Le-Sec on the 10th. June. Every night the 107th. Howitzer battery engaged special gas targets in conjunction with other Howitzer batteries of the artillery.