

The attitude of the enemy remained quiet on the whole, excepting the morning of 9th. June when he "put over" a heavy bombardment of gas and H.E. upon the divisional front. This bombardment from the enemy was in support of his attack upon the French between Noyon and Montdidier. However, in spite of the tremendously heavy concentration of gas the brigade was subjected to, no casualties, luckily, were reported.

During this period, defensive measures were pushed ahead in preparation of a German attack against Amiens. Deep gas-proof dug-outs were constructed at battery positions into which a detachment could be withdrawn during a preliminary bombardment. Rear battery positions were selected and reconnoitred to cover the Aubigny and Blangy-Tronville lines of defence, while "notes on withdrawal" were issued by the brigade, laying down the procedure to be followed by batteries in case the front line system was driven in.

An epidemic of Spanish Influenza, fortunately however, in a mild form, possessed the Brigade, and although there were numerous cases of sickness, the evacuations were few.

On 4th. July a noteworthy operation took place. The 4th, 11th & 15th. Australian Infantry Brigades attacked on a front of approximately 7,000 yards between the Somme and Villers Bretonneux, and captured the enemy positions to an average depth of 3,500 yards, taking Hamel, Vaire and Hamel Woods. Tanks and aeroplanes successfully co-operated, whilst a few companies of American Infantry also took part.

On the same day, the 7th. A.I. Brigade under a barrage put down by the 3rd. Australian Div. Artillery, advanced their lines slightly astride the main St. Quentin-Amiens Road to conform with the general line and the following week by silent operations and daylight patrol work drove the enemy out of his entire forward system including Monument Wood. The brigades guns afforded effective support during these minor operations by increased harassing fire, and by engaging all enemy movement and opportunity targets. On the 16th. July, the Fouilly position was taken over from the 4th. Australian Division.

The Howitzer batteries continued to fire gas on all occasions when the weather was favorable.

August was a particularly strenuous one with the A.I.F. and the brigade was kept very busy. The first part of the month from 1st. to 7th. was a period of preparation. The policy of directing continued harassing fire upon the enemy was maintained. The utmost secrecy was observed. Ammunition was carted by night and carefully hidden at the forward positions near Hamel. The task was a particularly hazardous one, as these positions could be easily seen by the enemy in daylight.

Everything was brought to concert pitch for the attack on the 8th. August, and the enemy was quite oblivious of the impending operations. The order of the day issued by Lt. Gen. Sir John Monash, the Aussie Commander, ran as follows:-

Australian Corps.

Corps Headquarters,  
7th. August, 1918.

"To the soldiers of the Australian Army Corps."

For the first time in the history of this corps all five Australian Divisions will tomorrow engage in the largest and most important battle operation ever undertaken by the Corps.

They will be supported by exceptionally powerful Artillery, and by Tanks and Aeroplanes on a scale never previously attempted. The full resources of our Sister Dominion, The Canadian Corps, will also operate on our right, while two British Divisions will guard our left flank.

The many successful offensives which the Brigades and Battalions of this Corps have so brilliantly executed during the past four months have been but the prelude to, and the preparation for, this greatest and culminating effort.

Because of the completeness of our plans and dispositions, of the magnitude of the operations, of the number of troops employed, and of the depth to which we intend to overrun the enemy's positions, this battle will be one of the most memorable of the whole war; and there can be no doubt that, by capturing our objectives, we shall inflict blows upon the enemy which will make him stagger, and will bring the end appreciably nearer.

I entertain no sort of doubt that every Australian soldier will worthily rise to so great an occasion, and that every man, imbued with the spirit of victory, will, in spite of every difficulty that may confront him, be animated by no other resolve than a grim determination to see through, to a clean finish, whatever his task may be.