

On the 21st. still another move this time to the hill on the west of Bazuel, this position was perhaps the closest that the brigade had ever taken up, the front line being less than 1,000 yards away, immediately in front of the battery, Tommy machine gunners had their out post built and fully manned.

Hostile fire was exceptionally severe in this area, every cross road for miles back was continually under fire. The battery positions were receiving more than their share on the morning of the 23rd. about 5.a.m. Fritz evidently anticipating a barrage by us, opened with all his artillery as a "counter." It was fortunate that our barrage was timed for the following morning.

Things were worked to a nicety at 11.p.m. on the 23rd. All the machine guns and trench mortars in the area opened up with a bombardment on the enemy's territory, it was surmised this was to deaden the sound of our tanks coming up. They were to hop off with the infantry. Fritz in retaliation for this move, put down another strafe equally severe as the morning one, he opened up soon after our machine gunners did, and continued till 1.40.a.m. At this time the batteries were warned to be ready to open the barrage at 2.a.m.

Fritz had just got back in blanket bay when our barrage fell, the retaliation was very weak. This early barrage only lasted one and half hours to enable the Tommy infantry to advance to a depth of 1,500 yards. As this objective was reached, they dug in and waited for the barrage to continue at 5.30.a.m. but during this wait, a few of our guns were firing a protective barrage.

By 7.30.a.m. the German guns were out of range, but the number remaining in our possession was considerable.

The 27th. battery were unfortunate in having four men killed and four wounded by a shell that landed alongside a bivvy at the waggon lines at St. Benin.

The brigade was withdrawn to Montbrechain on the 26th. but was back to the line again on the 1st. November.

On the 3rd. a position was manned just to the south of Mazenheim, and the barrage fired at 4.a.m.

The work of October comprised many attacks on the Hindenburg line in the vicinity of the St. Quentin Canal Tunnel. The enemy put up a very obstinate defence for this highly important position, but his resistance was finally overcome on 5th. October, and a general advance was made into fresh country beyond, with good roads and still inhabited villages. Conditions somewhat improved in this country, though on account of the scarcity of water, the horses suffered.

The advance continued till the 24th. October, when upon the enemy stiffening his defence in the vicinity of the Sambre et Oise Canal, conditions became settled again.

Although the remainder of the division came out of the line early in the month and went back to near Abbeville, the Australian Artillery Brigades continued to take part in the operations, being attached to various British and American Divisions.

Influenza again broke out, and resulted in many evacuations from the brigade.. It must be stated that notwithstanding the continuous and vigorous fighting day after day, the morale of the brigade was never better, and the men displayed the same cheerful sportive spirit that always characterised them - win or lose, rain or shine.

In October it was generally felt that the foe was weakening and the end was in sight, and though "The Heads" endeavoured to prevent "Peace Talk" among the troops, they did not succeed. The men were buoyed with great and exhilarating hopes of an early termination to the long night of horror and suffering.

It might not be out of place to give a fourth army order received during October and read to the batteries on parade.

"Since the Australian Corps joined the 4th. Army on the 8th. April 1918, they have passed through a period of hard and uniformly successful fighting of which all ranks have every right to be proud.

"Now that it has been possible to give the Australian Corps a well earned period of rest, I wish to express to them, my gratitude for all they have done. I have watched with the greatest interest and admiration, the various stages through which they have passed from the hard times of Flanders and Pozieres to their culminating victories at Mont St. Quentin and the great Hindenburg system at Soisy, Bellicourt Tunnel and Montbrechain.

"During the summer of 1918 the safety of Amiens has been principally due to their determination, tenacity and valour.

The story of what they have accomplished as a fighting Army Corps, of the diligence, gallantry and skill which they have exhibited, and of the scientific methods which they have so thoroughly and so successfully applied has gained for all Australians a place of honour among Nations, and amongst the English speaking races in particular.