

ONCE MORE INTO THE BREACH

After returning from the rest tour, the respective batteries took up positions in the neighbourhood of Steenwerk. It was early in May, and the raspberry, strawberry and gooseberry bushes adjacent to the deserted farms in rear of our trenches, showed signs of an abundance of fruit later in the season. Being ahead of time, however, we made the best of rhubarb as an adjunct to our rations.

Anniversary of Leaving Sydney. On May 11th, we saw the Harbour scene on the day of our departure, over again. The ribbons, the ferry boats and The Heads were as vividly before us as though we saw them in reality instead of in imagination. Circumstances necessitated the indefinite postponement of celebrations of the 1st Anniversary of our service abroad.

The Wagon Lines were located within reasonable walking distance of Bac-sur-Mer, near which is a canal. The latter was taken over for many miles of its course, by Australians for swimming purposes. The overarm stroke excited general wonder and admiration among local inhabitants. "Australian plenty swim" they said.

Dinkum Avenue. Printed in large characters on a gate in Dinkum Avenue, where our wagon lines were situated, is the familiar sign, "14,000 miles to Griffiths Bros. for Tea, Coffee and Cocoa". Where was it we saw something similar before? On the North Shore Line? From the Melbourne Express? Or was it up Newcastle way?

The Big Stunt. A couple of weeks elapse and the guns of the whole Brigade point ominously at the enemy from the vicinity of

Something big is doing. Ammunition comes forward in unlimited supplies, and facilities for transport are being perfected. The roar of gunfire daily increases in intensity; tanks and heavy artillery continue to arrive. The enemy retaliates with his artillery, and from time to time tremendous explosions indicate that he has located one of our ammunition dumps. In spite of our suffering from enemy field guns, heavies, shrapnel and gas, it is obvious that Fritz is subjected to a bombardment infinitely more terrible. One night in particular will ever live in the memory of those engaged in this great attack. For 9 hours on this night we wore gasmasks with salivary accumulating within and the band pressing almost unbearably on the forehead. The gas on this night (3rd June) constituted an experience which tried the patience and nerves more than any other which has yet fallen to our lot.

Still we were ready for the Boche. Throughout the few days prior to the advance each man was confident and expectant. In the early hours of June 7th, tremendous explosions intimated that the mines had gone up, and the Infantry went over the top protected by a barrage which they afterwards described as a wall of steel. In fact, they said they could lean up against it. In a much shorter space of time than had been allowed the important ridge where once stood the towns of Messines and Wytshaeete was in our hands, and our Infantry continued to advance taking objective after objective, until the whole plan of operation had been successfully executed.

Great was the victory, but it had demanded of us tremendous sacrifices in the loss of comrades who willingly laid down their lives for the beloved homeland, and in the great cause for the world's emancipation. That they have not died in vain, we are resolved. Great though our loss may be, it is for the bereaved at home that the intensity of our feeling, and our unspoken sympathy go.

We came out of the line on 26-6-17, and learned that a general parade of the Division had been ordered for the following day for the purpose of inspection by Major General Monash.

Major General Monash congratulated our Divisional Artillery on the wonderfully creditable turnout that afternoon, taking into consideration the little time for preparation and the strenuous times just past. He commended them for the efficient manner in which they had played their part in the important Messines attack. In this operation the standard of Officers and men was shown to be of the highest. The Trench Mortars, he said, had destroyed barbed wire through which the Infantry could not otherwise have passed; the 16 pdms had put up a barrage which was a veritable fence of steel. The howitzers had wrought havoc on enemy defences of the second line.

The work of the Artillery as an arm of the service came less in the lime light than that of the Infantry. The Division was proud of its Artillery, and the Division itself was of the highest standard. In the words of an eminent Artillery Commander in this country, "The highest compliment that can be paid any Artillery, is the praise of its

own Infantry". The Divisional Artillery had earned that praise. Those who prided themselves on such matters, could value the fact that they had taken part in the Messines advance, which from an Artillery standpoint, was the greatest battle in history.

Exit King Tino. Reported in the press that King Tino of Greece abdicated the throne under pressure from the Allies. The termination of such a career of treachery and twisting is excellent reading.

Brigade Sports were held on 28th June. Though the ground was somewhat slippery, the weather was fine, the band played, and except for the absence of civilians, the scene was similar to one on the Sydney Cricket ground on Saturday afternoon.

Russian Revolution The welcome news reaches us that the Russians are again attacking on the Eastern front. These reports, sparse and indefinite, are intermingled with hints of political unrest and mutiny in certain Russian Regiments. The new democracy is confronted with enormous problems, but we do not think that the lovers of freedom, who gave their country self-government, will quit in a struggle for the world's emancipation.

Death of General Holmes General Holmes met his death while escorting Hon. W. A. Holman, Premier of N.S.W. on a tour of inspection in our part of the line.

The King. On 4th July we lined the roadway adjacent to the Wagon Lines and saw the King go by at a range of 39.37 inches. He was followed by the Prince of Wales looking fresh and alert. Conspicuous in the Royal Party, arrayed in top hat and frock coat, was Hon. W. A. Holman who, we understand, came to Europe for the purpose of interviewing Uncle Ike. Nothing doing in Blighty, we surmise, so the Hon. Bill proposes passing round the hat among the troops in France. The old war-worn phrase "Australian beaucoup money" has evidently been wafted to his ears. We waited in vain to see his top hat and claw hammer coat in the trenches.

Shell Hole Country. After a few days the Brigade again went into action, this time in a position which was formerly enemy trenches. The landscape here is a perfect network of shell holes. Approaching the former battle field, we notice ahead a stretch of devastated country of shell holes, mine craters, smashed dugouts, and annihilated woods. In the foreground is a strip of green grass, daisies, poppies and other wild flowers - the former site of No Man's Land. The scene behind is a contrast. Flourishing woods, verdant pastures, and red-roofed farm buildings enable us to comprehend what this country was like before the invasion by the Boche. Relics of the battlefield lie everywhere, among which are enemy rifles and ammunition which are useful for miniature rifle ranges in leisure moments. Little wooden crosses denote the last resting place of those who "died that the nation might live".

Fritz dugouts are constructed of reinforced concrete about 4ft in thickness, and even they may sometimes be seen hurled out of position by the heavy shells from our guns. Heaps of brick, and an occasional cabbage or turnip are all that remain of a former farm. In this locality we are enabled for the first time to note the results of our own fire. The enormity of the shell holes made by our heavy shells, the vast number of 18 pdr casings, the complete destruction of enemy trenches and strong points, show beyond doubt the truth of a German officer's words "To know what a bombardment is really like, it is necessary to be on our side of the line".

Divisional Horse Show. This took place on 22nd July. In the list of prize winners our Brigade was well represented. Riding along a road between Wagon Lines and the Battery, we noticed a smiling face surmounting the hill ahead. "Well done!" was the response to our salute. It was the C.O., Col. Macartney.

BRIGADE HORSE SHOW

| | |
|---------------------------|--|
| Best Battery Turnout..... | 26th, 1; 107th, 2. |
| Sub-section Turnout..... | 26th, 1; 25th, 2. |
| Riding Hack..... | B.S.B. Peyton (25th) 1; Sgt. Buckle (HQ) 2. |
| Comic Turnout..... | Gnrs. Ross and Bulfin (26th) 1. Sgts. Quirk, Williams and Chapple and Dvr. Ford (27th) 2. |

DIVISIONAL HORSE SHOW - Brigade Places.

| | |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Best Sub-section Turnout.... | 107th Bty. 1; 25th, 2; 26th, 3. |
| Best Section Turnout..... | 26th, 1; 107th, 2. |
| Comic Turnout..... | 26th, 1 (Fritz Gun Crew). |