

**THE OFFICIAL HISTORY OF
AUSTRALIA IN THE WAR
OF 1914-1918
VOLUME VI
THE A.I.F. IN FRANCE:
MAY 1918—THE ARMISTICE**



THE
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE
IN FRANCE

DURING THE ALLIED OFFENSIVE, 1918

BY
C. E. W. BEAN

With 530 illustrations and maps

AUSTRALIA
ANGUS AND ROBERTSON LTD.

89 CASTLEREAGH STREET, SYDNEY

1942

Printed and Bound in Australia by
Halstead Press Pty Limited,
9-19 Nickson Street, Sydney

Registered at the General Post Office, Sydney, for
transmission through the post as a book

Obtainable in Great Britain at Australia House and from all booksellers (sole agent for wholesale distribution—The Official Secretary for the Commonwealth of Australia, Australia House, Strand, London, W.C. 2), in Canada from the Australian Trade Commissioner, 15 King Street West, Toronto, in the United States from the Australian Government Trade Commissioner, International Building, 630 Fifth Avenue, New York; and in New Zealand from the Australian Trade Commissioner, D I C. Building,
Wellington.

PREFACE

THE publication of this volume brings to an end the production of the *Australian Official History of the War 1914-18* nearly twenty-three years after the writing of it was begun at Tuggranong Homestead, near Canberra. The time taken has been due mainly to the detailed character of the narrative, but also partly to the fact that, even with regard to the main course of the campaigns described, the work has been largely pioneering. Not only the events of Gallipoli, Palestine, and New Guinea, but those of 1916 (First Somme) and 1917 (German Withdrawal, Bullecourt, Messines and Third Ypres) had to be grappled with before the British official history of them was available, although Sir James Edmonds and his staff constantly gave generous and invaluable help. For the earlier part of 1918 the British History was published before the Australian, and was of utmost assistance; but the present volume again traverses ground which is largely virgin, at least for official history. Again Sir James Edmonds, still steadily proceeding with his great work in wartime England, has largely helped with advice and by making some of his chapters available as they were finished.

This volume deals with those months in which the First World War turned against the German Army on the Western Front, and shows in detail how, in the crucial Amiens sector, that change was brought about: the first chapter shows by what kind of men, and the rest of the book by what kind of methods (actually by a most aggressive defence leading up to attack). It had been intended to add, in appendices, short notes upon certain interesting aspects of army legal administration; on the remarkable work of headquarters of the Australian Mining Corps (the A.E. and M.M. and B. Coy., perhaps better known as the "alphabetical company") in all armies of the B.E.F.; and on the Australian railway operating companies.

It had also been intended to devote this preface largely to

corrections or additions, particularly one relating to the origin of Quinn's Post in Gallipoli—as to which a long-realised gap in the records has been covered by an interesting statement from Sergt. H. E. Pugsley¹ of the 11th Battalion, who was first sent to that indentation by Maj. Drake Brockman on the morning of the Anzac Landing, and appears to have held his troops and the New Zealanders there, despite orders from a superior to retire.

But the completion of the story of the final offensive in 1918 finds a second world war in its third year; and both the length of this volume and the necessity to avoid further delay in its publication have made the inclusion of these additions impossible. Fortunately, however, an opportunity of dealing with these matters is afforded by the intention of the Australian War Memorial Board to issue shortly, as a separate publication, a general index of the twelve volumes of the present history. The appendices and corrections will be included in that publication.

In closing his work the Editor must again acknowledge the indebtedness of himself and his colleagues in authorship—first, to Sir G. F. Pearce, Mr. Andrew Fisher, Mr. W. M. Hughes, and successive Prime Ministers, Governments, and Ministers and Secretaries for Defence, whose patience alone has enabled the task to be carried through with thoroughness; next to Generals White, Bridges, Birdwood, Monash, Chauvel and Hamilton, whose support made it possible for most of the military narrative to be based on first hand observation and evidence; third to old comrades of the First A.I.F. of every rank for their unflinching readiness to help both during the First World War and since; to the British Official Historian, Sir James Edmonds, and his staff; to authorities in charge of the military records of Great Britain, France, Germany, Turkey, New Zealand, Canada and (in the case of the present volume) the United States; to Colonel A. Graham Butler, who is sacrificing not only his livelihood but his health in order to provide his countrymen with a history of their Army Medical Service of which the second volume is a widely prized text-book in the present war, and is largely drawn on in these pages; to the publishers and printers, Government and other, of both State

¹ Regtl Sgt.-Maj. H. E. Pugsley (No. 222; 11th and 51st Bns.). Timber worker, of Ferguson, W.A., b. Taunton, Somerset, Eng., 10 May 1883.

and Commonwealth, and their staffs, who have constantly given this work an attention going far beyond any contractual obligations; to the Director and staff of the Australian War Memorial who have made this undertaking a part of their own—the work of Mr. E. L. Keage in classifying the immense files of war documents has not previously been acknowledged in these pages; to newspapers and the R.S.S.I.L.A., which have regularly helped the search for information; to many others, but foremost, to Mr. J. Balfour, responsible for checking and indexing the work, Mr. A. W. Bazley in charge of the historian's records and correspondence (and, since his call in 1939 to another task, Miss Ida McAulay),² and Mr. W. S. Perry, successor to Mr. P. R. Wightman in the production of the maps and sketches—who together have formed the backbone of the small staff that has carried through this long task with devotion and thoroughness.

C. E. W. B.

*Victoria Barracks,
Sydney,
21st May, 1942.*

²Mr. Bazley, now on the staff of the Australian War Memorial has extended his help by dealing with records of technical services.

CONTENTS

I.	THE "DIGGERS," 1918	1
II.	"PEACEFUL PENETRATION" BEGINS	32
III.	THE AUSTRALIANS AT MORLANCOURT HIT BACK	61
IV.	VILLE-SUR-ANCRE	109
V.	FOCH HOLDS THE SCALES	148
VI.	MONASH SUCCEEDS BIRDWOOD	184
VII.	THE THIRD STROKE AT MORLANCOURT	216
VIII.	THE HAMEL PLAN—TANKS, AND THE AMERICANS	242
IX.	THE BATTLE OF HAMEL	280
X.	"PEACEFUL PENETRATION"—ITS CLIMAX ON THE SOMME	336
XI.	"PEACEFUL PENETRATION"—ITS CLIMAX AT HAZE- BROUCK	382
XII.	THE TURNING POINT	441
XIII.	THE ORIGIN OF "AUGUST 8TH"	463
XIV.	"DER SCHWARZE TAG"	526
XV.	LIHONS	617
XVI.	CHIPILLY, PROYART AND ETINEHEM	685
XVII.	HAIG'S SECOND STROKE (AUGUST 21ST-25TH)	713
XVIII.	MONT ST. QUENTIN	772
XIX.	THE HINDENBURG OUTPOST-LINE	873
XX.	THE HINDENBURG LINE	941
XXI.	THE WAR ENDS	1045
XXII.	THE OLD FORCE PASSES	1074
	APPENDIX—RECRUITMENT AND CASUALTIES	1098
	INDEX	xvii

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

In the loft at the Brewery Farm, Querrieu ..	8
Brewery Farm, Querrieu	9
Vaure and Hamel Woods from the Australian front line .	56
Villers-Bretonneux	57
Fields east of Vieux Berquin road, 21st May, 1918 .. .	57
Sergeant Bruggy's raid, 22nd May, 1918 (air photograph showing his track)	57
A fold in the Somme valley side	96
In the Ville marshes	97
The post north of Ville captured on 19th May, 1918 . . .	128
The Ancre	128
The "Big Caterpillar"	129
Lieut.-General Sir John Monash	200
The country around Morlancourt	201
American Infantry resting on the way to Hamel, 3rd July, 1918	256
Hamel sur Somme	257
Pear Trench and the woods, Hamel	288
A Newton mortar firing from Ville	289
Mill on the Ancre on 4th July, 1918	289
The clay-pit east of Villers-Bretonneux	352
The hangars east of Villers-Bretonneux	353
The crops at Mont de Merris	353
The Diggers in 1918	488
The country beyond Villers-Bretonneux	489
Waiting to start in the second phase, 8th August, 1918 . . .	544
A tank going through on the Roman road, 8th August, 1918 ..	545
Prisoners passing the church in Harbonnières, 8th August, 1918	584
In the final objective, 8th August, 1918	585
The eastern side of Morcourt gully	600
German artillery waggons shot up by the armoured cars in Framicourt on 8th August, 1918	601
The 1st Division going through, 9th August, 1918	640
German dumps at Rosières	641
A post of the 6th Battalion after the first advance, 10th August, 1918	672
Vauvillers	673
Guns in the valley behind Gressaire Wood	696

ILLUSTRATIONS

xi

An outpost above Bray	697
The big gun in Arcy Wood	744
Prisoners coming up the valley north of Bray, 22nd August, 1918	745
The scene of Lieut. McCarthy's exploit	745
Péronne, seen from across the Somme	792
Mont St. Quentin	793
Scene of the 14th Brigade's attack, 1st September, 1918	840
Part of the afternoon attack on Mont St. Quentin, 1st September, 1918	841
A post of the 54th Battalion in Péronne	856
Bringing in wounded, 1st September, 1918	857
Rebuilding a bridge over the Somme swamps near Cléry	857
The scene east of Péronne, 5th September, 1918	896
A platoon of the 45th Battalion reaches its objective, 19th September, 1918	897
Part of the 46th Battalion in the Hindenburg Outpost-Line	920
The entrance of the canal tunnel below Bellicourt	921
Bellicourt and the Hindenburg Line	952
Part of the main Hindenburg wire defences near Bony	953
The St. Quentin Canal south of Bellicourt	953
Troops of the 11th Brigade and tanks moving into the battle near Bellicourt, 29th September, 1918	960
Bony seen from the Knoll	961
Tanks destroyed in the old minefield, 29th September, 1918	961
Beaurevoir, Mushroom Quarry and Lamotte Farm	1024
The white cottage on the le Cateau road	1024
Australians and Americans in Péronne	1025
The A.I.F. marches through London, Anzac Day, 1919	1025

LIST OF MAPS

1 The attack by Australian Corps, 8th August, 1918	520
2 The front from Lihons to Albert after the Battle of Amiens	718

CHRONOLOGY

(*Italic type indicates events dealt with in this volume.*)

- 1918.
- May 27—Battle of the Aisne 1918 begins.
 " 31—*Monash succeeds Birdwood as G.O.C. Australian Corps*
- June 9—German offensive at Noyon.
 " 15—Austrian offensive against Italians on Piave.
- July 4—*Battle of Hamel.*
 " 15—Germans thrust towards Paris across the Marne.
 " 18—Franco-American counter-attack north of the Maine.
 " 21—Château Thierry retaken by Allied forces.
- Aug. 8—*Battle of Amiens begins.*
 " 13—The Czecho-Slovaks declare war on Germany.
 " 21—*Battle of Albert 1918 begins.*
 " 26—Battle of the Scarpe.
 " 29—*Battle of Mont St. Quentin begins.*
- Sept. 1—*Occupation of Péronne.*
 " 18—*Battle of Epéhy (and Hindenburg Outpost-Line).*
 " 19—Final offensive in Palestine opens.
 " 27—Bulgaria asks for an armistice. Battle of Canal du Nord begins.
 " 28—Battle of Flanders Ridges begins.
 " 29—*Battle of St. Quentin Canal (final breaking of the Hindenburg Line) begins.*
 " 30—Armistice with Bulgaria signed.
- Oct. 1—Damascus taken by British and Arab forces.
 " 3—*Battle of the Beaurevoir Line.*
 " 4—Germany and Austria-Hungary seek an armistice through U.S.A.
 " 5—*Battle of Montbrehain.*
 " 24—Final Italian offensive begins.
 " 26—Aleppo (Syria) taken by British forces.
 " 27—General Ludendorff resigns.
 " 30—Armistice signed by Turkey.
- Nov. 3—Armistice with Austria-Hungary signed. Mutiny breaks out in German fleet at Kiel.
 " 4—British and French advance beyond Scheldt. Americans reach Meuse.
 " 8—German Armistice delegates meet Allied G.H.Q.
 " 9—Kaiser Wilhelm II abdicates.
 " 11—Capture of Mons. *Armistice with Germany signed.*
 " 21—German Fleet surrenders.
- 1919.
- Jan. 18—Peace Conference opens at Versailles.
 June 28—Peace Treaty signed and published.