The Australians' Fine Record.

THE BATTLE OF AMIENS AND AFTER.

HOW THE GERMAN TIDE WAS TURNED.

"After the severe defeat of August 8th, I gave up the last vestige of hope."

(LUENDORFF.)

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THE Australians opened their first war chapter at Anzac; they closed it East of Amiens. The history of the Corps during that period is replete with feats of unparalleled courage and military skill, but at no time nor in any theatre of the war has the closing campaign in front of Amiens been surpassed. For brilliance and boldness of conception, for skill in execution, for efficiency in organisation, for capable staff work, for bravery and resource on the part of the rank and file, it is doubtful if any other military operation in the war bears adequate comparison. "The finest troops in the World" was the comment made by a British Officer, whose Division assisted on the Australians’ left. The French poilus were equally enthusiastic. The local population affectionately call the Australians "The Saviours of Amiens," and propose to erect a memorial to the fallen Australians in their far-famed Cathedral.

The title accorded by the French is not undeserved. The crash of the Huns was so overwhelming that they had but to maintain their hold upon the heights of Villers-Bretonneux.
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to advance en masse upon Amiens and completely destroy the city as they had destroyed Rheims, Albert and so many other famous towns. That they were foiled was due to Australian courage and strategy which completely dislodged them from Villers-Bretonneux and compelled the beginning of a disastrous and final retreat.

The value of Villers-Bretonneux from a military and historical point of view is well known to both French and Germans. In 1870 the German General, Manteuffel, had defeated the French troops there and obtained possession of Amiens. The French General, Faidherbe, marched to the relief of the city, but fought an indecisive battle at Font Noyelles near by, and to-day an obelisk erected by the French commemorates the occasion. The period covered by the operations under review was unique in at least one respect. Prior to June, 1918, the several Australian Divisions had been associated with various British Corps and Armies in various localities. In fact during the earliest operations in 1916, whilst the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Divisions were fighting the memorable battles which resulted in the capture of Pozières, the Fifth Division was fighting, under a different English Army, the mighty and heroic, yet ineffective battle of Fromelles, while the Third Division was still undergoing its war training.

A happy inspiration, fraught with the most pregnant and beneficent results upon the final issue of the war brought, in May, 1918, all the five Australian Divisions into one Corps, operating under a distinct Australian command. This in turn brought into relief those distinctive attributes which have made the fighting qualities of the Australian soldier famous the world over. The result has conclusively shown that effective national units best obtain complete co-ordination in all their efforts by operating within their own ranks. It was this co-operation that accounted in a great part for the extraordinarily brilliant success that attended these operations.

TRIBUTE FROM BRITISH AUTHORITIES.

The Australian soldier is keen and experienced. He is no longer a novice at war. He had had his vicissitudes at the
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portions of their earlier gains. The reaction was inevitable and of a deep and lasting character.

Sir Arthur Conan Doyle is not less eulogistic. After skillfully stating the facts, he draws deductions which are extremely instructive and illuminative: "The Australians had never been involved in a disaster, and they had twice saved the situation when it had been in an absolutely desperate condition. The first occasion was about March 26th, at the end of Gough's retreat, when his Army, through no fault of his, was disintegrating after enduring terrible hammer blows for six days in succession. . . . There was nothing between the Germans and Amiens, and if the Germans had got that place they would probably have captured the Channel Ports. But the Australians were there and the Germans did not capture the Channel Ports. When the British resumed the offensive the Australians, in their victorious career, captured Mont St. Quentin. Standing on that hill one would think a rabbit could not get up it. How the Australians ever got up there and put the Germans out was a marvel."

THE PERSONNEL.

The purely personal equation, from the highest to the lowest, necessarily enters into the launching and execution of a great military enterprise. From the beginning to the end of these thrilling months of warfare the Australian Corps was commanded by Lieut.-General Sir John Monash, who was not only with the original Australian Gallipoli expedition, but whose name is perpetuated in the topography of that brilliant but fatal peninsula enterprise. A typical Australian, his intellect and capacity for quick and effective decision secured the loyal co-operation of his brother-Generals and his staff; his consideration for the interests and the personal welfare of the men, who are ever quick to perceive such qualities in the higher command, led to complete trust and esteem. The General knows "the Digger" off by heart, thoroughly understands his nature, and has his unbounded confidence. Perhaps his distinguishing trait is his recognition of ability amongst the juniors. When asked by an English journalist about the Australian Army and its efforts, he said: "Our success is due in large part to the devotion and skill of our junior officers. Of these 95 per cent. are from the ranks. We have a democratic army. We were told that our system of wholesale promotion from the ranks would deprive us of an officer caste, and that this would be a bad thing. We have found the exact contrary to be the truth. Our democratic system has been a success in every particular. By opening the way to ambition it has stimulated ambition, and we have reaped the benefit of the enterprise of ambitious men. There is only one doorway into our commissioned service now, and that doorway is through the ranks. Many of our junior officers who rose from privates have been dazzling successes. Two of them have won the V.C., the D.S.O., and the M.C., with a bar to each, thus doubling the highest honours in the service. In the whole Australian Army at this moment there is only one brigadier whose regular profession is that of soldiering. The others are so-called citizen or civilian soldiers, like the officers of the American State Militia."

With Sir John Monash were associated men whose names are not alone familiar to the British public, but whose exploits are the pride and admiration of the Australian people. In the particular enterprises here described, the Divisional Commanders were:

Major-Gen. T. W. Glasgow, 1st Australian Division.
Major-Gen. J. Gellibrand, 3rd Australian Division.

In the Corps General Staff Branch the following Officers were responsible for giving effect to the magnificently conceived and admirably successful enterprises:—Brigadier-General T. A. Blamey, Lieut.-Cols. Ross and McCall, Major R. G. Casey, and Major S. A. Hunn.
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THE OFFICIAL ACCOUNT.

The whole world, civil and military, is interested to learn of every contribution to the mighty effort which brought about the final overthrow of the Hun. Up to the present the distinctive and authoritative Australian aspect has not been presented. Sir Douglas Haig’s despatch, although extremely commendatory—none more so—is necessarily partial and restrictive. His survey was too large, his scheme of vision too broad to permit of any adequate representation of the part played by the Australian Army Corps. I have had the great advantage of perusing the official documents relating to this part of the campaign, and am happily able to give an authentic account of the operations which, it is hoped, will prove of permanent interest and historic value.

The particular period under review starts from August 8th, when the Australians were in front of Villers-Bretonneux, and concludes on October 6th, when the Beaurevoir defences, and Montbrehain were captured, after which, the decisive result having been achieved, the Australians were relieved and allowed a very well-deserved and much appreciated rest.

The arrangement of this battle story is split up for convenience into five distinct phases to enable the reader more readily to perceive the salient features of the campaign and to grasp the causes and effects of the various operations. These phases are as follows:

PHASE “A.”—8th August, in front of Villers-Bretonneux.

PHASE “B.”—From 9th to 15th August.

PHASE “C.”—15th August to 4th September, Advance to the Somme and Capture of Mont St. Quentin and Peronne.

PHASE “D.”—4th to 20th September:
(i.) The German Retreat.
(ii.) Capture of Hindenburg Advanced System.

PHASE “E.”—20th September to 6th October, Capture of the Main Hindenburg Line and of Beaurevoir and Montbrehain.

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PHASE “A.”

The result of the long series of minor operations undertaken by the Australian Corps from Villers-Bretonneux to the Ancre River during April, May and June, 1918, had given the Corps a decided moral superiority over the enemy. The most significant and important of these preliminary and preparatory operations was the Battle of Hamel, fought on July 4th. It was the first offensive on any substantial scale, undertaken by any Allied Force in any theatre, since the outbreak of the German onslaught in the early Spring of 1918. It was experimental, and it was a full-dress rehearsal for what was to follow. The whole of this splendid little operation was conceived and executed by the Australian Corps. It introduced new tactics and new applications of the latest tanks, aeroplanes and other weapons. It was an unqualified victory, inflicting severe damage upon the enemy at trifling cost. Its moral effect upon the Allies and upon the enemy was startling and decisive. The absence of my enemy reaction, the general condition of the prisoners captured in this operation and subsequent minor operations on the Villers-Bretonneux Front, and the condition of the enemy defences on the Corps Front, led the Corps Commander to the conclusion that operations on a much larger scale on this portion of the front would lead to considerable results.

The Fourth Army Commander was therefore approached with a view to carrying out considerably extended operations. The conclusions drawn fortunately coincided with those already arrived at by him, and arrangements were put in hand to attack the enemy in great force on the important Front between the Luce and the Ancre.

The position allotted to the Australian Corps was in the centre, the Canadian Corps on the right, and the 3rd Corps on the left. The Australian front extended from the Amiens-Nesle Railway east of Villers-Bretonneux north to the Somme Canal.
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These magnificent "assault troops"—to use the German phrase—were to attack on a front of two Divisions and in three phases; there was to be no preliminary bombardment or alteration in the normal conditions of trench warfare before the battle, and every effort was to be made to ensure secrecy as to the operation prior to zero hour.

The first phase entailed the attack of the enemy's main position by the Second Division on the right and the Third Division on the left, under an artillery barrage and with the assistance of tanks. These Divisions were to penetrate an average depth of 3,600 yards, and pass beyond the enemy's main line of field artillery.

The second phase consisted of the Fifth and Fourth Divisions (right and left respectively) moving through the Second and Third Divisions, and advancing to the second objective, a penetration of from 2,500 yards to 5,000 yards. This advance was to be carried out in open warfare—a form of warfare the Australians were remarkably proficient in and fond of)—without a barrage.

The third phase comprised the exploiting of the success already gained by the Fourth and Fifth Divisions, and the seizing by them of the old British defence lines between Morcourt and Morval. The capture and consolidation of this line was the final limit laid down for exploitation, as far as could be determined prior to the action.

The experience gained at the Battle of Hamel had brought to light what were the best means for employing tanks to overwhelm the enemy's resistance with a minimum of casualties to the infantry, and the methods of co-operation between artillery, tanks and infantry employed in that battle were, therefore, taken as a model for the operation of the 8th of August.

The success of the means adopted prior to the Hamel operation to ensure secrecy also led to similar means being repeated and extended.

The first knowledge of the battle plan was confined to the Corps Commander and the Chief of Corps General Staff. A little later, when the preparation of the artillery plans became necessary, the G.O.C., R.A., was informed. Then Staffs and

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Formations were informed as late as possible, but in ample time to ensure that complete preparation could be made. All Commanders received strict injunctions that, as far as possible, no subordinates were to know of the contemplated operations until action was required by them, and above all that troops detailed to continue garrison duty in the line should have no intimation of the action before the day prior to the attack.

One of the main difficulties in maintaining secrecy was the time required for getting forward supplies. This particularly applied to the assembling of large quantities of ammunition for the opening of a set-piece operation. Time was essential for the getting of it from the base and from railhead to the gun positions. To overcome this, authority was obtained to increase the dumped ammunition to 600 rounds per gun, and reasons were assigned which did not suggest that operations on a large scale were contemplated.

The wisdom of this course was soon shown in a remarkable way. On the night before the battle a post of the Fourth Division in the vicinity of the Roye-Amiens Road had been captured by a small enemy raid and prisoners taken by them. As a result of the policy of secrecy these troops were not in a position to reveal the fact that operations were proposed. It should be stated, however, that later information obtained from captured enemy documents showed that those prisoners could not be induced to give any military information at all.

The date selected for the operation was the 8th August. The first intimation had been given to Divisions at a conference held by the Corps Commander on 31st July. At his second conference, on 4th August, all Commanders were required to state their full plans, all outstanding points at issue were decided, and final decisions affecting the operation given. The Corps Commander laid it down that on no account should any alterations be permitted in the plans as then approved. The result was that Divisional and other Formation Commanders were able to set about completing the whole of their detailed arrangements, and felt confidence that there would be no harassing alterations.

The operations in view differed from similar operations carried out in 1916 and 1917 in the following main particulars:
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(a) Every possible effort was made to obtain surprise, both strategically and tactically, and it was, therefore, determined that there should be no preliminary bombardment or attempt at destruction of the enemy defence systems.

(b) Careful concealment of our intentions, prohibition of movement by day in back and forward areas and the careful policing of the Corps area by observers in aeroplanes to ensure that this was being carried out.

(c) Emplacement of a large proportion of artillery within 2,000 yards of the front line which enabled the advance to be covered by an effective barrage to a depth of 4,000 yards into enemy territory.

(d) No registration of guns in new positions. This was made possible by a new system of careful calibration of all guns as new artillery came into the Corps area.

(e) The employment of a large proportion of smoke shells in the barrage to enable the infantry to appear suddenly before the enemy defences and rush them before the enemy was able to realise what was happening.

(f) The employment of tanks. A new method of their employment worked out by the Australian Corps had been tested at Hamel, and it was determined to use light infantry skirmishing lines and to conserve the infantry strength.

(g) The 17th Armoured Car Battalion of the Tank Corps was also placed at the disposal of the Australian Corps Commander and was given an independent mission to move direct against enemy centres of communication, headquarters, etc. Its operations were brilliantly successful, and its exploits read like a tale of the old days. The full value of the action of this Battalion will not be known until the German story comes to light, but from such enemy reports as have come to hand it undoubtedly had a most disturbing effect on the enemy's rear communications.

In view of the distance to which it was proposed to penetrate and of the great depth of the infantry formations throughout the attack, it was essential to organise the assembly of infantry units in such a manner as to reduce the fatigue of the troops detailed to the capture of the most distant objectives to a minimum.

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The assembly was accomplished without hindrance, no difficulty was found in moving the Tanks to their positions and the infantry were formed up during the darkness on their respective tape lines without difficulty.

The method employed of assembling tanks at Hamel was repeated, and this method has since come to be the recognised system. Thus during the nights prior to "Zero" the tanks were moved forward to selected concealed lying-up positions as near as possible to their assembly positions. On the night prior to "Zero" the tanks moved forward under full engines to about 3,000 yards from the front line. From here the engines were closed down and the tanks moved forward quietly and slowly to about 1,000 yards from the front line. From this starting position the tanks proceeded forward at such an hour as to ensure that they reached the tape line exactly at Zero hour. To cover the noise of the tank engines, large type aeroplanes with noisy engines flew continuously over the area.

An untoward incident marked the assembly of the tanks. One Company of carrying-tanks allotted to the Fifth Division had occupied its lying-up position in the orchard North of Villers-Bretonneux. On the late afternoon of the 7th August a chance enemy shot set fire to one of these tanks. The enemy promptly brought the whole of this area under heavy fire and destroyed nearly the whole of this Company of tanks and their loads.

The incident created some uneasiness as to whether the enemy had discovered their presence and was aware of the proposed operations. This, however, did not prove to be the case.

The destruction of the store of which these tanks were carrying made it necessary to hurry forward additional supplies of water and engineering material. This difficulty was overcome through the energetic action of the Staff of the Corps and of the Division concerned, and all supplies were available for the Division next morning.

"Zero" hour was fixed for 4.20 a.m. on the 8th August. The attack was suspiciously begun. By 5 a.m. information had been received that the approach marches had been carried out without a hitch, the attack had started to time, the barrage was excellent
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and there was practically no enemy artillery retaliation. The Second and Third Divisions moved forward steadily with the tanks under the barrage towards their objectives, although a heavy mist and the smoke and dust of the barrage made observation very difficult. By 6 a.m. German prisoners began to stream in, and as far as could be ascertained from them the attack had come as a complete surprise to the enemy. The first objective was reached at the same hour, and later the Second Division reported that Warfusée had been captured. At 6.20 a.m. the Second and Third Divisions had handed over the command of the battle front to the Fifth and Fourth Divisions in their respective sectors.

From the time that the Fifth and Fourth Divisions passed through the Second and Third Divisions the battle assumed the character of open warfare, and each of the attacking brigades moved forward organised as Brigade Groups under the command of Infantry Brigade Commanders. The Armoured Car Battalion had also successfully passed through the barrage while the First Cavalry Brigade, which was also under the orders of the Australian Corps Commander, had moved forward with patrols in contact with the advancing infantry. At 10 a.m. the final objective had been gained on the right of the right Division and on the whole front of the left Division. At 1.40 p.m. the infantry had passed Harbonnières and learned that the roads further back in the enemy country were crowded with transport. By this time the whole of the enemy’s defences in the sector had been destroyed and the Cavalry Brigade had passed through the infantry.

The troops of the Fifth Division pressed on to the line of exploitation, and about two hours later the Fifteenth Infantry Brigade were firmly established there. The opposition on this part of the battlefield had practically ceased. Further to the north the right of the Fourth Division pressed forward, but its left was not able to push on to the exploitation line owing to enemy fire from the northern side of the river. At the end of the day the right and centre of the Corps, however, were all on their objectives, although the left flank was thrown back towards Morcourt.

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The final result of the day’s operations was the capture of the whole of the objectives allotted to the Corps and the seizure of the exploitation objective except on the extreme left. The villages of Warfusée, Marceclaye, La Motte, Bayonvilliers, Harbonnières, Morcourt, Gailly and the greater portion of the village of Cerisy were in our hands. Some of the enemy troops were still on the river side of Cerisy. We were in touch with the Canadian Corps on our right, but the difficulties of the River Somme as a boundary between Corps were already beginning to make themselves felt.

The total captures for the day were:—Prisoners: 183 officers, 7,742 other ranks; 173 guns and many hundred machine-guns, trench mortars and anti-tank rifles were also captured.
PHASE "B."
9TH AUGUST TO 15TH.

The operations on the Australian Corps front were resumed on the 9th August. The role of the Corps was now to advance our front on the right between Amiens-Nesle Railway and the Amiens-Brie Road, and to form a defensive flank to the further advance of the Canadian Corps on the right. The first phase of the advance was to have been carried out, commencing at 11 a.m., by the First Division passing through the left Brigade of the Fifth Division. Owing to its unavoidably late arrival in the battle area and the long approach march which followed, the First Division was not able to reach the assembly positions in time to co-operate with the beginning of the advance of the Canadian Corps. Consequently, the right Brigade of the Fifth Division was told off to continue the advance, and carried out the initial phase of the operation entailing the capture of Vauvillers.

These operations were duly carried out, and without an artillery barrage, Brigades of artillery being placed directly under the command of the Infantry Brigadiers concerned. The Second, Eighth and Fifteenth Tank Battalions co-operated with the attacking Divisions, but with very reduced numbers owing to casualties suffered on the 8th August.

Considerable opposition was also met with from the Liéons Ridge, both from close-range field guns and from machine guns. Direct fire was responsible for considerable casualties among the tanks supporting the First Division. The advance of the Second Division met with less active resistance, and the village of Framerville was captured during the late afternoon.

Junction with the Second Canadian Division was made by the First Division on the railway line about one mile North-East of Rosieres, and our line at 7 p.m., on the 9th instant, ran practically due north round the eastern edge of Framerville, through La Plaque to the Amiens defence line.

About 5 p.m., on the 9th instant, the III. Corps on our left

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attacked and carried the village of Chipilly and part of the Chipilly Spur, enabling the Fourth Division to swing its left forward to the outskirts of Mercourt.

The advance towards Liéons was continued by the First Division on the 10th instant, in conjunction with the advance of the Canadian Corps south of the main railway. Very considerable opposition was encountered and heavy fighting took place in the old entrenched country on the Western slopes of the Liéons Ridge. The First Australian Infantry Brigade was counter-attacked very heavily and the battle swayed to and fro during the day. As the result of the day's operations our line was advanced to the Western outskirts of the Village of Liéons.

Liéons is situated on a low hill which rises in a glacial slope for a considerable distance on all sides, and the country is particularly open and is admirably adapted for defence. The capture of this strong position under conditions of open warfare was therefore no ordinary feat of arms.

Owing to the disadvantage previously alluded to of having the valley of the Somme as an Inter-Corps Boundary, the Australian Corps Commander prevailed upon the Army Authorities to permit him to extend his battle front Northwards so as to enable him to get outside of the Somme Valley. This dispositions had a most important bearing upon subsequent events. Accordingly the Command of the Right Divisional Front of the III. Corps between the Bray-Corbie Road and the Somme passed to Australian Corps during the early morning of the 10th August. G.O.C., Fourth Division, was ordered to assume command of the sector, and arrangements were put in hand on the morning of the 10th instant for the attack and capture of the Etinehem Spur. The troops employed north of the Somme consisted of 13th A.I. Brigade and 131st American Regiment, which latter force was taken over from III. Corps.

The Corps Commander held another conference on the 10th instant, when his policy was outlined and instructions issued with regard to further proposed operations. The Third and Fourth Divisions were to carry out an encircling operation on the night 10th-11th August in order to cut off the Etinehem Spur

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north of the Somme and the ridge east of Proyart, south of the Somme. The northern operation was to be carried out by the 13th Infantry Brigade (Fourth Division) and the southern operation by the 10th Infantry Brigade (Third Division). The Second Division was to conform on the right and link up with the Third Division, which relieved portion of the front held by the Fourth Division south of the Somme earlier on the night of 10th instant.

The general lines of the operation both to the north and the south of the river were similar. Columns were to move along defined roads, leaving the objectives well to the flanks and then encircle the enemy positions. Each column was accompanied by tanks, and was to move in an easterly direction and then to wheel inwards towards the Somme.

It was recognised that this action involved certain risks, as tanks had never been tried by night in this way, but in view of the condition of the enemy's morale at this stage it was considered that the effect of the advance of the tanks and infantry would lead immediately to the collapse of the defence.

The action north of the river was entirely successful. South of the river the enemy bombed the forward area heavily early in the night on the Third Division front, causing considerable delay in the preparations for the attack. The progress on the Southern Sector of the attack was at first slow owing to heavy enemy artillery and machine-gun fire and the disorganisation caused by the bombing. Two of the tanks allotted for the operations were destroyed or put out of action very soon after Zero hour.

Heavy casualties having been suffered by units of the 10th Infantry Brigade, it was decided that this Brigade, as it was unable to carry out that operation as ordered, should co-operate with the 9th Infantry Brigade by taking up a position round the eastern outskirts of Proyart. The 9th Brigade was to complete the capture of Proyart.

The advance of the Second Division progressed favourably further to the right, but the delay in the 10th Brigade operation left the flank of the Division somewhat exposed. The 10th

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Brigade took prompt action accordingly to bring up its right and re-establish the complete line.

On the 11th August the advance was continued by the First and Second Divisions between the Amiens-Nesle Railway and the Amiens-Brie Road in conjunction with the Canadian Corps on the South. Owing to the greatly increased enemy resistance on the Lihons Ridge and the fact that there were but few tanks left available to support the advance, it was decided to employ a creeping artillery barrage. The enemy fought hard to retain Lihons, but by 6 a.m. the villages of Lihons and Raincourt had been taken and consolidation of the captured ground was well in hand. The enemy made numerous local counter-attacks, particularly against Lihons and Raincourt, but these were beaten off by infantry fire.

Junction was made with the Canadians at the Railway about a mile north of Chilly.

The enemy counter-attacked the Fourth Australian Division during the afternoon of 11th August and succeeded in regaining a small portion of the Etinchem Spur. This counter-attack was made possible by reason of the difficulty of holding the steep exposed eastern slopes of the Somme bluffs against hostile fire.

A provisional formation known as the Liaison Force was now constituted on the 12th August, and placed under the orders of Brigadier-General E. A. Wisdom, C.M.G., D.S.O., to take over the front north of the Somme from the Fourth Division. The troops of this formation consisted of the 131st American Regiment, the 13th Infantry Brigade, together with the 58th Divisional Artillery and the necessary auxiliary troops. The remaining American Regiment of the Brigade was allotted to the Fourth Division in place of the 13th Infantry Brigade.

The Liaison Force was employed north of the Somme to ensure that the control of both banks of the River Somme was under one Corps Command and as a liaison formation between the Australian and III Corps.

A successful local attack was carried out by the 13th Infantry Brigade on the Liaison Force front at dawn on the 12th August, whereby the whole of the Etinchem Spur was recaptured.
and 200 prisoners and a large number of machine guns taken.

The Seventeenth British Division from G.H.Q. Reserve
was at this juncture allotted to the Australian Corps in order to
relieve the Third Division, which was greatly in need of a rest.
It was not desired to employ this Division in any serious
operations, as it was required for action elsewhere. The
Division was in good form, however, and showed a very fine
aggressive spirit. The most marked incident of its tour was a
heavy gas shelling which it suffered and which caused numerous
casualties.

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PHASE "C."

THE ADVANCE TO THE SOMME AND CAPTURE
OF MONT ST. QUENTIN AND PERONNE.

15th August to 4th September.

The command of the Canadian Corps front on the Australian
right passed to the Australian Corps Commander at noon on 22nd
August, the distribution of the Divisions then under his com-
mand being as follows from south to north:

Fourth Canadian Division, Fourth Australian Division,
Thirty-Second English Division, Fifth Australian Division,
Third Australian Division, with the First Canadian Divi-
sion in support to the Fourth Canadian Division, and the
First and Second Australian Divisions in Corps Reserve.

On the morning of the 22nd August the Third Division was
ordered to attack north of the Somme in conjunction with the
III. Corps on its left. The Third Division seized all its
objectives and the line was advanced to the immediate west and
north-west of Bray-sur-Somme

During the nights 23rd-24th and 24th-25th August the Fourth
Canadian Division and the right-half of the Fourth Australian
Divisional Front were relieved by the 36th French Corps. The
Thirty-Second Division extended its front to the right and took
over the remaining portion of the Fourth Division Front, thus
releasing that Division from the line.

During this relief the enemy fired a very heavy gas con-
centration, extending over some hours, on the front which was being
taken over. The unavoidable movement of troops led to a
very large number of casualties of both French and Fourth
Division. The concentration being unusually dense and drifting
over the area of the Thirty-Second Division considerable
casualties were suffered from this cause.

On the morning of the 23rd August a fresh operation was
launched on a front of four-and-a-half miles on the general
line Herleville-Chuignes-Chuignolles. The attack was carried
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out by the Thirty-Second (English) Division on the right and the First Australian Division on the left. All objectives were gained and the enemy’s defences penetrated to a depth of one and a half miles. A proportion of tanks was allotted to the advancing Divisions.

Good progress was made along the whole front of attack, and except at one or two places strong opposition was not encountered. The attack was a complete surprise and the enemy was caught in process of reorganisation as the result of his recent reverses. The successes gained were fully exploited and our line was considerably advanced.

The attack was carried out in three phases, the first phase being supported by artillery and tanks; the second phase being purely exploitation, was carried out without artillery support. The third phase involved an advance into very open country, and the attack on the left of a commanding position east of the Chuignes Valley. The enemy, under the impression that our attack had spent itself, had occupied the position in great strength. The opposition proved much stronger than was anticipated and the fighting was particularly severe. A light artillery barrage fire was provided for the final phases by batteries rapidly pushed forward during the early phases of the advance. This was carried out by 3rd Brigade, which had very severe fighting throughout. By nightfall the line along the front of attack ran approximately Héteville-Chuignes-Baraque. Eighty-six officers and 3,066 other ranks, as well as 21 guns, were captured as a result of the day’s operations.

During the night 23rd-24th August the Third Division carried out an operation north of the Somme with the object of conforming with the general line of the Corps front south of the Somme. After overcoming strong enemy resistance, Bray was captured and our line advanced to the east of the town. This advance was continued during the 25th August in conjunction with the III. Corps.

The First Division also carried their line forward by means of local minor operations, as a result of which Cappy was captured on the 20th August. By this time the Third Division

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had taken Suzanne, meeting with very little opposition, and the enemy had retreated in great disorder.

A Conference was held at Corps Headquarters on August 15th, at which the Corps Commander decided to relieve the First Division by the Second and Fifth Divisions, each of these to be on a single brigade frontage. The policy to be followed was to keep a continual pressure on the enemy, to advance by means of fighting patrols and infiltration; but to avoid such fighting as would incur heavy losses.

The order of the battle from south to north on the 27th August was as follows: Thirty-Second Division, Fifth Division, Second Division, Third Division, and the line ran approximately Foucaucourt (exclusive) Fontaine-les-Cappy (exclusive) Suzanne (inclusive). Patrols pushed out during the early morning of the 27th August and found the enemy’s posts unoccupied at several points on our front. Immediate advantage was taken and the advance was continued rapidly. Opposition was encountered, mainly from machine guns on commanding tactical features. These held on till the last.

Serious opposition was also met with from formed infantry and artillery fire, on the Second and Fifth Divisional fronts, especially at Foucaucourt. This was overcome after stiff fighting.

Throughout August 28th the advance was continued and opposition encountered in the form of machine guns holding on to important features to cover the retirement of the enemy’s main body.

Early on the morning of the 29th August the advance was continued with the object of forcing the enemy across the Somme. As the attack was vigorously pressed, the enemy was forced to put up a stubborn fight in order to cover his withdrawal across the river.

The line of the Somme Canal was finally reached on August 29th, south of Peronne, by the Thirty-Second (English) Division, the Fifth Division and the Second Division. North of the Somme our line ran about 1,000 yards west of Clery-aux-Sommes. Patrols crossed the Canal in several
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places but found the marshy ground east of the Canal impassable for larger bodies and for artillery.

Seven officers and 577 other ranks, together with 5 guns, were captured in the period 24th-29th August. On the morning of the 30th August the Australian Corps front was held by the Thirty-Second Division, the Fifth Division, the Second Division and the Third Division from south to north, the line being the line of the Somme Canal as far north as Clery. Clery had been cleared of the enemy with the exception of a few houses in the eastern outskirts, and we held the high ground north-east of the town.

The Somme Canal and marshes were impassable south of Clery. Hostile machine-gun fire from concealed positions on the eastern bank kept all possible crossings continually engaged. It was determined not to force the passage south of Peronne as this could only be done at very heavy cost.

The only immediate possibility of gaining a footing east of the Somme and of continuing our pressure on the enemy was from the direction of Clery, and with this in view the 5th Infantry Brigade of the Second Division was ordered to cross the Somme at Féricieres, pass through the area and front held by the Third Division, and make good a bridgehead south-east of Clery to enable the Omicourt crossing to be exploited, and if intact to be utilised. This was successfully accomplished during the 30th August, but the Omicourt crossing was found to have been destroyed.

The Corps front was re-adjusted on the night of 30th-31st August, the Thirty-Second Division extended its front northwards by taking over a brigade frontage from the Fifth Division as far north as Farm Lamiré, the Fifth Division extended northwards from this point to a point on the Canal 500 yards north of Bicelles, by taking over a brigade frontage from the Second Division. The Second Australian Division was given a front from this latter point to the village of Clery. The Third Division held from Clery to the Corps northern boundary.

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MONT ST. QUENTIN.

The capture of Mont St. Quentin stands out in bold relief in a war that had hitherto largely consisted of monotonous trench warfare. Its story reads more like a military romance of the olden times, though in certain respects it was not unlike the famous Gallipoli landing. Sir Douglas Haig, using strictly official language in his recent despatch, says it "ranks as a most gallant achievement." Other writers, unfettered by the strict necessities of Army formality, use language of a much more eulogistic character. The Germans, as we learnt after the attack, knew the formidable character of the forces operating in front of them. An order signed by the Commanding Officer of a German Battalion, and subsequently captured, contained the following warning to the enemy:—

"Forces confronting us consist of Australians who are very war-like, clever and daring. They understand the art of crawling through high crops in order to capture our advanced posts. The enemy is also adept in conceiving and putting into execution important patrolling operations. The enemy infantry has daily proved themselves to be audacious."

Even with this fine tribute, it was, however, never conceived possible by the Germans that this great natural fortress, supplemented by the aid of every clever device of skilful leaders, would in a few hours not only fall, but that the whole of its garrison would be killed or captured. On that eventful day of 31st August our troops, in addition to the large number killed, took 1,500 prisoners of the Prussian Guard, and, as Sir Douglas Haig states, left the way open for the subsequent capture by the Australians of Peronne.

The importance of this victory is perhaps better appreciated by the French than ourselves. Our gallant Allies are closely familiar with the topography of this area and they knew the consequences of its successful defence or capture. The Special Correspondent of "Le Journal" writes:—

"It required a forest-trapper or a hunter versed in the art of ambush and bush-craft—and the Australians, bold
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seekers after adventure, are these—to venture to attack on
a stormy night a strong position like Mont St. Quentin. At
the back of their barbed wire defences the German
machine-gunners thought themselves impregnable and
immune from capture. Their sentries watched behind
their parapets. The citadel, with its three rows of trenches,
stood like a dark shadow on the banks of the Somme.
Only a few hours were necessary for the Anzacs to conquer
this impregnable mountain, and of the garrison of 3,000
who defended it, more than one-third are to-day lamenting
in the prisoners' cage behind the line.

The operations for the capture of Mont St. Quentin were
arranged at a Conference held at 10 p.m. on the night of
the 29th August. As rapid action was necessary, and the
time available did not permit of a detailed creeping artillery
barrage being worked out, artillery support was arranged in the form of
successive engagement of selected localities.

The 5th Infantry Brigade was formed up for the attack on the
limited area in our hands immediately south-east of Clery
and the attack was launched at 5 a.m., on 31st August, in
conjunction with the advance of the Third Australian Division
up the slopes south of Bouchavesnes.

In spite of very considerable opposition and a complex system
of hostile trenches covered by exceedingly strong lines of wire,
the attack was successful, and by 8 a.m. the hill and villages of
Mont St. Quentin, Halle and Feuilliaucourt were in our hands.
This was a most brilliant feat of arms on the part of the Second
Division. It was, however, rendered possible by the very
vigorous action of the Third Division, which, by its energetic
advance, cleared the ground to the north and gave elbow room
to develop the action of the Second Division.

Owing to repeated counter-attacks and constant heavy enemy
shell fire on the village of Mont St. Quentin, our troops were
temporarily withdrawn to a line which was consolidated just
west of Feuilliaucourt, and Mont St. Quentin and east of Halle,
and this line was held during the night 31st August-1st
September.

The capture of the Mont St. Quentin position and the

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enemy's efforts to recapture it led to a most sanguinary struggle.
The importance of this position to the Germans was fully realised
by them and they made repeated efforts to retake it and
to prevent our further advance and seizure of Peronne.
There is no doubt that the whole system of the enemy's defences
on the British front was rudely shaken by this important tactical
success.

Between the 29th and 31st August feints were made by the
Fifth Division and the Thirty-Second Division to effect a crossing
of the Somme south of Halle, in order to attract the attention
of the enemy to this part of the front. These were unsuccessful
owing to the width of the marsh to be bridged and to the fact
that any attempt at bridging were met by immediate artillery
and machine-gun fire from the eastern bank.

To enable any attack on Peronne to be developed it was
necessary therefore for the Fifth Division to cross the Somme
between Feuilliaucourt and Clery and to pass in a south-easterly
direction through the Second Divisional area.

During the night 31st August, the 6th and 7th Infantry
Brigades of the Second Division and the 14th Infantry Brigade
of the Fifth Division crossed the Somme between Feuilliaucourt
and Clery, and passed east and south-east of Clery preparatory
to the continuation of operations on 1st September.

The enemy realised that the majority of our movement must
be through Clery, and in consequence the area was shelled
very considerably during the period 30th August to 2nd
September, thus making the passage of any large bodies of troops
towards the battle front south-east of Clery a slow and costly
matter.

The attack was continued on the 1st September, on the fronts
of the Fifth, Third and Second Australian Divisions. The 14th
Infantry Brigade and the 6th Infantry Brigade attacked at 6 a.m.
and the Third Division at 5.30 a.m.

After very severe and continuous fighting, which lasted
throughout the day, our line on the evening of 1st September
included the greater part of Peronne, passed east of Mont St.
Quentin, just west of Allaines, and joined with III. Corps
midway between Moislains and Bouchavesnes.
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The hard fighting on this front finally forced the enemy to give up the whole Somme line and to undertake a retirement to the Hindenburg Line, apparently, much earlier than he was prepared to do.

Arrangements were now made for the Second Division to attack on the 2nd September towards Aizecourt Le Haut, with its left flank on the Canal Du Nord, with the object of securing the ridge south-west of that village and protecting the right flank of the Seventy-Fourth Division and III. Corps, which was to attack in the direction of Montaigu. The Third Division was to be released from the line by the convergence of the Second Division and Seventy-Fourth Division in the vicinity of Haut Allaines and consequent shortening of the front.

At the same time the Fifth Division was to complete the capture of Peronne and to gain the commanding high ground north of Doigt.

The Second Division gained their objectives after very severe fighting. At the outset the infantry were temporarily held up by enemy machine-gun fire, with the result that the barrage soon outpaced them and the fighting developed into an infantry attack against numerous and well-sited machine-gun positions. These were readily and skilfully dealt with by platoon and company leaders, and the village of Haut Allaines and the ridge south-east of Aizecourt were gained to a large extent by reason of the initiative and skill shown by these junior commanders.

The attacking battalions of the Fifth Division were considerably disorganised through a heavy enemy barrage falling on their assembly positions just prior to the attack. At Zero the attack commenced, and was immediately met by hurricane machine-gun fire from the Ramparts on the east of Peronne, from St. Denis and from Windmill.

After heavy hand-to-hand fighting a footing was gained in the Brickworks between St. Denis and Mont St. Quentin, and by vigorous action the enemy was forced to withdraw from St. Denis. Meanwhile the Ramparts and the north-east end of Peronne were cleared of the enemy and an attempt made to exploit towards Flamicourt and Chair Wood, but this was frustrated for the time being by heavy machine-gun fire.

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The day's fighting had been very severe, the enemy fighting stubbornly and never yielding until forced to do so.

A large number of the enemy was killed and a considerable number of prisoners captured. The prisoners for the three days' fighting for Mont St. Quentin and Peronne amounted to 45 officers and 1,621 other ranks. Six guns and a very large number of machine guns were captured.

During the course of the 3rd and 4th September Flamicourt and Chair Wood were taken by the Fifth Division, and the enemy was finally cleared from the neighbourhood of Peronne.

The result of the operations during the latter part of August had so disorganised the enemy that a general retreat on his part became imperative.

The operations of the Corps up to this date had been carried out with the five Divisions and Thirty-Second Division (English). The latter Division, most ably commanded by Major-General T. S. Lambert, C.B., C.M.G., had borne its part with great resolution and gallantry.

The total number of enemy divisions engaged and defeated by the Australian Corps from 8th August to 4th September was twenty-eight, of which six were engaged twice, one three times and four have since been disbanded.
PHASE "D."

GERMAN RETREAT AND CAPTURE OF HINDEMBURG ADVANCED SYSTEM.

4TH SEPTEMBER TO 20TH SEPTEMBER.

During the first days of September the enemy retired on the front of the Armies to the north. There was every indication that the retirement would extend to the front of the Corps at an early date. Consequently preparations were made and instructions issued that the two Divisions in the line were to press the retreat with strong advanced guards and maintain contact with the enemy. Meanwhile the front was to be re-organised and the advance continued on a three-Divisional frontage, each Division being covered by an advanced guard consisting of a brigade of infantry with a proportion of artillery. A squadron of Australian Light Horse was attached to each Division. On the 5th September the Corps had two Divisions in the line—the Third Division on the right and the Fifth Division on the left, each on a frontage of two brigades.

During the early morning the enemy commenced to retire, covered by strong rearguards. Doingt, Le Mesnil, Brie, St. Christ, Athies Wood and Bussu were captured, severe fighting taking place east of Doingt and in the vicinity of St. Christ. Opposition was mainly from machine gun, but isolated field guns held up the advance temporarily. About 150 prisoners were captured.

The steady pressure on the enemy was forcing his retirement at a much more rapid rate than he could afford to allow himself to gain time to occupy his old lines of defence, and between 10 a.m. and 11 a.m., on the 11th September, the enemy carried out a strong local attack against the left battalion of the First Division under cover of a heavy barrage, with the result that our advanced posts were forced to withdraw a few hundred yards in this place.

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CAPTURE OF THE OUTER HINDEMBURG DEFENCES.

On the 13th September the Corps Commander issued instructions for an attack to be made on the enemy’s defensive position in front of the Hindenburg Line, in conjunction with the III. Corps on the left and the IX. Corps on the right. The First French Army and the Third Army were also attacking the outer defences of the Hindenburg Line. The attack was to be carried out under a creeping barrage by the Fourth Division on the right and the First Division on the left. A section of four tanks was allotted to each Division, and the Fifth and Third Australian Machine Gun Battalions were placed at the disposal of the Fourth and First Divisions respectively for the attack.

Zero hour was fixed at 5:20 a.m. on the 18th September. Divisions arranged for tape lines and direction boards to be erected in the vicinity of assembly positions, and these proved invaluable in assisting the troops to get into position with the minimum amount of trouble. The darkness and the incessant rain made the ground very sodden and added to the difficulties, but Brigades were in good time on the forming-up tape in spite of this and the men were in great heart.

Each Division attacked on a frontage of two brigades under cover of an artillery barrage, which lifted 100 yards every three minutes until the twelfth lift, and then at the rate of 100 yards every four minutes. Some sharp fighting took place round Le Verguier, but apart from this no serious opposition was met and the first objective was reached along the whole of the Corps front by 10 a.m. A large number of prisoners were taken, and the fact that little heavy fighting took place was primarily due to the dash of the infantry and the accuracy of the artillery barrage. A proportion of stone shell was employed in the barrage, and this again appears to have created considerable confusion amongst the enemy.

Exploitation was at once commenced, and although opposition gradually increased, the First Division on the left succeeded in taking the whole of this part of the outward line of the
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Hindenburg System, which was of considerable strength. The Fourth Division reached an average distance of 500 yards from the line of exploitation. Touch was maintained throughout with the Corps on our flanks. The Fourth Division was by this time too exhausted to go on immediately, and the G.O.C. Fourth Division was instructed to rest his men for the day and continue the action by night. This advance reached an average depth of nearly three miles on a frontage of four miles.

At 11 p.m., on the night 18th-19th September, the Fourth Division again attacked under a creeping barrage with the object of seizing the front portion of their Divisional sector. Stiff fighting took place at several points, but the whole of the objective was gained and consolidated.

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PHASE “E.”

CAPTURE OF THE HINDENBURG LINE, THE BEAUREVOIR DEFENCES, AND MONTBREHAIN.

20th September to 6th October.

PRELIMINARY OPERATIONS.

On the 20th September the Corps front was held by the Fourth Division on the right and the First Division on the left. During 20th-21st September strong fighting patrols were sent out by both Divisions, with the result that they succeeded in establishing a new line approximately 500 to 800 yards in advance of their old line. During the following night the Forty-Sixth English Division relieved the Fourth Division, and command of this portion of the front passed to IX Corps on the morning of 22nd September, leaving the Australian Corps temporarily on a single Divisional front.

The II. American Corps, comprising the Twenty-Seventh and Thirtieth American Divisions, were now placed under the orders of the Australian Corps Commander and commenced to arrive in the Corps area by bus and train on September 22nd, finally relieving the First Australian Division from the line.

The Second American Corps in this way became affiliated to the Australian Corps for the contemplated operations against the main Hindenburg Line. It established its advanced headquarters close to the headquarters of the Corps, and was thus able to keep closely in touch with the situation.

An Australian “Mission” was formed and was attached to this American Corps. The object of the Mission was to ensure that all units and formations of the American Divisions were placed thoroughly in touch with the battle methods and procedure of the Australians. The personnel was carefully selected.
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and included representatives of all branches and arms. The scale of attachment of personnel was such that every unit down to Companies had an Australian officer or senior N.C.O. attached. On the night 25th-26th September the enemy carried out raids in strength on the front of both the Twenty-Seventh and Thirty-first American Divisions, and it is probable that he secured identifications in each case.

Preparations for the main attack on the Hindenburg Line were now well in hand. A Conference was held by Sir John Monash at Australian Corps Headquarters, on 23rd September, which was attended by Staffs and Commanders of II. American Corps and the Divisions and Brigades of that Corps. At this Conference full details and methods were explained and his plan of operations for the capture of the Hindenburg Line was laid down by G.O.C., Australian Corps. A subsequent Conference, attended by all Divisional Commanders, Chiefs of Departments, Staffs, etc., of formations concerned, both of the American Corps and Australian Corps, was held at Australian Corps Headquarters on the morning of the 26th September. The Australian Corps Commander outlined the whole scope of the preliminary and main operations, and such plans as had not previously been decided were discussed and final decisions reached. The operations were dealt with at great length and all aspects and possibilities were made clear to all concerned.

The Thirty-first American Division advanced its line at certain points in order to secure a good line for the infantry to form up on during the night 26th-27th September. It had not been possible for the III. Corps to secure the proposed Infantry Start Line on the front taken over by the Twenty-Seventh American Division, prior to this portion of the front being handed over to the Australian Corps. It was, therefore, necessary to carry out a preliminary operation to gain this line.

The Twenty-Seventh American Division endeavoured to capture the proposed Infantry Start Line at 5.30 a.m., on the 27th September, with the assistance of a Company of Tanks and under a creeping barrage. The attack met with strong opposition

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and the final position reached was the subject of conflicting reports from the troops engaged and from the air observers. Subsequent events showed that small parties of Americans had reached the vicinity of their objective and had very gallantly maintained themselves there, but the line as a whole was not materially advanced by the day's operations. The non-success of this operation considerably embarrassed the preparations for the main attack on the Hindenburg System.

The barrage could not be brought back on this flank owing to the knowledge that parties of American troops, as well as a number of American wounded, would be exposed to our own fire. Also, any alteration in the barrage plans, which had already been issued, would inevitably lead to confusion. It was therefore decided by the Corps Commander that the Artillery Start Line, as originally planned, would hold good, and that the troops of the Twenty-Seventh American Division should form up for the attack on a line as far forward as possible and should be assisted by an additional number of tanks. The strength in tanks was augmented to such an extent as should easily overwhelm the enemy resistance west of the start line. It was hoped that this, with the slow rate of barrage, would enable the 27th American Division to carry out its task.

A concentrated artillery bombardment of our new mustard gas of hostile defence and approaches (the first during the war) was carried out during the night 26th-27th September, and the general plan of attack was as follows:

The combined American and Australian Corps were to attack the main Hindenburg System on the corps front in conjunction with the IX. Corps on the right. The III. Corps on the north was to protect our left flank and, if opportunity offered, capture Veschusville and prepare crossings over the Canal for the V. Corps. The attack was to be carried to the Nauroy-Goy line by the Thirty-first American Division on the right and the Twenty-Seventh American Division on the left. The Fifth and Third Australian Divisions were to pass through the Thirty-first and Twenty-Seventh Divisions respectively and gain Joncourt-Wiandcourt-Beauvoir line, whilst the Thirty-first and Twenty-Seventh American Divisions were to push south.
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and north respectively in order to extend our bridgehead over the Canal.

As surprise was no longer possible, the attack was to be preceded by a 48 hours' bombardment of enemy defences and approaches and delivered under an artillery barrage and so cover the consolidation of the American Divisions on that line. Tank units from the 4th and 5th Tank Brigades were allotted to each Division, and were detailed to infantry formations. Arrangements were made for the rapid construction and maintenance of roads in each Divisional sector and for the definite allotment of infantry, artillery, cavalry and Tank units to definite roads, which would be clearly signposted throughout. Units allotted to distant objectives were to have priority on certain roads between prescribed hours.

The 5th Cavalry Brigade was placed under the orders of the Corps Commander for the operation. Its role was to be the exploitation of success and dislocation of enemy organisation in conjunction with the Whippet Tanks and Armoured Cars.

Zero hour was 5.50 a.m. on the 29th September. The attack started well on the Thirtieth American Division front, but on the Twenty-Seventh American Division front trouble from hostile machine guns inside the barrage was experienced from the outset. A number of the tanks supporting this Division were put out of action by enemy shell fire and by anti-tank mines, and with this support gone, the infantry rapidly lost touch with the barrage. Enemy machine guns were thus free to harass the main weight of the attack, with the result that only isolated parties were able to get forward. The attack on the Thirtieth American Division front had meanwhile progressed fairly well and the infantry had pushed forward. The intricate trench system and the confusion of wire and dugouts, however, was responsible for a certain amount of loss of cohesion, with the result that by the time the village of Bellicourt had been reached the attacking troops were some distance behind the barrage and a good deal of the weight had gone out of the attack.

Air reports indicated that parties of the American Divisions pushed on beyond Neuroy and Gouy, but no information came back from those bodies, and it was found that the enemy resistance was as strong as ever along the Canal Line and the trench systems. If these troops had penetrated through as the Air reports indicated, they failed entirely to mop up the intervening defences. It will be impossible to state accurately in what strength these parties were until all evidence is available.

The leading Brigades of the Fifth Australian Division were therefore moved forward in artillery formation behind the Thirtieth American Division. A certain amount of opposition was encountered from hostile machine guns and snipers who had been overlooked in the first phase of the advance by the Americans, but this was quickly overcome and they deployed and moved through Bellicourt and took over the battle front in this sector from the Thirtieth American Division. Their advance was carried out by sheer hard fighting in the face of the most vigorous opposition. During this advance a great many men of the American Divisions went forward with the Australian troops.

The Twenty-Seventh Division had been held up from the outset and free movement was impossible on this flank on account of hostile shelling and machine-gun fire. The Third Australian Division was, therefore, faced with the difficult problem of carrying out the task originally set for the Twenty-Seventh American Division as well as its own task, but without the assistance of a barrage and in broad daylight. The fighting was severe and the right of the Division advanced in conformity with the Fifth Division, but practically no progress was made on the left. The tanks detailed to assist the Third Division suffered considerably from hostile shell fire, and it was soon found to be impossible to continue the advance on this flank.

Overnight, therefore, the Corps Commander slightly modified the later phases of his plan, and early the following morning the Third and Fifth Divisions attacked in a north-easterly direction along the Hindenburg Line and also along Railway Spur. In this attack artillery action was limited owing to the uncertainty as to the whereabouts of the advanced troops of the Twenty-Seventh American Division. This made the infantry task particularly difficult.
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A considerable amount of opposition was met with and heavy hand-to-hand fighting took place throughout the day. Progress was made on the Bony spur, along Nauroy Trench and also east of Nauroy Village. By bombing along the Hindenburg Line the troops of the Third Division entered the southern outskirts of Bony and the mopping up of the town proceeded.

On the morning of the 1st October the Fifth Division made an organised attack with tanks. Millridge, Estree and Folenville Farm were captured after severe fighting. The Third Division completed the mopping up of Bony, and progressing along the Hindenburg Line northwards, secured the northern entrance to the Canal Tunnel. Patrols were pushed forward and by nightfall were operating on the high ground east of Le Catelet.

The whole of the Hindenburg Defences along the whole Corps front thus came into our hands. It was a stiff fight and the endurance of the infantry was highly tested. Casualties were severe, but this was mainly due to the enforced limitation of artillery action already described.

The Second Division, who had been resting since they had captured Mont St. Quentin, were now brought into the line on the south of the Corps front, relieving part of the Fifth Division. It was decided that the Second Division would attack with the object of capturing the Beaurevoir Line on the Corps front, and also seizing Beaurevoir Hill and obtaining a footing on Prospect Hill. The XIII. and IX. Corps were to attack at the same time on the 3rd October. The troops of the Fifth Division in line were to continue to hold the line until the battle troops of the Second Division had passed through at Zero hour. The Fifth Division was then to be withdrawn. Arrangements were made with the 15th Wing R.A.F. to drop smoke bombs on high commanding ground as the attack progressed in order to conceal the movement of infantry and to help to confuse the enemy. The 4th and 5th Tank Brigades co-operated in the attack. Considerable opposition was met with along the Beaurevoir-Massines Line, which was too wide on the front of the right Brigade for the Whippet Tanks to cross. The Heavy Tanks also encountered much anti-tank fire, but a few reached the line of La Motte Farm and ably assisted the progress of the infantry.

At about 11 o'clock the enemy heavily counter-attacked and temporarily drove in our advanced posts in the centre, but this did not materially affect the situation. The day's fighting had been heavy, severe losses being inflicted on the enemy, and in addition about 25 officers and 700 other ranks were captured, together with a large number of machine guns.

During the night 3rd-4th October the XIII. Corps extended its front, taking over from the Australian Corps as far south as the Canal. On the 4th October the Second Division improved their position by local attacks. That night, 4th-5th October, the Australian Corps took over from the IX. Corps to a line running south of Ramicourt-south of Montbrehain-south of Brancourt-le Grand, and so brought the advance back to its original north-easterly direction.

At 6.5 a.m. on the morning of 5th October, the Second Division attacked Montbrehain, the IX. Corps co-operating by keeping the high ground south of the town under heavy artillery fire during the operation.

The attack was launched in co-operation with a company of tanks of the 5th Tank Brigade, and covered by an artillery barrage. The enemy fought stubbornly, but the whole of the objectives were gained and consolidated. About noon the enemy counter-attacked the north-east corner of the village and penetrated our positions to a depth of 400 yards. A subsequent counter-attack completely restored our positions. About 20 officers and 600 other ranks belonging to seven different regiments of three Divisions were captured, and a number of civilians were liberated. The Second Division was relieved in the line by the Thirty First American Division, relief being completed about 2 o'clock on the morning of the 6th October.

At 9 a.m., on the 6th October, the decisive "break through" of the Hindenburg Line having been completed, General Monash handed over command of the Australian Corps front to General Read, of the II. American Corps, and the Australian Corps then passed into Army Reserve to rest and refit. It was
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on this same day that the German Government, at last realised the hopeless struggle, made its final offer of peace which led shortly after to the granting of the Armistice.

SUMMARY.

The Australian Corps came into the line on the Somme front at the end of March. It promptly commenced a series of minor offensive operations which had the double effect of securing Amiens and of establishing the moral superiority of the Australians over the enemy. The culmination of these operations was the successful action at Hamel, and they were continued by the seizure of the area east of Villers-Bretonneux.

Thus after considerable fighting, extending over a period of four and a half months, the Australian Corps was called upon, on August 8th, to open the Allied offensive, which has led to such great results.

The Corps maintained this offensive from the 8th August to the 6th October, a period of approximately two months, and therefore was engaged in active offensive operations for a total period of six and a half months before being withdrawn from the line to rest.

During this period the total number of prisoners captured was 610 officers and 22,244 other ranks. The total number of enemy guns captured was 332. A total of 30 enemy Divisions were engaged, many twice and a few three times. Of these 30 Divisions, six have since been disbanded. This was the equivalent of 73 separate Divisions engaged and defeated, or more than one-third of the whole German Army.

The advance of the Corps was pursued for a total distance of 37 miles. One hundred and sixteen towns and villages were captured, and the total area recovered was approximately 250 square miles.