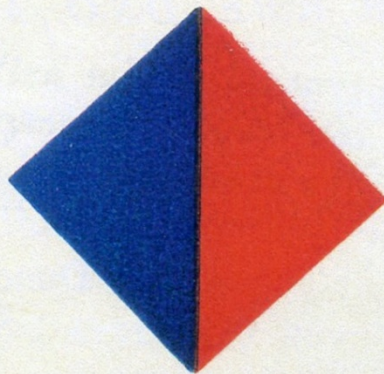


THE STORY OF THE
18TH BATTERY
6TH BRIGADE
FIELD-ARTILLERY
1ST A-I-F
1915 — 1919

Written by
J. DYER
TUSMORE
Nov. 1965



Foreword

BY MAJOR-GENERAL A.G. WILSON, C.B.E., D.S.O.

It is only of late years that the Australian Army has become conscious of its history, and for the need of recording it. Some time ago, Captain David Brook of the 13th Field Regiment, Royal Australian Artillery, of his own accord, started to delve into the history of the Artillery in South Australia. He sowed the seed of interest in the subject, and in September, 1963, a Committee was formed to prepare a comprehensive history from the early days to the present. A chapter of the projected publication was allotted to the 18th Battery, Australian Field Artillery unit, which established a second-to-none reputation in World War I.

But who was to write the history. The ex-members of the battery were growing old, and memories had to be tapped before they lost their edge. Eventually Messrs. J. Dyer and J.R. Eddy joined the Committee and set to work immediately to compile the history. They, and myself as Chairman of the Committee, were helped considerably by Colonel E.T. Dean., D.S.O, M.B.E, V.D., who commanded the battery from its formation for almost two years. I congratulate all concerned in the production of this history, especially Mr John Dyer who has written the story and arranged for its publication.

We "gunners" are proud of our traditions and I have no compunction in ending this foreword with a quotation from a book by Lt.-General Sir Brian Horrocks, KC.B., K.B.E., D.S.O., M.C., written after World War II.

"I have often said in lectures since the war that although I am an Infantryman, I would say that the Royal Regiment of Artillery did more to win the two World Wars than any other arm."

**"Duncraig"
Stirling West, S.A.
November, 1965.**

HISTORY OF THE 18TH BATTERY – 6TH BRIGADE – FIELD ARTILLERY

1ST AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCES 1915 – 1919

First and only complete Field Artillery Battery to go on Active Service from South Australia

Served in Egypt, France and Belgium

Written 50 years after formation.

Following are a few brief statements prior to the formation of the Battery.

The Commonwealth of Australia came into existence on the 1st January, 1901, when the responsibility of the Nation's defence became a Commonwealth concern, and the 30,000 volunteers serving in the six State Defence Services were taken over.

All British Garrison forces had left Australia by 1870.

Lord Kitchener visited Australia in 1909 to advise on defence. Six military districts were formed in the whole of Australia, and these were divided into 215 military areas, and in 1911 compulsory military training commenced of all boys over fourteen years of age, and under eighteen, unless exempted. These forces were known as Senior Cadets; there were also volunteer groups in schools as Junior Cadets.

In 1912 the boys born in 1894 were formed into Citizen Force Units, and from then on were entitled to pay. Small numbers were posted to various arms of the services, where volunteers had kept these formations intact and ready for expansion to full strength. Australia has never acknowledged the debt she owes to these men.

The 34th Battery Field Artillery was one unit that received its quota of boys in 1912 and again in 1913. Major W.S.Hanson was the Battery Commander.

At 11 p.m. (English time) on the 4th August, 1914, Britain declared war on Germany because of the invasion of Belgium. By the 10th August a force of 20,000 had been offered by Australia and accepted by Britain and recruiting commenced. General Bridges to command the force: he called it the Australian Imperial Force, and so the birth of the A.I.F. took place.

Shortly after the declaration of war, Major W.S. Hanson of the 34th Battery suggested that the Battery offer for service as a Unit. This was received with enthusiasm. Enlistment ages for the A.I.F. were 19 to 38 years. Most of the 34th Battery consisted of the 1912 and 1913 Cadet quota intake and some being under 19 years of age they were ineligible for enlistment. A further factor was that all boys under twenty-one must have parents' consent to enlist. Many of the boys of the 34th Battery who were 19 years of age, as well as many of the older volunteer men, who were Sergeants and other specialist rank, enlisted, and were

placed in the 3rd Brigade Ammunition column, 1st Division camped at Morphetville (West of the racecourse). February 1915 saw the ages for recruiting altered to 18 to 45 years (from 19 to 38).

The end of April 1915 saw the first news of the landing of the A.I.F. at Gallipoli on the 25th. This was soon followed by casualty lists, the main outcome was the big lift for over a year in the numbers enlisting.

18th June 1915 saw the announcement from Great Britain – *“Every available man wanted”* even without rifles.

Some of the factors had an influence on the younger group of the 34th Battery, and in June 1915 a number of them were in camp at Mitcham South Australia, training with the 27th Battalion, word having gone around that no further artillery would be required.

Towards the end of July 1915, the 2nd Division A.I.F. was reforming in Egypt when it was decided that Australia could provide Artillery and Engineers to complete this Division. This decision caused all the boys of the 34th Battery and any in camp at the time with artillery experience, to be moved from those Units and sent to an Artillery Base Camp in the south-eastern section of Mitcham Camp, South Australia. This took place starting on Monday 23rd August 1915, and may be said to be the formation date of the 18th Battery.

Sgt. D.M. (Doug) Niemann, an old sergeant of the 34th Battery with many years service as a volunteer, was in charge, and who, like all the other members of the 34th or any other unit, had to be released before enlistment. This caused an intake of members of the 34th Battery, mostly those of the 1913 quota who, by the lowering of the age, could now enlist. The next few weeks saw about forty with previous artillery training, in camp.

Doug. Niemann, incidentally, became a “much loved” Battery Sergeant-Major and served with the battery for two years before being transferred with the rank of W.O.

The first Officer who appeared in the camp was Lieut. J.W.O. Walker, a slightly built, physically fit ex-officer of the British Army (Royal Horse Artillery).

“Johnnie Walker” often took the unit for physical drill at 7 a.m. on those cold August mornings. This often consisted of a run to the “Torrens Arms” with a promise of a drink if you could keep up with him.

26th August saw the unit taken to the 34th Battery gun sheds (now the Torrens Drill Hall) for its first gun drill. On Friday 3rd September the unit moved to Glen Osmond. This was Mr Peter Waite’s property; quarters were in the old stables, coach houses and the lofts.

6th September saw the unit using a section of the 34th guns and wagons, the horses being supplied as was customary from the Remount Farm. The horses were given their freedom during the nights in the paddocks of the property.

On 17th September the Battery took over the other section of the 34th, including “specialists gear” and brought it all to Glen Osmond Camp. For a month the nit had real artillery

training, using the guns, wagons and gear of the 34th, and the horses from the Remount Farm. This was all returned to the Parade Ground on the 15th October, via the west side of North Terrace and down King William Street “at the gallop” – a slight shock to the people of Adelaide, even though they were used to seeing the 34th return from manoeuvres at Montefiore Hill, ‘at the trot’.

23rd September saw Captain E.T. Dean of the 35th Battery take command of the 18th Battery at Glen Osmond as its O.C.

15th October was a public holiday, actually Labour Day, but celebrated as the first Anzac Day with a military procession including Red Cross Volunteers, with ambulance, etc.

On Monday 18th October, following four days leaves, the whole unit – 7 officers, 141 others – left Glen Osmond via Mitcham railway station, to travel by train to Essendon North, at “Marr-Lodge” Camp, Victoria, to join the 6th Brigade. This was an artillery camp only of three brigades for the 2nd Division. The 6th Brigade consisting of the 16th, 17th, 18th Batteries under the command of Lt. Col. H.E. Cohen, appointed to command on 28th August, 1915. The next month was to see the unit busy training and being equipped ready to go overseas.

On 10th November the Brigade was on parade through the streets of Melbourne but only at walking pace; the Governor of Victoria taking the salute on the steps of Parliament House.

On 22nd November - Embarkation and leaving of Australia via Port Melbourne, aboard transport A 34 S.S. “PERSIC” a small passenger cargo liner belonging to the White Star Coy. (Later sold to the Japanese and used as a troopship in the 2nd War, later torpedoed). The twenty-six day voyage on the fairly crowded transport was without any important event. The novelty of the situation possibly helped, once the sea-sick period and wrench at leaving Australia was over. The strict naval discipline and cleanliness was a pleasant surprise to all. The transport A.49 S.S. BOTANIST left Port Melbourne on the 24th November, carrying 400 horses (only 4 of which died on the voyage). Military OC. Of this transport was Major E.T. Dean of the 18th Battery.

Arrived Pt Suez 18th December and on account of the number of transports to be handled it was not our turn until the 21st December.

Then the Battery entrained for Zetour “Aerodrome Camp”, near Heliopolis, some miles from Cairo. A detail of drivers was sent to the railway siding to help unload the horses on arrival. Timed for early evening, drivers were in shorts and shirts, no train arrived. As the night wore on, it became bitterly cold. Asking the British Tommies working for the “R.T.O.” if there was anything available to build a fire, the answer was “dung” if you can find any, this being a common fuel supply in Egypt. Soon a fire was going with straw, dung and the sides of a railway truck, enjoyed by R.T.O Tommies as well. The train arrived at 6 a.m., about 12 hours late.

On 26th December we marched, drivers leading the horses, through to Cairo and on to Maadi: Turo camp, a distance of 16 miles.

On 13th January 1916 moved to Tel-El-Kebir, on the edge of the desert and the Nile delta, the battlefield of 1882 of Lord Wolseley against Arai Pasha, leader of the Egyptian revolt. Old trenches and breastworks were still there, also old coins and rifle ammunition still to be found in the sand.

Sand was of a hard surface and lots of training, mounted, was done. Being on the fresh water canal dug direct from the Nile to Ismaila for the building of the Suez Canal it was a good site for artillery. Whilst here were inspected in the parade of 40,000 Australians by General Murray who did not like their type of discipline, but later learned to appreciate their fighting qualities.

On 8th February 1916 moved to Ferry Post, on east side of the Canal – an entirely new area, never been used as a camping site. Crossed the canal by Engineer's pontoon bridge, construction just completed. We were now on the Sinai Peninsula and detachments took up positions 7 miles east of the Canal, dug gun-pits and sandbagged trenches, an almost hopeless task in the moving sand. Everything in the way of supplies, also rations, and water, was transported by camel. This period was not without incident as it was easy to lose one's way, especially if the "Kamsin" was blowing – "lifting the top off the desert". The horses would not face this. The guns were taken out to these gun pits, and on 6th March the first firing took place.

On 8th March the N.Z. Artillery took over the guns in the pits, also all equipment other than horses and harness.

The Battery then moved back to a camp at Moascar, when it became known to all that the 2nd Division was moving to France.

16th and 17th March saw us move to Alexandria. The drivers and horses went aboard "H.M.T.S. EBOE", the gunners aboard "H.M.T.S. ARCADIAN" – Goodbye to Egypt.

The Australians enjoyed Egypt, its climate, the open air life, the novelty of the people with their completely different mode of living and conditions as compared to Australia. Both learnt something, not always for their good. The natives learn that the Australians could be tough.

Of note were the great "two-up" schools, as well as the "Crown and Anchor" games of an evening at Tel-el-Kebir, and the visit of the Prince of Wales (now the Duke of Windsor); the "counting out" of the Prince, and then the "counting in". Natives were not allowed in the camp lines to sell their wares, so they did so on the watering parades of the horses. These were strictly disciplined on account of the great numbers of horses, no stopping or breaking lines being permitted. This gave the natives opportunities to run off without giving change on selling goods (mostly chocolate and oranges). This was the cause of some of the stampedes of horses. The "Gypos" were also good at thieving horses off the "lines" in the night.

An incident occurred one day when the Battery was out on manoeuvres at Tel-el-Kebir. Officers were still wearing their swords, and one drew his sword to “shoo off” a Gypo who had suffered “retaliation” for a “change episode”.

The historical sites and scenes of Egypt, and in particular Cairo, gave the Australians much more than value for their money, or shall we agree they took full value. The disgusting things as well as the filth and poverty of some of the Gypos is best forgotten. Egypt and Cairo in 1961 was a vastly different place. The British have gone. Population has increased enormously. Vast areas of the desert are now under irrigation. There is still not enough work available to earn a decent living. Possibly the best thing is an attempt to educate all children, which in the long view must make for improvement.

17th March – out in the Mediterranean with plenty of shipping of all kinds to interest us, as well as an occasional glimpse of the coast. On 23rd March we entered the harbour at Marseilles, France, and our curiosity was aroused by a huge German liner anchored and occupied by German prisoners of war. Marseilles was a pretty sight, the city and glorious view of the mountains in the distance.

Horses, baggage and troops were soon aboard a train for the 58 hour trip to Le Havre. No Australian could ever forget this trip, the country, the people, the welcome by the French was wonderful. The scenery of the Rhone Valle, the cities of Orange and Lyons and others the train passed through. Then, as the train drew near to Paris the great railway yards with fast moving trains, both steam and electric, criss-crossing the many sets of rails was fascinating. The Battery was not to see even a glimpse of Paris, the train switched off south of that great city to the coast and Le Havre, and the Battery went into camp at SANVIC.

The horses for this trip were put in covered vans, eight horses in each, four each side facing one another, with a space the width of the door in between them in which the harness, fodder and two drivers “lived” for the trip. The Battery was to become “experts” at this mode of travel in the years to come and with the guns and wagons could entrain or unload on reaching any destination in very quick time.

Arrived at Sanvic camp, Le Havre on the 26th March, and were welcomed by the first fall of snow for man. Clothed only in summer underclothes, exercising of men and horses was the only way to keep warm. The British Army Ordnance soon came to the rescue, indeed the Battery received a shock when a complete battery of four guns and wagons with all the gear necessary, hooked in the teams and marched away ready for action in less than an hour. The “curiosity”, “exploring” and “sympathy” of the Australians both with the French and Belgians started immediately, and although later received some pressure and strain, was never broken, and the friendliness exists to this day.

31st March the Battery entrained for Lynde near HAZEBROUCK. The same day an advance party left for ARMENTIERES by bus (ex London) to be attached to a British 79th R.F.A. battery actually with their guns in action behind the convent walls on the edge of the town, whilst their wagon lines were across the River Lys into Belgium. The Battery wagon lines were set up at ERQUINGHEM and the gun positions three and a half miles away near BOIS-GRENIER.

10th April the actual taking over took place. The right Section's two guns were in an old farm house where part of the walls had been removed and through which the guns fired. When not in action a hessian curtain coloured to look like a brick wall in position. The position was right alongside the support line trenches, these guns never fired direct to the front, as they would have quickly been detected and blown out. Their favourite target was enfilading the communication trench to the north in part of the Armentieres salient. The detachments lived in the farm buildings. Great care had to be observed in day time that nothing was spotted by enemy planes, and for that reason,, an observer was kept on duty on the village road just in front of the buildings. The left section's two guns were in a position in a farm a little to the north-west of Charlie's Farm. It comprised a large group of buildings, the guns being better placed for directing fire on the front line and beyond than the right section were. The Battery stayed in action in these positions for eighty-six days and was relieved on the 2nd July. The Infantry of the 6th Brigade was also taking up their positions at the same time in early April.

This activity in the change over was noticed by the Germans who shelled an infantry billet close by with three hundred shells 5.9 and 4.2 and demolished the building. Ammunition was being saved for the forthcoming Spring Offensive in the Somme, so on some days the Battery only fired two rounds per gun.

25th April, the anniversary of Anzac, the Battery was allowed fifty rounds for the two right section guns. The left section fired thirty rounds per gun on buildings and trenches in enemy lines.

19th April saw No. 4 gun pit Left Section get a direct hit on both gun and billet with a 77M. shell, without serious damage.

15th May the 106 Howitzer Battery became part of the Brigade.

7th June the Battery fired in an operational raid by Australian Infantry, possibly the first raid of any consequence of the A.I.F.

25th June saw the Battery lose two officers wounded when returning from the front line at a junction in the communication trench.

5th May saw the Germans attack the Bridoux Salient. This occurred in the early evening on trenches occupied by the 20th Battalion. The salient was 500 yards in length and curved out 140 yds. From the main front line trench, making it only 125 yds from the German trenches. The 20th Battalion by mistake in orders had two Stokes Mortars in the Salient. This caused quite an upset, as these were new weapons still on the secret list and the Germans captured these, along with some prisoners. History records that the Germans did not realise the new secret weapon was fitted with the special Newton fuse. Both infantry and artillery know this night what it was like to be on the receiving end of a barrage. The German barrage lasted from 7.40 p.m. till 9.30 p.m. and was like a very heavy hailstorm. But retaliation firing the effect was completely overcome. The first week in June was considered the Germans'. We seemed to suffer several losses followed by the news of the Battle of Jutland which was very black to start with.

Sunday 3rd June, King's birthday. Gnr. "B.....s" accordion arrived from London – great celebrations.

Another episode took place whilst in this area. A nine inch shell known as a "dud" was found near the Right Section; it had two 'driving bands' an unusual feature. Very short in length for a shell this size, Someone had tried without success to remove the copper driving bands. It was put up in the support trenches and fired at with armour piercing bullets without any effect. Also rolled out on to the road from a partly demolished two-storied building which also failed to explode it. Finally it was placed in the open fields away from any gun positions and set alight with the aid of petrol on a very dull afternoon.

The German artillery poured about 230 rounds of 4.2 shells at this target, still the dud shell was intact.

Whilst in this position the Battery took part in twenty-eight special operational orders mainly for raids by our Australian INFANTRY. The last week saw the Battery fire 1500 rounds, said to relieve the pressure on the French at Verdun, which started on 21st February, 1916. 30th June being the largest raid, when 8,000 rounds were fired with 1,000 Trench Mortar bombs in the sector.

At the wagon lines at ERQUINGHEM facing the main road which led to Calais a very keen officer had the drivers exercising the horses over low jumps. This caused an unofficial visit from Birdwood who noticed this in passing and came into the lines with the remark – "he didn't think the artillery would be required to jump hurdles".

2nd July saw the Battery hand over to a R.F.A. Battery and thus came to an end our introduction to the Western Front on a quiet sector.

3d July saw the Battery on the march to CAESTRE and the following day to NEUVE- EGLISE in Belgium where the Battery took over from an R.F.A. battery. Messines was to have been attacked by the 1st and 2nd A.I.F Divisions: cancelled on account of the heavy fighting in the Somme attack. This position only lasted until the 8th July when the Battery was relieved and took the road to ST. SYLVESTRE-CAPPEL and all knew the Battery was heading for the SOMME, the attack by the British to relieve the French at Verdun.

The Somme attack started at 7.30 a.m. on the 1st July 1916. The preparatory bombardment for the Somme lasted seven days, using something like 13,000 tons of shells the first day alone. It was heard in England, in Kent, Surrey and Essex, and even in London, when traffic was quiet. Said to be the first time the British showed superiority in Artillery.

On 12th July entrained at ST. OMER at 11 a.m. and arrived at AMIENS at 5 p.m. Marched to BELLOY-SUR-SOMME, then marched to PUCHEVILLERS nearer to the battle area. It was here that the Battery off duty men willingly helped load the ambulance trains.

Many wounded were our 1st Division A.I.F. This opened our eyes to a new phase of the War.

On the 26th July the Battery marched to the brickfield area behind Albert.

On 27th July at 10 p.m. we took up a position in Sausage Gully firing on O.G. 1 & 2 (old German lines). The bombardments for POZIERES were famous, they were visible at times for twenty miles. The Battery stayed in this position for twelve days until relieved on the 9th August by a Lahore battery.

Five men were lost – killed at the gun pits. The back areas were heavily shelled by the German artillery; the Battery losing twenty-five horses, it was remarkable that no one was even wounded.

During this period the 106 Howitzer battery immediately behind A. Sub gun of the 18th, due to an unknown cause, blew up, and with it three hundred rounds of ammunition. This caused a casualty in the 18th and also toppled an ammunition wagon complete with horses over a bank just as it finished unloading.

The Battery moved back to St. Leger for nine days to refit and clean up. 18th August saw the Battery via the Albert brickfields area, back in action in Mash Valley on the opposite side of the Pozieres road to Sausage Valley. This was in support of the capture of Mouquet Farm, a famous name now, and was a very strong German position of cellars, tunnels and very deep concrete dug-outs. In action here for eighteen days.

Leaving the Farm not captured, the 1st Anzac Corps finished its first tour of the Somme on the 4th and 5th September 1916 (1st, 2nd and 4th Divisions) after six weeks of shocking experience. They had suffered almost 23,000 casualties.

The 18th Battery moved via the brickfields to AUTHEVILLE and entrained to the north to GODEWAERSVELDE and from there marched to POPERINGHE (the Toc H town in Belgium).

On 10th September 1916 the Battery took over from 29th Brigade R.F.A. in the YPRES sector, Menin Gate. It was thought by all that this was to be our position for the coming winter.

1st Anzac did a great job in improving this sector. The artillery when taking ammunition to the gun pits carried stores, duck boards etc. to help in this reconstruction, and dumped them at points near the communication saps to the front line.

We were relieved on 27th September and marched to STEENVOORDE where we stayed till 13th October when we again moved back to the Ypres sector to Hill 60, working as before on the improvement to the sector. The Infantry engaged in some good raids during this time, but most of their efforts with great zest was in the work of preparing for the winter. 20th October saw the 2nd Division Infantry moving from the Ypres sector, and all knew it was back to the Somme, and for the winter.

27th October saw the 18th Battery march to St. Omer to entrain for SALEUX in the Somme.

The 17th October 1916 was the completion of one year since leaving Adelaide.

The Battery had fired 12,718 shrapnel and 5,345 high explosive shells, actually from the 10th April, 1916.

In spite of the Battery's heavy engagements the casualties were only five killed and four wounded. The horses were not so fortunate, twenty-one having been killed and eleven wounded and seventeen dying.

On 27th October 1916 marched via BUSSY and then to DERNACOURT and on the 30th and 31st took over from an R.F.A. battery.

The wagon lines were at LONGUEVAL (behind the water tanks) and the gun positions in "Gun Valley" near Ginchy. All these places were in the old battle areas, torn asunder by artillery of both sides, full of trenches, dead buried just where they were killed. Heavy rains had already turned it into a quagmire that defies description.

On 21st November and morning of 22nd – a year since the Battery left Melbourne – fired 450 rounds; also changed our gun position to Ginchy. Stayed in these positions for seventy-five days without relief, in the dreadful weather of the 1916-17 winter.

The 1st, 2nd, 4th and 5th Divisions of the A.I.F. took their turn in the line under the most appalling conditions. At the same time they engaged in attacks on Hilt Trench, Bayonet Trench, all near GUEUDECOURT and FLERS. The ammunition fired in support of these attacks was considerable, often the Battery fired 350 rounds for the day. On 1st December the 18th Battery between 10 a.m. to 6 a.m. on the 2nd, fired 869 rounds; not a bad effort for four guns under such conditions.

On Christmas Day at 11.39 a.m. (noon German Army time) every gun on the Anzac Corp front fired three rounds per minute for nine minutes as a "Xmas Gift". On New Year's Eve (two minutes after midnight German time) we welcomed the New Year somewhat the same as Christmas; the 18 pounders firing twenty rounds per minute for two minutes.

On the 13th and 14th January the Battery was relieved and went to the staging camp at BUIRE. Mainly due to loss of horses, the Battery had to have assistance out of the wagon lines on account of the mud; this was the reason for the relief taking two days.

19th January saw the Battery at the little village of CARDONNETTE. Possibly the worst march the Battery ever had; most teams were down to four horses and they were so weak it was all they could do to drag the wagons along on the muddy, worn roads.

On 26th January the Battery left the 2nd Division Artillery under the re-organization, and became Army Corp Troops. A section from the 59th Battery of the 5th Division also joined the 18th to make a six gun battery. This took place in the four Australian Divisions, the 3rd, 6th and 12th becoming Army Brigades.

The Brigade now consisted of three batteries of six guns each, and one howitzer battery of six guns. The Battery moved back via Buix and on to Mametz for the wagon lines. The gun position was at Gun Valley to the right of GUEUDECOURT taken over from the 10th A.F.A.

Brigade also in position at Flers, another stretch of forty-three days in the mud. A few items of interest during this period in the Somme for the winter of 1916-17.

When moving in the last days of October, the state of the roads made it impossible to arrive at the wagon lines in the one day. After marching all day the horses were done, and the Battery stopped at dusk. Rations, due to the state of the roads, were not available for men or horses. If you could find a spot to lie down with only a little mud – you were lucky! Two drives found such a spot, but on awakening in the early dawn light they saw German Army boots sticking out of the ground just beyond their own boots. Two Germans recently killed had been buried there. Moved on during the day without any rations, and took over from the British battery the most desolate lines the Battery ever used.

As an example of conditions – three men slept the night in an old trench, portion of which was covered over but leaked like a sieve. To keep out of the mud they used a sheet of corrugated iron. The width of the trench would hardly equal an ordinary three-foot bed. (They are all alive still – 1965!)

Taking ammunition to the guns was a task, mostly it was by pack horses, eight rounds per horse, a driver leading two horses and walking himself. The first obstacle was across a shallow watercourse or stream just full of mud, the consistency varying with the amount of rain. If a horse stumbled due to hidden debris in the mud, it usually ended with a bullet. The track to the gun pits led past DELVILLE-WOOD, a scene of heavy fighting. All that was left were some broken tree stumps, and a maze of trenches with the bodies of all the units of both sides being tossed about by shell fire, along with all the gear of an army. Our Infantry support trying to get some relief in little pitiable sand-bagged “humpies” about two feet high, with mud everywhere.

It was here that Birdwood inspected some of the Infantry’s great coats and weighed them, over 100 lbs with the wet and mud! They had chopped off the bottom of the coats to keep them from dragging in the mud, and because of this, a debit was entered against them in their pay book. It is said that Birdwood asked a staff officer to try one of the coats on, the result being that no one was to be “charged” for cutting a coat down under such circumstances.

The Germans were credited with a lot of “dud” ammunition at this period. In some cases a 5.9 shell landing under certain weather conditions would bury itself deeply before exploding, leaving only a small hole where it hit, very easily seen when the snow was on the ground. Due to rain, also a thaw after frost, pity any driver leading a pair of pack horses if one went too close to one of these spots. Without any warning they would cave in, taking horse and ammunition, usually ending in a bullet, the driver just managing to scramble out or away from the edge.

Because of the shortness of daylight, also fog, snow etc., lots will remember the big German skull put on the stump of a tree that became a landmark for the corner of Delville Wood. The direct road to the gun pits was a lightly made road that served the farming area, a good section of this sunken below the level of the fields. It was in a shocking state, full of shell holes, waterlogged and full of mud. To transport timber for dug-outs and other stores a

jinker was made of a General Service Wagon by removing the body and driver's seat and strengthening the cable between the front and rear wheels.

Hooking five pairs of horses in, ridden in the usual gun team style, a party would set out for the gun pits via this sunken road; the lead driver would force his horses into shell holes full of mud and at the same time cross his legs on the front of the saddle. The horses' mouths and nostrils would be filled with mud as each pair went through the shell holes. The mud and wet softened the horses' hoofs and often on returning to the wagon lines, half the shoes would be missing (to the disgust of the farriers). Eventually the Engineers built a track of logs on the high ground. This was promptly registered by the German 5.9 batteries. The logs were not long enough to make the track wide enough for two lines of ammunition wagons, double sections were added for passing. As soon as shells started to fall, ammunition and engineers' carts took to a gallop, and it was an unwritten rule to give way to loaded wagons, putting the wheels on one side off the track into the mud of the returning empty wagons. Any mounted soldier of whatever rank who failed to give way was forced right off the track into the mud. Some very amusing as well as ugly episodes occurred on this track, but it was always looked on as an exciting trip in a dreary world. Later it was found to be under direct German observation.

The main roads had pits dug each side to attempt to drain the mud off the road. At Longueval a British "Tommie" was leading two pack mules, one became stubborn and started to back, ending in a pit of mud and disappearing completely, with only a few bubbles to show what had happened.

When the ground was hardened with frost a "short-cut" from the guns to the wagon lines, past a burnt-out sugar refinery on the highest point of the area was found. On good observation days this could be relied on to draw the fire of the German batteries. This was looked on as a well-worthwhile bit of excitement, even though the reward was often to be sent back with another pack load of ammunition. This was an unofficial track, and only a few young drivers lied 'drawing the fire' of the German batteries.

On the 23rd February the Germans blew the craters in the main road leading from Albert to Baupaume, and on the following day retired beyond the town. South of Baupaume the Germans still held their positions and these kept the Battery occupied till the 18th March when the Battery finally left their dreary winter positions for good, both guns and wagon lines.

On the 19th the Battery moved forward and took position south Baupaume. No one who took part in that night march on the crowded main road to Baupaume will ever forget it. The mud, the craters, the hold-ups, rain, sleet, snow, but next day we were in much better country, grassy patches between the shell holes and generally a vast improvement.

Held positions at Thillooy and Reincourt until the 28th March.

On 31st March the Battery moved via Baupaume township and saw a glimpse of the damage deliberately done by the Germans; and then on north to Ervillers for the attacks on St. Leger

and Cruisselles. Only one line of wagons was taken with the guns to these positions, as well as only single gun crews.

Up to the 17th April the Battery led a very active life, taking part in the attack on BULLECOURT-ECOUST. On several days the Battery fired over a thousand rounds. During this period we had the final winter snowstorm. The guns fired on the enemy over open sights here, and some drivers had the opportunity to serve on the guns whilst unloading of ammunition went on.

For the disastrous attack by the 4th Division A.I.F. on the Hindenburgh Line at the battle of First Bullecourt, the 18th Battery had its guns behind Longatte.

The month of April 1917 saw almost open war compared with anything previously. The artillery was now using shells with the 106 fuse, with great effect, a fragment could kill at 800 yards. Tanks were used with the 4th Division for Bullecourt but through bad timing, the Australian Infantry lost for the time being, any faith in the tanks for an attack.

On 17th April the Battery was relieved and returned to rear wagon lines. The Battery had also been in action for the exciting times of Lagnicourt and Noreuil Valley in which Australian guns were abandoned, captured, and re-taken.

On 18th April we moved back through Baupaume and on through Fremicourt to take up positions at Beaumetz and Velu Wood. The Battery was engaged in the heavy fighting which took place during 2nd Bullecourt and the German counter attacks, seven in all. Thus the Battery took part in the greatest achievements of the Anzac Corp. These battles cost the four Australian Divisions 10,000 casualties. We had seen the British Army send its Cavalry of magnificent men and horses against the German artillery with shocking results. We had the not so pleasant task of catching many riderless horses and taking care of them till they were claimed.

On 12th May we were relieved, moved back through Pozieres and Albert and beyond and had a spell on sports and competitions till 21st May when we entrained at Edge Hill and moved north to BAILLEUL. Two days later we were in action again in M. Group near NEUVE- EGLISE. Had positions in PLOEGSTEERT, the wood of the same name that was drenched with gas shells by the Germans. In this area we first made contact with our 3rd Division A.I.F. and in spite of all the barracking we were all Australians and friends immediately. This was soon put to the test in the Battle of Messines on the 7th June when the 3rd and 4th A.I.F. Divisions fought together in this very successful action. The 18th Battery had positions at Tilleul Farm and at Grabion Farm, Messines, until the 16th June, firing was heavy, often using 1000 rounds a day.

It was here the great mines of Messines Ridge were fired. The 1st Australian Tunnelling Company received great praise for their work on these mines for the last seven months.

On 16th June we were relieved by 3rd N.Z. F.A.B and Battery moved to Hill 63 just south of Messines and almost due west of WARNETON.

On 26th June the Battery pulled out and went back into a rest area.

11th July saw the Battery with the three Australian Army Brigades of A.F.A do the longest and best organized march by road from near BAILLEUL to NIEUPORT almost on the English channel.

The only other Australians in this area were the 2nd Australian Tunnelling Company and the 54th Battery of the Australian Siege Artillery Brigade. The area had always been in the care of the French Army till recently, but had been handed over to the British to make a combined land and sea attack. The Germans attacked first, so the project was stopped in favour of the 3rd Battle of YPRES.

The 18th Battery held positions in the sand dunes, and suffered considerable shelling of the gun positions. 27th July saw five of the guns damaged by hits, all but one being repaired and back in action on the same day.

In this area until the end of August. During this period the Battery had nine guns hit, showing the extent of German artillery activity, including a lot of the new mustard gas shells.

Our artillery was equally active, including gas. Fires were caused in the ammunition of the Battery and Brigade by the enemy shelling; the Battery losing 900 rounds and Brigade 2000 by explosion and fire. Only prompt and brave action saved a bigger disaster.

The carting of ammunition was a night-time job, the wagon lines being a considerable distance from the guns. Being summertime and the roads good, the trips were always made in fast time with the added excitement of a few shells coming over, including gas. Being perfectly flat country away from the sand dunes, and also almost water-logged, with the River YSER and canals almost brimming full, the flats were cultivated with crops and small copses of light brush growth. These details led to two incidents worth mentioning.

Setting up the wagon lines on one of these flats, we promptly cut down the brush growth for 'tent poles' for spreading tarpaulins on, our only shelter. The local farmers soon complained and this cost the Battery six hundred francs from the Regimental funds. The Australian and English pound being at par those days and roughly 25 francs to the £, we learnt that scrub or brush in Belgium was of a different value to that in Australia.

Temper on both sides were a little high over this incident, more so when a light but steady rain set in during the night and after a wasted effort to try and trench the 'humpies' the whole flat was under water. It was a wet and weary Battery that broke camp that morning and dragged the wagons out with some trouble off the flat, now covered with from six to nine inches of water.

Something of a different nature was the supplying of mounted picquets to patrol the beach at NIEUPORT BAINS whilst the King of the Belgians and other senior officers played polo.

Whilst in this area the following incident took place and by British Army law was a mutiny. Brigade posted a senior N.C.O. to the 18th Battery. He came from his own Battery under some disciplinary action, the reason for which is best forgotten. The majority of the 18th Battery signed a petition asking for his removal, partly because it was thought we were to lose a well-liked N.C.O in exchange. A Battery parade was called and all were asked if they wished to have their names removed from the petition. There was no response. Another parade was called for the Colonel of the Brigade. "Our Colonel" rode up on horseback and without dismounting took the salute from the officer in charge of the parade, who was then told to stand the parade 'At Ease'. The Colonel just made the statement – "I run this Brigade", and rode off.

The outcome of this was a song with several verses on the theme of "I am Colonel who runs this Brigade, I am Colonel who is never afraid" and so on. This song was sung at a Brigade concert shortly afterwards in the presence of the Colonel who joined in the chorus with enthusiasm! By a coincidence the N.C.O. who was the cause of all this was quietly re-posted to another unit a few days after the concert!

At the change of command of the 18th Battery which took place about this time, a hit was given to the new Battery commander of this 'Mutiny'. This caused a slight misunderstanding – until the gun crews and guns were hit in the 3rd battle of Ypres. When men "stand firm under fire" – there is no greater test of discipline; the new Battery commander acknowledged this.

On the 27th August we pulled out of action and knew we were going back to join the Australian Divisions now in the 3rd Battle of Ypres that had started on the 15th July. This march again took three days, at the end of which a change took place in the Battery command. Major E.T. Dean, promoted to Lt. Col., went to 1st A.F.A Brigade, and Major F.H. Berryman took over.

The wagon lines were established at Dickebusch and gun positions taken at ZILLEBEKE on the 10th September. The Battery had missed the first bombardment and attack which started on the 15th and 31st July respectively.

For this second attack an even greater concentration of Artillery had been made, 1295 guns, of which 720 were field guns, one to every 12 ½ yards in the 1st Anzac sector. The preliminary bombardment took place for five days. Actual barrage for the attack 5.40 a.m. on the 20th September. Expenditure of ammunition in the preliminary bombardment and barrage for all guns was 3 ½ million shells.

Known as the Menin Road Battle it was the most strenuous, drawn out, and dangerous the Battery had been in. Seven members of the Battery were killed and twenty-two wounded. The Battery moved forward about a 1000 yards to the prepared gun pits during the night. Next day drivers moved the ammunition by pack horses, each driver with two horses carrying ten shells each, covering about 17 miles, with the added excitement of a few heavy German shells and German pilots having a look over the side, and down would come a bomb. One driver with his two horses and ammunition were killed with an almost direct hit by one of these pilots.

Menin Road was known as the first step, and Polygon Wood, the second, took place on the 26th September.

On the 25th September Germans attacked and gave us everything they had in both forward and rear areas. We had twelve wagons of ammunition just beyond the old gun positions ready to pack-horse it into the new gun positions when the barrage fell just before daylight. We were extremely fortunate in only having two drivers killed, one horse killed and six wounded.

The ammunition was moved by the same men and horses with pack saddles during the day.

The Battle for Polygon Wood on September 26th was an epic of courage and bravery for all Australian troops engaged. The Battery was at Clapham Junction. The area was near the assembled British tanks used in the battle. German guns searched and swept the area and only one gun was left in action. Casualties were heavy.

The Battery was relieved after twenty-three days in action on the 3rd October and moved back to rest area LA-MOTTE near Hazebrouck. On the 18th October (2 years since we left Adelaide) it moved back to the YPRES area.

The Battery losses for the second year were fifteen killed and sixty-two wounded. 19 horses were killed, 21 wounded and 13 died. Ammunition used in second year – total 62,748 shrapnel 36,084; high explosive 26,473, smoke 191.

The 18th Battery missed the “Third Step”, the fight for the Broodseinde Ridge on the 3rd and 4th October. Three very successful attacks were made in 15 days, with great credit to all the Australians taking part. The weather had been slowly showing signs of the coming of winter.

On the 29th October a German plane dropped a bomb right on our horse lines, killing 7 and wounding others.

The 9th October saw the “Fourth Step”, 1st PASSCHENDAELE (in which the Battery was not in action).

From the 18th October to the 10th November, the Battery was in action near ZILLEBEKE in the dreadful days following the disaster of Passchendaele 1 and 2, when the mud and rain was even worse than that of FLERS in the SOMME.

The Canadians attacked Passchendaele on the 26th October, and on the 30th October, 6th November, 10th November, and were successful in capturing The Ridge and holding it, The Australian Infantry was in the 26th October attack only, but the Artillery was in action mainly in the KEIBERG area till the final attack on the 10th November.

Thus the Third Battle of Ypres cost the A.I.F. over 38,000 losses. The Battery lost 14 in this battle: A Memorial Service was held.

Some of the incidents of this period were:

The work at the gun pits was so exhausting that frequent changes of crews were necessary. Following the rain setting in it was almost an impossible task to keep the ammunition clean. Guns suffered direct hits. German gas shells of a new and more dangerous type were a great nuisance. When gun crews were killed the guns alongside never failed to keep in action.

Just behind the houses of the little village of Dickebusch is a chain of shallow ponds – man-made – to drain the water off around the village. During our time they were ponds of mud, just level with all the surrounding mud. Woe betide anyone who strayed into these ponds, and they had no respect for rank – “the victims know”- (Note: These ponds were visited in 1961 in the summer, and to see the sparkling water, the umbrellas and tables, with people drinking, eating and enjoying themselves – it was hard to realise these were the same ponds of 1917.)

YPRES, the Belgian town with the famous Cloth Hall, we gradually saw disappear from ruined walls to heaps of dust from the German artillery.

The Menin Gate that led out of the town on the road to “Hell Fire Corner”. Every night the ammunition wagons, as well as the Engineers’ carts gathered here and stopped behind the walls of the estaminet to time the bursts of the German shells. Then each team in its turn went around the corner at a gallop and up the Menin Road, or turned south towards ZILLEBEKE, this road turned off a short distance up the Menin Road. Unfortunately, the British batteries’ wagons under an officer or N.C.O would not follow the Australian example and both men and horses suffered shocking casualties.

At “Hell Fire Corner” there is a small stone by the roadside stating this is the point where the German Army was stopped in its advance.

The Menin Gate Memorial, built into the ramparts of Ypres, has on the east side a figure of the British Lion with the words “They shall not pass”.

The east side of the Memorial is marked all over by blasts of explosives from charges laid and fired by British Engineers to blow up the bridge across the moat on the east side of the Memorial (as seen in 1940). This Memorial carries the names of 6000 Australians killed in these battles with no known grave.

Half a mile north-west of Dickebusch we had our wagon lines at one stage, and there were several Nissen huts here, used by the Battery. This is now the position of the “Huts Cemetery” and nine of the boys killed during the 3rd Battle of Ypres are buried here. They lie in two pairs, and five in a row.

TYNE COTT Cemetery 5 ½ miles from Ypres, out towards Passchendaele holds the graves of 1353 Australians, as well as the names of 35,000 British, with no known grave, many of whom are Australians. The Cross of Sacrifice in this cemetery is an old German pill-box captured by the 2nd Division on the 4th October 1917, in the Battle of Broodseinde.

Whilst the wagon lines were in Dickebusch one of the 18th Battery drivers put his pair of horses in a room of a shattered house, where the roof and walls gave some shelter. Alongside was a beautiful pair of horses (mares) belonging to a British officer. When the officer sighted these gun team horses, he really “went off”. The driver (with a ‘little bit of French blood’ and rather ‘fed up’) said – “They are only a pair of poor old geldings, what harm can they do”. The Belgian billeting officer found that the officer’s horses were in the 18th Battery’s billet area, paid for by the British Army, so with good Australian tact, all the four horses gained the benefit of what shelter they could from the cold, rain, snow and mud!

Cooks were always a problem, as well as rations. A small unit like a battery without a mobile cooker, and always split up into groups, requiring a splitting of rations and a cook for each group.

During this period a driver volunteered for this work and out of army Rations turned on wonderful meals first at the wagon lines. He volunteered to go to the gun pits and do the same; unhappily, a German shell found his row of “dixies” and “He lies with his Mates” in the Huts Cemetery.

The Battery left this Ypres salient area on 10th November, and moved to the wagon lines at Kemmel, and on 15th November, guns went into action at St. Eloi and Oaten Wood until the 20th December.

On the 22nd November (2 years since we left Australia) we fired over 600 rounds on various targets towards WERVIXO. On 20th December the Battery was relieved and became reserve artillery.

Wagon lines shifted to a camp of huts with stables for the horses. This camp was situated mid-way between the towns of BAILLEUL and ARMENTIERES in France with the Belgian border just a few yards away from the camp. This was the Battery camp for Christmas and the New Year and the Battery enjoyed it. The Australian Comforts Fund “turned it on”. Each sub-section had a celebration in their own hut, and the fact that the whole Battery was together made it a time to remember.

Rations for the Christmas Day dinner to each sub-section consisted of two turkeys, 14 lbs. of pudding and 28 lbs of cake; all this came from the Battery Club as well as a parcel for each member of the Battery. This was our best Christmas celebration since leaving Australia, and it became a real European Christmas as towards early evening the first fall of snow for the winter started, and before midnight the whole countryside was covered with a complete mantle of snow.

The year 1917 closed with the Battery still in this camp. (as from 1st January 1918) We stayed in this camp as wagon lines until 6th April 1918. As Corps Reserve Artillery the Battery built many gun-pits and carted in ammunition. Some were used by the guns going into action for raids by one of the Australian Divisions in what was known as the winter campaign at Messines; other pits were never used by the Battery.

On the 4th January the 18th Battery won the competition for the best turned out battery – we were inspected by Brig. Gen. Cowen.

On the 8th January, 1918, the Battery put the red dot on the colour patch to denote 6th Brigade. Likewise the 3rd and 12th Brigades Army Artillery at 3 and 12 o'clock. The "wags" had it that it was at the request of the Provost Corp! In building these gun pits a lot of timber was salvaged from the ruins of the buildings in Neuve-Eglise. This proved to be impregnated with gas, and in disturbing it a lot of men became affected, many losing their voices completely.

On 20th February we built a set of gun pits and the Battery was to be ready to occupy them at two hours notice.

On 21st February crews at gun pits were to have 24 rifles and each man allotted a rifle to carry fifty rounds of ammunition. Batteries to have a stock of "Mills Bombs" available, also one Lewis Machine gun mounted for defensive protection of gun pits; also the pits to be protected by barbed wire on flanks and in rear.

The famous "Fight to the Finish" order was issued – That Batteries will fight with every weapon until stopped'. Every Australian soldier knew the great German offensive was expected, and there was every likelihood of the guns being surrounded in these areas in the first onslaught. This actually did happen, but Fate decreed that this was only to happen after we had been relieved, and the New Zealand Artillery 'caught it'. At the end of March, the 18th Battery provided a crew for a 15-pounder anti-tank gun.

On 9th and 10th March German artillery turned it on, the forward and rear areas were pestered; also, their Air Force bombed places like Bailleul and all railheads, etc., and we all knew the Germans were about to make their great strike before the Americans were in strength to assist.

At 4.43 a.m. on the 21st March 1918, Ludendorff struck and the greatest battle of the War started. By the 23rd the news that the Germans were nearly back to Pozieres was known, and the Messines sector, from being an Australian one, quickly changed, and all knew the Divisions were heading south back to the Somme. The Australians were elated at this.

On the 8th April the gunners played the drivers at Australian Rules football, the gunners winning, making the games even, the drivers having won the first match played.

We started the move south the next day. This was a typical Australian attitude, the sports were of first importance until the "fight was on".

The 18th Battery was relieved by the 9th Battery of the 2nd Army Brigade of the New Zealand Field Artillery, guns being exchanged, and we immediately march by way of Bailleul-Armentieres road to Strazelle railway station and entrained on the 9th April. Arrived at Amiens, now an almost deserted city (except for troops) we immediately moved out to Franvillers.

On 11th April relieved C Battery of the 157 Brigade R.F.A. with guns in action at Ribemont. It seemed strange to have the guns in action here, so many miles behind the front line to where the Battery left it less than a year ago. The Battery was very active. The gun limbers and six ammunition wagons, ready for any emergency. This also took place at any heavy bombardment starting on "either side".

The Battery fired 6000 round in the 19 days of April in this position, a very busy time for all. April was the month when the Australians played a great part in barring the German advance on Amiens. At the same time the 1st Australian Division which had been rushed back north to Flanders did a great job in helping to keep Hazebrouck, with its important railway centre, clear of the Germans.

Sunday the 21st April saw the chase and fight which ended in the bringing down of Baron Richtofen's plane. Thousands of Australian Infantry fired with rifles, also machine guns of all types, both official and unofficial firing. How anyone can claim the firing of the bullet that caused his death is just plain stupid. This was in the Somme Valley near our position, many of the Battery had a look at the plane which quickly had a guard on it, or it would have been souvenired piece by piece. The Battery helped the Brigade under the 3rd Division A.I.F. in salvage operations in Ribemont, of wool, wine and stock foods. The French authorities were very pleased with this effort. It was only natural that some of the goods were also 'used'.

During the next few months our horses fared very well; the crops were ripening and it was only to be expected that with farm machinery available in towns like Corbie that it should be put to good use, cutting crops of clover etc. chaffing it up and feeding it to the horses. Likewise crops of potatoes were maturing and we became 'experts' at digging and frying chips. All this would have been wasted otherwise, as the French people who had planted these crops would not venture into these areas. Rations were short, due to the extreme demands of transport of all kinds, right back to the ships occupied in bringing the Americans over.

24th and 25th April saw the 2nd Battle of Villers-Bretonneux which by the 26th left most of the town in British hands.

The 1st fight for Morlancourt also took place at the end of April. April had been a great month, at least from the Australians' point of view. On the 6th, the German thrust was over and from then on we knew it was possible to beat them.

When the British Navy made the successful thrust at ZEEBRUGGE in the destroyer raid on the 23rd, the news was received with cheers.

On the 25th, when we heard of the capture from the French of Mont Kemmel, in the north – although a shock to know the Germans had pushed so far back, we only thought it gave us a better opportunity with the Allies in clean country and the Germans in the old torn muddy battle areas.

The Battery stayed in this position till the 9th May when the gun positions, with guns, were handed over to the batteries of the 8th Brigade, A.F.A., and we became Divisional mobile reserve. We at once went into action firing gas shells into Dernancourt.

Wagon lines were now at Frechencourt alongside a small stream that fed into the Ancre River, and also had a few small, but quite deep lakes surrounded by beautiful trees, almost like a park. The horse lines were placed on the old track formation of the light railway (removed by the Germans) until the Engineers came along to replace the rails and we had to move the lines a little further away from the protecting bank. This caused us to start on the never-ending job of bomb protection for the horses by building barricades behind the horses. The weather was now improving and this brought out the planes in great numbers. German planes came just before the break of day, and with lots of wagon lines along the river bank, plus the light railway and all the troops with their 'humpies' dug into the bank, this area offered a good target.

The morning of Friday 10th May saw a German plane flying very low bring down several lovely tall trees and overturn a couple of small huts, without a hit on the rail track, or any men or horses. The 18th Battery was the last of the units on the south end, with its anti-aircraft Lewis gun mounted on top of the low bank with the bell tent for the guard alongside.

As the plane came straight down the line the double drum of the gun was fired at it, the pilot looked over the side and dropped a bomb. The tent went flop on the ground and the guards not on duty and many disturbed men getting this early Reveille, were surprised to see a bomb about 3 feet in length (said to be a 60 kilo) lying a few feet from the tent. The Air Force boys said the hail of bullets may have caused him to turn as he released the bomb, and as he was so low it landed on its side.

Whatever the reason, it was lucky for a lot of men and horses of the 18th Battery. As the plane was so low it had to run the gauntlet of all the firing in the trench lines ahead, and did not appear to regain height. Rumour had it that it never reached German held territory; what is certain is that no Reville call was needed by the 18th Battery that morning!

On the 19th May the Australians took part in the attack on VILLE-SUR-ANCRE; "the boys" also captured the much wanted Morlancourt ridge. The Battery fired 5200 rounds for the month of May. During this month the Battery first saw the Americans in increasing numbers, mostly engineers. The Battery played football against them, both Soccer, Rugby and Australian rules. Americans coached the Battery to play baseball, providing all the gear. The first match was a walk-over for them but the Battery won in the return match much to their surprise.

June saw the promotion of Monash to the command of the Australian Corps of the five divisions of the A.I.F. The 10th June saw the attack just before dark for the final piece of the high spur between Morlancourt and Ville, in which the 18th Battery took part. Indeed, we were becoming a very mobile battery; our guns were moved from one position to another frequently; and from one Australian Division to another, as well as from group to group for various attacks. Mostly we had forward wagon lines as well as the main wagon lines.

South of the Australian Corps was the French Army, so we were the southern flank of all the British Armies, our main charge was to hold the high ground of the Viller-Bretonneux plateau to prevent any danger to Amiens. Over 6,000 rounds fired by the Battery in June.

On the 4th July the 18th Battery took part in the Battle of HAMEL. Great preparations had been made for this, and at 3.10 a.m. the barrage opened with an 18-pounder gun to every 25 yards of front being attacked. Tanks, smoke shells, and the barrage turned the dawn into a fog. Four companies of the 33rd American Division were with the Australian infantry.

On the nights previous to the attack the 18th prepared gun positions and carted in ammunition forward of the infantry attacking positions, leaving before daylight with everything camouflaged. On the last night the guns were moved forward in front of the Infantry, to their surprise, leaving only sufficient guns to fire the usual early morning "ration". The Air Force, including the Australian Air Force, played a large part. It was a great success. The Germans also used tanks in this battle and some were captured.

The Battery used large amounts of ammunition during July, including a lot of gas shells. It was a shock to see so many young German soldiers with their gas masks on, lying dead from our gas shells. It almost seemed as if whole platoons had been lined out ready for the Battle of Hamel, and gone to sleep with their gas masks on, never to wake again.

Our gas shells were certainly effective, and we were too busy to have any pity for the victims.

On the 26th July the Brigade was relieved by 86th Army Brigade R.F.A. This month, mid-summer, had seen great activity in the air, attacks on observation balloons, and aerial fights by both sides with the results being fairly even. Many planes were brought down.

The Battery moved back into action positions on the 5th August ready for the big day that was coming off, no firing taking place.

On 8th August 1918 – the "Great Day" for the British, particularly the Australian Corps of the five Divisions, with the two Canadian Divisions on the southern flank, followed by the French Army, and on the northern flank, two British Divisions.

At 4.20 a.m., 2,000 guns opened with a crash. The Australian Corp had an 18 pounder to every twenty-two yards. The 18th Battery was in a position just north of the main Amiens to Peronne road. Firing at a rate of four rounds per minute, per gun, was kept up to 6.43 a.m., when the battery became mobile reserve to 14th Australian Infantry Brigade. By 9 a.m. the Battery had moved to its second position, having moved up the main road towards Lamotte. By 1 p.m. the Battery had moved forward about 5 miles to Bayonvillers, going into action in support of the infantry for the third objective.

When the limbers and ammunition wagons went forward just one hour after the start, the smoke and fog was so thick it was like being in a London fog, one never knew what was in front until 'you ran into it'. The teams could easily get lost.

When the smoke and fog lifted it was possible to see a great part of the battle area, and the fighting north in the valley of the Somme River where it was more difficult. Great batches of prisoners, guns, motor lorries, and stores in dumps were captured.

To get further supplies of ammunition the teams went back to Warfusee in the German lines before the attack and here met the motor lorries loaded with shells in boxes. With one driver minding the team, the other two drivers would obtain boxes of ammunition from the lorries, drop them on the road on their corners and shatter them, and then load the shells. Rather a risky business with 106 fused shells, and soon the heaps of boxes were as big as a row of houses.

As soon as the wagons were filled and extra boxes placed on top and on the foot rests, the drivers would set off at a gallop to return to the guns.

We camped in the open near Bayonvillers for the night, and possibly for the first time it was noticed that every horse, after being fed, was lying down and the picquet had no troubles with the horses that night. The horses never looked better, due to the grazing and extra feed available in the fields, and were hardened with regular work.

The following day the Battery supported the 5th Australian Infantry Brigade in its successful attack on Framerville. On the 10th August the Battery was in action covering Harbonnières but was relieved the following day to become Divisional reserve. This lasted only one day, then we were back in action near Hauvillers for the attack on Lihons. The Battery held positions at Fouilloy and Guillaucourt. Germans were shelling with long range, high velocity guns all around this area the battery had some close calls and had to move the horse lines a few times. Enemy bombers were also a nuisance and every new set of horse lines had to be protected with bomb splinter barricades which kept the drivers very busy.

On 15th August the Battery held a position at ROSIERES village with a large railway station and a German dump, consisting of British, French and German shells, brass and copper, taken from the French villages. Included on the sidings also, was a fully equipped Ambulance Train, as well as a German 5" gun.

Here, in a German officers' mess was found a case of 1 lb blocks of candied honey which was very acceptable as emergency rations, and this was carried for days in the wire baskets under the wagons without melting.

Rosieres railway station was a good target for the German artillery. It was here on Sunday the 18th August we celebrated our thousandth day since leaving Australia.

23rd August saw the Battery attached to the 4th Division Artillery, to help the 1st Division A.I.F. just north of the Amiens main road in the attack on FOUCAUCOURT. The following day the Battery was relieved by a Battery of the 34th Division French Artillery, and moved to a position at CHAULNES and wagon lines at CHUIGNOLLES. While there, many of the Battery visited the big 14" gun lying in Arcy Woods between the gun position and the wagon lines.

This was one of the largest guns that fired on Amiens. The Germans destroyed it when the advance started on the 8th August.

This month had certainly been mobile for the Battery, it had moved frequently from one sector to another, and had been with all the five Australian Divisions as well as being attached to the British 32nd Division. While with this Division (from 29th August till 5th September) the famous fight for Mont St. Quentin and the advance and capture of Peronne took place. The 2nd, 3rd and 5th A.I.F. Divisions and 32nd British were in the attack. The 1st, 2nd, 3rd and 5th Australian Divisions of Artillery with the 3rd, 6th and 12th Army Brigades of the A.F.A. plus 8 brigades from the British Army.

General Rawlinson described it as the "Finest single feat of the War" and many Australians who took part think it to be the most brilliant of all. One thing is certain, all Australians who were there were 'On top of the world' for the next few days.

On the 6th September the Battery crossed the Somme River at St. Christ by a temporary bridge and looked like being bombed by German planes, until they were driven off by A.A. fire.

The Germans were now retiring to the Hindenburgh Line, and the Australians following fast as conditions would permit. The 18th Battery moved forward with the 32nd British Division to RAINES. We then took part in the attack by the 1st and 4th Australian Divisions with the 4th Division Australian Field Artillery in the left group under Lt. Col. H.E. Cohen, 6th Brigade, at VENDELLES and LE-VERGUIER on the 18th September.

It is interesting to note that Lt. Col. E.T. Dean was in charge of the 4 Brigades in the right group for the attack, under the 1st Division Australian Field Artillery.

21st September saw the 1st and 4th Divisions of the A.I.F. (Infantry only) in sight of the Hindenburgh line, relieved, and this was to prove to be their last fight of the War.

For the attack on the Hindenburgh line on the 29th September the 18th Battery had the task of firing smoke shells to cover the flank of the 30th American Division, the smoke to cover the entrance to the Bollicourt Canal tunnel. The Americans were followed by the 5th Division A.I.F. Heavy rain helped to spoil this attack.

The Battery was now at Tincourt and Villeret. The south entrance to the tunnel at Bellicourt was captured on the 29th September, but the northern end was not captured until 1st October, by which time the main sections of the great Hindenburgh Line were completely taken.

The 2nd, 3rd and 5th Divisions A.I.F. went forward along with the 32nd British Division and later the 27th and 30th American Divisions until the 5th October, when the capturing of the village of Montbrehain was the last fight of our great Australian Infantry Divisions, and one of the most brilliant.

The 18th Battery in those last few days moved up in support of the above attacks through Bellicourt Nauroy, Jocourt, Magny-la-Fosse.

On the 6th October all the Australian batteries of the five Divisions and 3rd, 6th and 12th Army Brigades were transferred to the 11th American Corps. The 18th Battery was with the American 30th Division; which had relieved our 2nd Division Infantry, the last Australian division to leave the fighting. The 18th Battery moved forward to Montbrehain, Wiancourt, Vaux, Bois Proyant, Busigny.

On the 17th October, 1918 (just three years since leaving South Australia) the Battery covered the objective ST. MARTIN RIVIERE for the 30th American Division: Objective gained, they moved forward for further advance. The Germans had retired.

On Friday 18th October the Battery supported the attack again out east of Busigny and this was to prove the Battery's last firing in the War. Germans were retiring but using their artillery to good effect. The 18th Battery became reserve.

On the 21st October, we received orders to take up positions again, but it was found that the horses were not fit for further work, and we were left as Corps reserve. Some of the A.F.A. Brigades were still with the American Divisions till the 4th November when British Divisions took over.

The Battery had been losing many horses through the heavy and constant work, as well as those killed. It was the same with the men, a number wounded, but many falling sick, and this left the Battery very much under strength.

The Bellicourt Tunnel was inspected by many of the Battery on the 4th October, some of them being present when one of the famous war correspondents took a photo in the so-called "Boiling Down Kitchen". It was quite easy to explain to the war correspondent that a British, possibly a 60-pounder ("Long Tom" as they were called) firing from well south of the tunnel entrance, had penetrated the wall of the tunnel entrance; and this was the only way because of the deep cutting of the canal.

Most likely an armoured-piercing shell with a delayed action fuse, coming right into the room before bursting, had disastrous results on the Germans, some killed could have been cooks, others on kitchen fatigue or just collecting a hot meal. A few days later the "Daily Mail" was available in this battle area, with the story of finding a German boiling down plant of those killed. Propaganda of this kind did not please the Australians. This famous war correspondent was considered a 'poor type' by those who actually saw it all. We know now he was not to blame for this propaganda.

After we crossed the Somme on the 6th September, there were many opportunities when Australians carried on a private war with German guns and ammunition, as well as fireworks displays of a night with German flares. It was easy to check the range with a nearby gun in position, or elevate it to extreme range and give the Germans the benefit of the ammunition they had left alongside the captured guns.

A more dangerous game was to use a captured gun for a target to try out German hand grenades. The troops of all the different units in the forward areas amused themselves in this way. Aerial activity during this period was most spectacular, especially of a night. The German bombers would come over and the search-lights would open up and if they caught a German plane in the beam, a fighter plane high above would swoop and with incendiary bullets set it alight.

On the 13th September the 18th Battery saw five German bombers brought down in this way. This sort of excitement, night after night, had a bad result, in the weariness of the troops. Still the summer months of 1918 and even when the rains came in September and October, were the brightest of the war for the Australian Corps. They all knew the climax of the war was imminent and when the Battery moved away from the old war-worn areas, it enjoyed the beauty of the countryside.

The beauty of all the park-like areas of many varieties of trees in the Proyart district, and the many groups of trees dotted around the small hills near Montbrehain and Busigny. On the 10th October the Germans left Busigny at 8 a.m. and by mid-day the Americans and Australian Artillery had been through the village, much to the amazement of the French villagers who had never seen either before. They treated us well and gave the troops lots of green vegetables out of their extensive gardens. Here in Busigny we camped in German huts, with stables for the horses. Some of the men even had beds to sleep in that had been used by German officers.

On 26th October started the four days march back to Lammotte on the River Somme, 7 kms. from Amiens, and now about 100 kms. From the forward area.

On 8th November talk was common that the war was over, but all the same, the 10th November saw the Battery start back towards the forward area, arriving at Proyart for the night.

Records show that the 1st and 4th Divisions were moving back to follow the Germans and our Brigade was to go with them.

At 2 p.m. on Monday 11th November, 1918 the order was read to the Battery in the little broken down village of Proyart that the Armistice had been accepted by the Germans.

The 16th November saw the Battery move back to Lammotte, where we had German p.o.w.s. to clean the harness, groom the horses and other chores, encouraged with a few cigarettes and Army biscuits.

On the 22nd November the Battery celebrated the third anniversary of leaving Australia with Brigade sports and a Battery dinner. The 27th American Division to whom the Battery was still attached, sent their band to the Sports Meeting. The 4th Division, A.I.F. Concert Party, the "Smart Set" turned on a special concert for the Brigade at Cannon.

The strength of the Battery was down between 50 and 60, with men also on leave. All horses not considered fit had been returned to the remount section, and on the 24th December at Abbeville we picked up 60 new horses.

The 8th December saw the Battery again moved back to Proyart, and from there we marched on to Vraignes, Bellinglise and to Bohain, where the Battery stayed for five days, men billeted in houses, horses in stables.

On 15th December we started the march into Belgium, which took four days. We were attached to 2nd Division A.F. who occupied an area between Chaleroi and Maubeuge. The 18th Battery was billeted in the small village of ERPION which, of course, had been occupied throughout the war by the Germans. The Battery arrived there on the 19th December to find the villagers very shy and a little afraid. The Battery 'turned on' a Christmas party for the children, which became a village party for all. This broke down all barriers, and it was an 'Open Village' from then on. Many of the houses found a spare room and spare beds and turned them over to the men. It was funny to see three men of the Battery sleeping in a double box bed, usually across it for more room, but it was a great improvement on what they had been used to.

During January 1919 the Battery was brought up to full strength; also re-fitted with new clothing and equipment.

The Brigade was paraded before the Prince of Wales (now the Duke of Windsor). On 8th February the guns and wagons marched to Chatelineau and were handed over to ordnance.

17th February 1919 saw the first draft of men go from the Battery to start the long journey back "Home to Australia". It included 46 original members of the Battery and others with equal length of service.

Actually the existence of the Battery at Erpion on the 17th February could be considered as its final day.

The 9th March 1919 saw the remainder of the Battery transferred to the 12th Battery at THUIN as part of the 2nd Div. A.I.F. The main draft moved down to the port of LE HAVRE and went across to England, to be camped at SUTTON VENY on Salisbury Plains, and finally by train through Exeter to Devonport to board a transport for Australia and HOME.

As a troopship left Devonport all the ships of the British Navy in port there would move into line each side of the channel and with their crews and bands paraded on deck "Salutes" would be exchanged with the troopship as it passed down the line; this would be followed by cheers and the bands playing – a remarkable tribute and farewell by England and the British Navy, for whom the Australians had the greatest admiration.

RECORDS

Total number of days on service out of Australia	1227
Days in action	602
Days out of action	458
Days at sea	36
In Egypt	86
In France	657
In Belgium	413

SHELLS FIRED

Shrapnel	86,350
High Explosive	59,043
Smoke	<u>876</u>
	<u>146,264</u>

Average of 243 for every day in action

Number of persons who served in Battery	Officers	29
.....	Others	363

Number of original personnel in Battery on Demobilisation	46
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Number of personnel never off strength of Battery For sickness or other causes	2
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CASUALTIES OF PERSONNEL

Killed or died of wounds and other causes	32
Wounded	111

HORSES

Killed in action or died	105
Wounded	64

DECORATIONS WON IN BATTERY

Distinguished Service Order	1
Military Cross	5
Distinguished Conduct Medal	2
Military Medal	27
Bar to Military Medal	2
Croix de Guerre	3
Meritorious Service Medal	2
Mentioned in Dispatches	8
Croix de Virtute Militaire, 2 nd Class (Roumania)	1

18th BATTERY CLUB

On the 28th January 1916 a meeting was called in the Stow Church Hall, Flinders Street, Adelaide, and the 18th Battery Club – the first Club of its type to look after the comforts of the men in the Unit, was formed. The meeting was called by Mrs E.T. Dean, wife of the OC. of the Battery. This Club held forty monthly gatherings before being disbanded in August 1919.

Many of the mothers and sisters of men of the original Battery are recorded in the Minutes of this Club. Also among the friends of men of the Battery, who looked after their interests in the Club, were such names as Sir E.T. Smith, Mr S. Kidman, Mr C. Grieve, all of whom were generous in their support.

This club collected in the vicinity of £2,000 to send extra special items of food to the unit. As well, some six hundred Christmas parcels were sent to the Battery in 1916, 1917, 1918. In addition, about 200 cases of special clothing, including hundreds of pairs of woollen socks. No unit could have had a more loyal band of women and men to look after them and do such a magnificent job. When the Club was disbanded in August 1919 it passed on the funds in hand – some £200 – to give the new 18th Battery Men's Club a very fine start. This part of the club took over from the women's club in August 1919. The majority of the Unit had returned to Australia by then.

Patron of the Club – the only one we have ever had – is Col. E.T. Dean, the first OC of the Battery and still 'going strong' after 50 years. Mr C. Grieve, who acted as Treasurer and a generous and willing worker for the Club during the war years, was the first elected President. Following this time and up until now the President's position and all other positions on the Committee have been filled by members who served in the Battery.

For many years the Club held an Annual Picnic for the benefit of members' families, these were very successful and were only dropped when the families grew up.

On Anzac Day the Battery is always strongly represented in the March under the badge of the 6th Brigade, and of later years, with a very fine flag with the Brigade colour patch on it, and the words "18th Battery" lettered on it. This flag was a present from Mrs W.T. Dean.

Following the March a short 'get-together' with a drink and lunch is held. This has been held at the Gresham Hotel for many years, but 1965 will be the last, as the hotel will be demolished later this year.

The main function of the year is held on the Friday night nearest to the 22nd November, the date of our embarkation in 1915 at Port Melbourne. This year's re-union will be our Jubilee. This is to be held in the Anzac Memorial Hall, Angas Street, Adelaide, on Friday, 19th November and with a nominal roll of 140 members, it is hoped for a good gathering. The Governor of South Australia, His Excellency Lieut-General Sir Edric Bastyan, K.C.M.G., K.C.V.O, K.B.E., C.B., is to be the guest of the Battery.
