

Extracts from the War Diary of the 15th Divisional Medium Trench Mortar Batteries of the Royal Field Artillery

War Diaries were kept by all British, Dominion, Indian and Colonial army units as well as military hospitals and the Royal Flying Corps in all theatres of the First World War.

The intention was not to give details of particular individuals but to record each unit's activities very briefly on A3 size pro forma sheets.

The following extracts have been selected because they give a background to Tickhill man Horace Brown's service with the Z Trench Mortar Battery in the months until he was wounded on 25 July 1917 when he earned the Military Medal for saving his commanding officer's life. (Horace Brown's story is given in Occasional Paper 16.)

Thanks to Lesley Nicholson for transcribing this War Diary which is held by The National Archives Ref.: WO95/1924 C565287 and is reproduced with their permission.

<u>Place</u>	<u>Date</u>	<u>Hour</u>	<u>Summary of Events and Information</u>	
	October 1916			
St Gratien	1 to 7th		Division at rest. Batterys personnel employed in cutting Fascines.	
St Gratien	8th	3 p.m.	Batteries proceeded by Motor Lorry to Bscourt Wood - Relieved 23rd Division.	
O.G.I. East of Le Sars	9th		4 guns taken over in line from 23rd Division - No guns in action	
	10th			
	11th		1 Gun in action about M.16.C.	
	12th		9th Division attack on Butte de Warlencourt- Attack failed to reach objectives MORTars in Action	
	13		1 Gun in action about M.15.B.2.F	
	14th - 20th		Firing done by both Guns - Situation Quiet.	
	21		Canadian attack on W of Le Sars - Successful	
	22/23		Nothing to report.	
	24th		Guns moved forward to attack on 25th - In action.	
	25th		Attack postponed.	
	26/27		Nothing to report.	
	28th		Attack postponed until 1st Nov	
	29/30/31		Nothing to report.	A. C. Elliott Capt XV Div T.M.O
	Nov-16			
Le Sars	1st to 8th		Two 2 Tranch Mortars in action at Le Sars at M.16.D.4.8 and M.15B0-9 Personnel of on Battery attached to 15th D.A.C. At M25D.	
	3rd & 4th		15th Division relieved by 48th Division	
Bscourt	9th		Relieved by 1st Division Trench Mortars - These Batteries proceed to rest at M25D and attached to 15th D.A.C.	
Bscourt	10th to 30th		Employed in the consolication of HorseStaindings at X15 Court	A. C. Elliott Capt XV Div T.M.O
	Dec			
Becourt	1st to 31st		Nothing to report - No Guns in Action during this period.	A. C. Elliott Capt XV Div T.M.O
	Jany			
Becourt	1-3		3 Batteries of Fatigus building Horse Standing for 15th D.A.	
Le Sars	5		1 2" T.M. Placed in Action at M.17C2-5	
	6-7		Bombs carried up and Dug out & Bomb Shelters Commenced.	
	8-11		Dug out & Bomb Store Continued and Completed on 11th	
	12		1 2" T.M. Placed in Action at M.17C1 ½- 6 ½	
	14		Gun at M17C 2-5 registered on Butte & Butte Trench - 6 rounds fired at Butte & Butte TR	
	15		Gun at M17C 1½-6½ registered on Quarry at M17A0-6	
	16		EMPLACEMENT Commenced in CHALK PiT at M15B1-8	
	17		EMPLACEMENT Commenced & Completed in CHALK PiT at M15B1-8	

19 50 BOMBS Carried to GUNS at M17C2-5
 20 50BOMBS Carried to GUNS at M15B1-8 - Heavy T.M. Bty formed at LAVIEVILLE
 Peake Wood 21 Heavy Battery moved to PEAKE WOOD
 22 50 BOMBS Carried to GUNS at M17C2-5 - Heavy T.M. Emplacement commenced at M16C2½-5½
 23 150 2" Bombs tp MARTINPUCH - Heavy T.M. Emplacement continued
 24 Heavy T.M. Emplacement continued - Dug out & Bomb Store Commenced in CHALK PiT for 2" Mortars
 25 Heavy T.M. Emplacement continued - Dug out & Bomb Store Continued
 LE SARS 26 & 27 Heavy T.M. Emplacement continued - 2" T.M. Dug out & Bomb Store in CHALK PiT completed on 27th 3 Bombs fired at Butte & Butte TR at enemy working party
 28 Mortar at M17C2-5 moved to M17C½-7¼ to fire at M16B8-5½ - M16B8-8½-gun registered and 5 rounds fired - work continued out**** T.M. Emplacement
 29-30th 1.45 a.m. Raid by 44th INFANTRY BRIGADE on BUTTE DE WARLENCOURT - Successful - 38 Bombs fired by 2" TRENCH MORTARS - Work coontinued on Heavy T.M. EMLACEMENT at LE SARS 30ft of TUNNELING Completed to date also ammunition ***** to hold 50 rounds of 9.45" ammunition - Work being Continued.

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1917
 Feb 1-4 2 2" Guns in Right Sector Hexham Rd
 1 2" Gun in Left Sctor Chalk Pit
 Continuing emplacment & tunnelling for 9.45 Guns in Left Sector
 5 Handed over to 2nd Australian Divn
 1-10 Y/15 Battery attended IV Army T.M. School at Vaux en Amienois
 6 X12 & V Batteries left Becourt & Peake Wood respectively & proceeded to Lavieville
 10 Y Battery proceeded from Vaux to Lavieville
 11-15 All Batteries at Lavieville. The training of 35 G*** * D** D.A.C. Personnel commenced
 16 All Batteries marched from Lavieville to Hem
 17 All Batteries marched from Hem to Monchy
 18 All Batteries marched from Monchy to Roellincourt
 19-28 Training of D.A.C. Personnel continued at Roellincourt
 26 All Batteries (minus 2 Off & 12 OR left for training purposes) proceed from Roellincourt & took up *** in Arras
 27 Took over 1.3 Sector VI Corps G30a65.85 to the R. Scarpe

H.B.Garrett Lt Actg XV D.T.M.O. 1/3/17

1917
 Arras 1/31 March Operations: Cutting of enemy wire (mainly front line) which was successful
 Preparation of 3 9.45" 14-2" positions }Bomb recesses Dug outs etc along Division front G3061.8 to R Scarpe
 Completion of 5 - 6 positions}
 Training of reinforcements prior to course at III Army School was continued by details 1 Off & 6 OR each. Heavy & Medium Batteries at Roellincourt 1/10 March Harlarcg 12/19 March

Officers & men trained at III Army School

	9.45" Gun				2"Gun			
	Gunnery		Infantry		Gunnery		Infantry	
	Off	OR	Off	OR	Off	OR	Off	OR
Course 2/9		8						
Course 11/19	1	25			3	35	3	35
Course 21/30						8	1	17
	1	33			3	43	4	42

1917
1/31 March

Men trained Anti Gas Course Averdoingt 13/16 March 92621 Cpl W Morris V/15 Battery
28/31 March 9620 Cpl T Duncan V/15 Battery

Quarters in Arras:- Mens Billets 20}

25} Rue St Maurice Hd Qtrs 3 Place Victor Hugo
70}

Casualties resulting from enemy fire} Killed S. Wounded Wounded Slight
13 OR 2 OR 1 Off 2 OR 1 Off 3 OR

23 March

Casualties in action (premature 2 OR

29 March

5 a.m.

Enemy shell caused explosion of over 300 rds 9.45" Am at Store G23d 8½ 8½ & resulted in casualties V/15 Battery (13 OR Killed 1 OR wounded) included above also severe casualties among the Scottish Rifles
Ammunition expended 2,474 rds 2" 185 rds 9.45"

H.D. Garrett Lt Actg Adj to T.M.B.

APRIL

1

Medium Batteries fired 152 rounds at targets on enemy's 1st wire system. Fairly good results several gaps began to open out
14 rounds 9.45" at enemy emplacements. One explosion caused and much debris thrown up.

2

176 Rounds 2" fired on front and support wire. Some damage caused but high wind made accurate shooting difficult.

3

33 Rounds 9.45" fired at houses in BLANGY and at gun emplacements. 3 houses received direct hits and timber from emplacements was removed.

Enemy observed to have repaired wire. 209 rounds 2" fired on 1st line & support wire. Several plus rounds in in enemy front trench, duckboards & timber dislodged. Effect on support wire not observed; but enemy retaliated vigourously. Gaps considerably increased in 1st System.

4

9.45" again bombarded houses and emplacements at BLANGY, numerous direct hits obtained and much masonry & timber thrown up.

575 Rounds 2" fired at enemy wire system & sapheads, good results on wire & quantity. Stakes demolished. Heavy enemy retaliation. 2 guns buried & entrance to to dug our blown in. Heavies opened fire with full battery, 100 Rounds fired on strong points' dug outs, front line trench, sunken road and salient. Shooting very effective.

5

457 Rounds 2" fired on front line & support wire also at sap. Heads. Great damage caused. Premature on No 1 gun caused by faulty gun.

1 Bombardier killed. Same targets engaged by heavy Battery as on the 4th. 109 rounds fired. Good results obtained and quantity timber thrown up along railway.

6

Night firing carried out by all Batteries

438 Rounds "2 fired. Much wire removed & MS position blown up. Considerable enemy retaliation & 7 gun emplacements blown in and much ammunition buried.

7

Right section of Heavy Battery bombarded enemy support line & left section front line. 100 Rounds fired.

2" TM fire concentrated on enemy wire and sap.heads. 560 rounds fired. Wire practically flat. 100 Rounds 9.45" fired on front & support lines. Much debris thrown up.

8-9

All batteries concentrated on enemy's works & wire. 651 rounds 2" fired. Considerable damage caused. 120 Rounds 9.45" fired. Several houses at BLANGY (containing machine-guns) demolished.

Quantity of 2" ammunition destroyed during night by enemy retaliation.

15 Casualties to personnel between April 1-9.

10

Assisted D.A.C. on ammunition dump.

11

Infantry personnel attached for attack, rejoined respective units.

11-30

Guns removed from front line, also cleaned and prepared for future exigencies.

Gun stores checked.

5 - 2" guns damaged in action sent to Ordnance for necessary attentions.

Assisted D.A.C. at ammunition dumps.

Supplied fatigue parties for DA Signals.

Number of captured guns salvaged and conveyed to Ordnance.

French Mortar Ammunition collected.

A C Elliott Capt. XV DTMO

In the Field	1.5.17	Fatigue Work - Collecting & examining Trench Mortar Rounds.
	to	D.A. Signals fatigues
	23.5.17	Camouflage collecting.
		Field Artillery Brigade Fatigues.
		Divisional Ammunition Dump Fatigues.
		Corps H.A. Ammunition Dump Fatigues
		Cleaning Trench Mortar Guns.
	24.5.17	Line of March - From "Action" to "Rest position"
	to	
	26.5.17	
	27.5.17	Physical Exercises & Gun Drill
	to	Recreation & Training for Divisional Sports.
	31.5.17	Musketry Practice.

A C Elliott Capt. XV DTMO

MONCHEL	1.6.17}	In rest billets at MONCHEL. Party of 30 D.A.C. Personnel given instruction on T.Ms Training
	15.6.17}	Fatigues - Assisting French farmers
MONCHEL	16.6.17	3 a.m. Marched to new billets at TENEUR
TENEUR	17.6.17	3 a.m. Marched to new billets at TONTES
TONTES	18.6.17	3 a.m. Marched to new billets at STEENBECQUE
STEENBECQUE	19.6.17	Batteries remained at billets in STEENBECQUE for the day
STEENBECQUE	20.6.17	4 a.m. Marched to new billets 2 kilos E of STEENVOORDE
STEENVOORDE	21.6.17	10 a.m. Advance party marched to WATOU drew tents from Area Commandant and pitched camp Sof WATOU
		9.15 p.m. Batteries marched to WATOU camp.
WATOU	22.6.17	Cleaned 2" guns
WATOU	23.6.17	Checked gun stores
WATOU	24.6.17	10 a.m. Advance party left WATOU for VLAMERTINGHE where Headquarters of T.M. Are situated
YPRES	24.6.17	Party took over 2 heavy TM positions and Medium T.M. Positions in the line.
WATOU	25.6.17	Lecture by Officer on defensive measures against enemy gas.
WATOU	26.6.17	Lecture by Officer on trench warfare adapted to Trench Mortars.
S WATOU	27.6.17	Cleaned guns.
WATOU	28.6.17	11 p.m. Batteries proceeded to new Trench Mortar Headquarters at VLAMERTINGHE
VLAMERTINGHE	29.6.17	10 p.m. Transported guns and ammunition to positions in line.
VLAMERTINGHE	30.6.17	9 a.m. 5 - O.R. Proceeded to II Army School of Mortars for instruction on the 6" NEWTON TRENCH MORTAR

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	JULY 1917	
YPRES	1-4	Emplacements and Ammunition Recesses commenced in the line for the reception of 12 - 2 inch, 4 - 9.45 inch and 3 - 6 inch Newton Trench Mortar Guns and ammunition
	5 & 6	Work in line continued. Fatigue parties supplied to D.A.C., to clear and tidy up Dump
	7	Work in line continued. Received 3 - 6 inch Newton Trench Mortars
	8	Bombs conveyed to line.
	9	200 Bombs carried to disused trench & tailed.
	10	2 - 9.45 inch Trench Mortars received.
	11	1 - 9.45 inch Trench Mortar, together with Ammunition and Component Parts conveyed to line. 250 bombs carried to positions.
	12	280 - 6" bombs conveyed to line.
	13	1 - 9.45 inch Trench Mortar conveyed to line, also beds & timber for emplacements.

14 300 - 6 inch bombs and 52 - 9.45 inch bombs conveyed to line.
15 Fatigue party supplied for strengthening O.P's.
16 2 - 6 inch Newton guns taken to Ordnance for attention, and 1 - 6 inch Newton received. Positions in line completed ready for action.
17 23 - 2 inch fired at Mound. Effective shooting. 24 - 6 inch fired at Mound. Small gap made in wire.
18 43 - 2 inch and 25 - 6 inch fired. Wire damaged
19 45 - 2 inch fired. Gaps made in wire of 10 yards. 25 - 6 inch fired. 3 Gaps of 5 - 7 yards.
20 79 - 2 inch and 21 - 6 inch fired. Much wire destroyed & gaps increased. One position destroyed.
21 85 - 2 inch fired. Wire much damaged but observation on enemy's reserve line difficult.
New position commenced to replace the one destroyed on the 20th
22 82 - 2 inch fired. Much wire thrown up. 40 - 9.45 inch fired. Enemy dump struck and blown up. 67 - 6 inch fired on enemy's reserve line.
23 71 - 2 inch fired. Gaps considerably increased. 20 - 9.45 inch fired. Quantity debris and timber thrown into the air.
New position commenced on the 21st just completed and fired from.
24 118 - 2 inch 38 - 9.45 inch and 41 - 6 inch fired in conjunction with raid made by the 12th H.L.I.
25 85 - 2 inch fire - Quantity of wire flattened and dump exploded in enemy's line
35 - 9.45 inch fired - Gaps extended and wire further damaged.
26 73 - 2 inch fired. Gaps greatly increased.
11 - 9.45 inch fired - Much debris removed
41 - 6 inch fired - Effective shooting on to enemy's positions
27 25 - 6 inch fired. Explosion caused in enemy line
27 - 9.45 inch fired. Enemy gas cylinder believed to have been hit, smoke observed drifting over enemy trenches.
89 - 2 inch fired - Gaps further increased.
28 54 - 2 inch and 25 6 inch fired in support of raid.
29 73 - 2 inch, 20 - 9.45 inch and 22 - 6 inch fired. Great quantity of wire removed.
30 117 - 2 inch fired at all points on enemy line
126 - 6 inch fired at support line
11 - 9.45 inch fired at enemy Trench Mortar emplacement
31 Firing continued to "ZERO" hour. Two fatigue parties of 50 men each under officers, supplied at "ZERO" hour - No 3 Track repaired and put into good condition by one party and assistance given in clearing up the old battery positions, vacated by the 70th Brigade, R.F.A., by the other party.

A.C. Elliott Capt. 15th Divisional Trench Mortar Officer