

TRANSCRIPTION.

APRIL 1917 WAR DIARY – OPERATION OF 4-4-1917

“J” Special Company R.E.

ARRAS 7.4.17 SPECIAL COMPANIES R.E. THIRD ARMY

Report for ‘J’ Special Company and ‘H’ Special Company Sections

(attached) LIVENS PROJECTOR DISCHARGE

April 4th 1917 (Operation G1/P)

FRONT OLD FRONT LINE 3rd Divn VI Corps

1. LOCATION

Ref ARRAS and NEUVILLE VITASSE Trench Maps 1/10,000

- a. 900 projectors were installed in the front line of J1 Sector

G.36.a.20.20. to G.30.c.90.30.

Infantry carried on nights 30/31 March, 31/1 April, ½ April, ¾ April

- b. From DUMPS - A ICELAND ST G.29.c.45.30.

B IMPERIAL ST G.29.c.75.80

- c. TARGETS in TILLOY-LES-MAFFLAINES

Right 300 - N.1.a.40.95.

Centre 300 - H.31.c.60.30.

Left 300 - H.31.c (Dugouts along road)

- d. HEADQUARTERS

Section H.Q. at firing dug outs on appended sketch (Table E)

Reports sent by runner to 76 Inf Bde Adv H.Q. in tunnel at

G.35.b.51/2.6 where CAPT C. LAYCOCK R.E. was stationed.

O.C. Coy CAPT J.A. CARPENTER R.E. was at 3rd Div Adv H.Q. RUSSEL

CAVE, RONVILLE G.28.d.20.30.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

Established with O.C. ‘O’ Sp Coy, CAPT N.P. CAMPBELL R.E. at 44 Bde

G.29.a.70.80 by runner. He was in touch with his section in 12th and 15th Div

fronts. Established with 3rd Divn and with CAPT LAYCOCK by telephone and the use of code. All arrangements worked perfectly.

3. PREPARATIONS and SIGNALS

The DRUMS were carried up on night of April ¾. They were loaded and complete by about 5.0 am. A SIGNAL ROCKET (golden rain) was fired from 76 Bde H.Q. at 5.30 am to warn all sections on the VI Corps front that drums would be discharged at 6.15 am, according to their orders of 3rd Division.

4. **ZERO** was 6.15 am. Wind S. by W. 7 mph.

Zero was communicated before departure. Had any change occurred, they were to be warned through CAPT LAYCOCK using code on the telephone, and thence runner.

5. **OBSERVATIONS.** DETAILS OF DISCHARGE.

At Zero about 70% discharged at once (all on LT TAIT's front). The remainder had their circuits broken by the slightly previous discharge of those which fired through shock and falling trench (the trench was extremely soft, and with no revetment). However by taking exploders with them to the front line they were able to get practically all fired.

The percentage fired at or about Zero were

Section		No of projectors	No of Drums	No Discharged	Percentage
41	L ^T LAWFORD	125	125	119	95.2
42	L ^T TAIT	125	125	125	100
43	2L ^T SANTER	125	124	124	100
44	2L ^T ALLCHIN	125	125	125	100
45	2L ^T FARR	100	100	99	99
Total 'J' Coy		600	599	592	99%

37	L ^T VANDERMIN	100	97	83	83
38	2L ^T WOOLNER	100	100	97	97
39	2L ^T LIZIUS	100	100	80	80
Grand Total		900	896	852	95

Four drums were left in C.Ts by carrying parties these were not found till afterwards.

LT VANDERMIN and 2LT LIZIUS had several projectors damaged by shell fire, they could not be fired. Some were buried altogether after the discharge and could not be fired even with the exploder. These drums were subsequently salvaged and brought back to workshops, all having been fired that could have been.

6. **BEHAVIOUR of OUR MEN**

All worked magnificently, and great gallantry and devotion to duty was shown by all Officers and men.

In many cases it was found necessary to carry on rejoining and exploding on the parados in full view of the enemy by daylight. This was done without the

slightest hesitation in spite of expected retaliation by the enemy (a few recommendations are being forwarded to VI Corps a confidential copy of these attached)

7. EFFECT ON OUR LINES

The front line trench used was practically destroyed by the shock and almost filled up owing to the soft character of the ground. This made the firing of the remainder more difficult; several projectors had to be dug out and reset on the spot. It speaks well for the charging and fusing that nearly all of these were able to be fired. Projectors fired appear to be twelve feet in the ground.

8. OBSERVATIONS

Reports received from direct observation from O.Ps, from the line, and from aeroplane observation summarise as follows

- (1) The fusing and detonation of the drums was perfect. It appears that practically no duds were present.
- (2) The targets were well covered with a dense cloud. The roads, TILLOY WOOD, and the main CAMBRAI road N. of TILLOY were hit and covered.
(Note. From experiments made at SIMENCOURT, O.C. 'J' Coy decided to use an extra half pound of powder to ensure the full range being obtained. This was exactly justified. To ensure the half pound firing with the rest, small holes were punched in the charge covering lid.)
- (3) The cloud drifted laterally along the second system of the enemy's line, moving slightly E. of N. until it reached that projected by 'O' Company.

9. ENEMY'S BEHAVIOUR

The enemy showed very little activity, and practically no retaliation was given for well over an hour.

10. SUGGESTIONS

- (1) A greater establishment of luminous compasses (50 per company)
- (2) An adequate number of clinometers and laying sticks (50 per company)
- (3) A very great number of staples for fixing leads. There was an insufficient number for this attack. A Company establishment of about at least 4000 is needed. We were unable to obtain these as expected from No 8 R.E. Park.
- (4) A slight gap should be left on the flanks of batteries, and leads should not be allowed to stay near the projectors of other batteries, but should be stapled well down.
- (5) The leads of the charge blocks are too long. On account of this infantry carrying parties continually broke the circuits right up to one hour before Zero.

11 The staff of VI Corps has congratulated the companies for their work done, and was pleased with the successful discharge and the observations made.

Capt J.A. Carpenter R.E.