

Brief Chronology of the 1st Aust Tunnelling Coy, allocated to the Second Army

The unit undertook in-theatre training with 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company before assuming responsibility in their own right for the sectors assigned to them.

Sectors at: Le Biset, Ploegsteert Wood, St Eloi, Ypres, Hill 60, Polygon Wood, Menin Road, Hooge, Amiens, Corbie, Hamel, Villers-Bretonneux, Peronne, Bony, Bellicourt, St Quentin, Dinant, Namur and Louvain.

May 1916

Nos1 & 2 sections were assigned to Le Bizet, Le Touquet and Houplines adjacent to Armentieres where their H.Q. located, and undertook defensive mining training with 1st Canadian Tunnelling Company

No3 section had their H.Q. at La Clytte while they were attached to 181st Tunnelling Company, Royal Engineers, at St Eloi.

No4 section were attached to 3rd Canadian Tunnelling Company at Hill 60, with their H.Q. at Poperinghe.

22 May 16: No1 section constructed a sub-way connecting Hill 60 Dugout System to Larchwood and undertook Infantry Duty with Hill 60 Garrison.

Gallery 6'3" x 3'6" wide totalling 212 ft. Completed about 28/5/16.

June 1916

Nos1 & 3 sections took over the offensive mining system at Trench 123 and the Birdcage from 171st Tunnelling Company

No2 section worked at Trench 88 and in the Houpline sector before moving to the Ploegsteert Wood Sector to undertake the construction of a system of Dugouts between the Front and Support Lines at Prowse Point, Ploegsteert Wood which was completed by 18 August 16. 'Ploegsteert' was commonly referred to as 'Plugstreet'.

No4 section were employed in the erection of a new H.Q. Camp in a field south of Bailleul and worked at Bull Ring near Neuve Eglise.

19 July 16 the Company moved over to 2ATC at Houplines, Touquet and Bizet

Commenced Hill 63 Dugouts for Troops 23/7/16 completed 27/11/16
Accommodation for two Battalions: Gallery 8ftx7ft 1036ft

August 1916

The two companies constructed a dugout system on Hill 63 near Hyde Park corner and

christened the works 'Wallangarra Dugouts'. Taking just 63 days to complete and averaging 197 employed per day, 192,588 cubic feet of earth were removed to provide 2,722 feet of galleries with sleeping accommodation in bunks for 1,200 men, the work being completed by 1 Nov 16.

(9 November 1916 - No2 section rejoined the Company in the Ypres Salient to relieve the 3rd Canadian Tunnelling Company on Hill 60.)

Russian Saps - Trench 123 and Bull Ring

3 Saps commenced 1/8/16 completed 1/11/16 Total Footage about 1440 ft drive

Prowse Point Dugouts for Troops Shelter for two Companies commenced 25/8/16 Completed 30/10/16

Hill 60 Dugout System and Subways

Battalion and 4x Company H.Q.s and assembly accommodation for a Battalion.

This system gradually developed over a period of 8-10 months. Started by 3rd Canadian Tunnelling Company and handed over to 1st Australian Company in November 1916. Subway driven 2700 feet.

May 1917

Hill 60 Left - Battalion H.Q., Observation Posts and Artillery Dugouts.

Commenced 16/5/17 completed 30/5/17.

June 1917

3/6/17 Attempts to commence Dugouts but the enemy shelling prevented work.

No 4 section:

Camp on roadside between villages of Dranoutre and Locre.

Construction of Forward Roads worked by a portion of the section. Completed on 18/8/17.

September 1917

Other portion of the section engaged on construction of Dugout System in Hollandscheschurr crater containing Advanced Brigade H.Q. and Advanced Dressing Station. Handed over to 2nd Canadian Tunnelling Company on 6/9/17.

7/9/17

No 4 & part No 2 sections:

Construction of Advanced Brigade H.Q. in Hooge Crater, Menin Road.

Stairways	6ftx3ft	130ft
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Connecting Galleries	6ftx3ft	127ft
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Dugouts Proper	6ftx6ft	140ft
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Total Hours worked	288 hrs	Completed 19/9/17.
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21/9/17

No 4 section:

Cambridge Road Dugouts

October 1917

Forward Road from Westhoek Ridge to Zonnebeke. Completed to junction with the Potijze-Zonnebeke on 18/10/17.

December 1917

Erect Dugouts for heavy Artillery in area between Half Way House and Birr Cross Road. Completed 26/12/17

Anzac Dugouts - took over from 1st Canadians and the Muhle System of Dugouts near Zonnebeke. Company withdrawn 25/3/18. Moved south to stem German offensive.

March 1918

1ATC Company H.Q. located at Saulty.

Front line trench work. Trench 6ft wide at top and 5ft wide at bottom and 3ft deep with spoil to form the parapet and protected by barbed wire entanglement. Each section allotted one mile of Front.

No 4 section:

One mile portion from Village of Labret, Arras-Doullens Road extending one mile on Arras side Saulty to La Bazeque Farm on the South of the Road. In addition dug communications and support trenches to a depth of 12 ins. Completed 6/4/18

April 1918

7/4/18

Transferred to G.H.Q. section line between Gaudiempre and Pas. Completed 19/4/18

Erection of Machine Gun emplacements and Battalion H.Q. Dugouts at Hauteville sector, 9 miles north of Warlincourt. Also four stairways to large underground cave north of village Connecting the pit with trenches. Completed 5/6/18

Worked on the 21 miles extending from Pas to South Bouvigny-Boyeffles on the North.

In the 3 month period to 30/6/18 completed 2 miles G.H.Q. Defense Front Line Trench and 30 Machine Gun emplacements. Total strength 110 men.

No 2 section:

Their section of front joined No 4 section at Gaudiempre.

July 1918

H.Q. in a wood ahead of Allonville.

Construction of Artillery Dugouts in front line joining Bussy to Querrieu for Artillery Batteries Nos 238, 291, 331, 137, 169, 283, 161, 125, 128, 93, 260 and 130. Ten men per dugout assisted by fatigue parties from each respective battery.

No 4 section:

Completion of Brigade H.Q. Dugout midway between Hamelet and Hamel.

1 Officer and 16 other ranks appointed to go over with the second wave attack to inspect all dugouts for delayed action mines for booby traps.

August 1918

Detailed for work with Canadian Railways Co. - repairs to railway line and yards at Villers-Bretonneux. Completed 21/8/18

Moved to Vaux to erect 109 steel huts for 3rd Divisional H.Q. Completed 28/8/18

Moved to Mericourt for job of establishing Corps H.Q. Completed 3/9/18

Join 6th Canadian Railway Co. Repair line and erect two water tanks at Plateau Siding blown across the line. Completed 7/9/18

Hem Siding, near Perone, repair line. Completed 10/9/18.

Company HQ. now outside ruined village of Cartigny.

Work on Perone-Roisel Railway line of damaged rails and demolition charges not fired, then Cartigny and Tincourt. Completed 21/9/18

September 1918

21/9/18

Returned to road repairs on Longavesnes – Villers – Faucon - St Emilie - Ronsoy Rd.

25/9/18

Detailed to forward roads for the approaching attack on Hindenburg line. US. Engineers "B" Company attached to No 4 section.

October 1918

2/10/18 Moved to Bellicourt and on 5/10/18 relieved No 3 section and No 4 resumed duty on 8/10/18 on forward road outside Premont carrying it forward to La Sabliere between Premont and Becquigny.

13/10/18 Company H.Q. situated in a field ahead of Railway crossing at Becquigny.

November 1918

1/11/18

No 4 section:

Attached to RE. of 1st Division British Expeditionary Force to bridging the Canal de la Sambre de Oise.

Two sets of 10" x 6" rolled steel joints, girders 3ft x 10" deep weighing 800 lbs plus timber decking 9" wide topping the girders with cleats on bottom and guide-rail longitudinally on each side of deck. Completed 4/11/18

15/11/18

Garrison duty attached to 1st Division B.E.F. to Avesnes.

No 4 section:

Removal of delayed action mines. Divided into squads.

27/11/18

AI.F. Corps called back the 1st Australian Tunnelling Company.

December 1918

9/12/18

No 4 section:

H.Q. moved to Nivelles.

Engaged in the examination of railway lines, stations and yards of Braine le Allend, Waterloo, Genappe, Seneffe.

18/12/18

8 members of section selected to investigate existence of a supposed Mine in the Railway Tunnel between Stavelot, Belgium and German fortress town of Malmedy.

Sources

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