



# Hill 70 – Black Watch Shaft

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*27th November 1916*

On the 27<sup>th</sup> November 1916 an incident occurred in the Black Watch Shaft on Hill 70 which resulted in the deaths of 20 enlisted men and the gassing of one officer and a further 8 enlisted men.

The following documents from the Australian War Memorial detail the incident and consist of the following

1. AWM4  
Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,  
1914-18 War  
Tunnelling & Survey  
Item number: 16/4/9  
Title: 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Tunnelling Company  
November 1916  
Cover pages and Page 22
2. AWM 224  
3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Tunnelling Company  
History from its formation in Australia in Dec. 1915 until May 1919  
MSS78 Part 2
3. Three location maps

The following is a list of the 20 enlisted men who died, and were buried in Hersin Communal Cemetery Extension in adjacent graves<sup>1</sup>. Nine men whose total remains were not fully recovered were buried in the same grave as Sapper Moore.

Name	Service No.	Rank	Marital Status	Age	Grave
Barker, Charles Victor	5250	Sapper	Single	35	15
Batson, William Henry	943	Sapper	Single	24	21
Brockley, John Robert	2371	Sapper	Widowed	47	16
Christiansen, Peter Marinus	1313	Sapper	Single	29	21
Coulton, David	4340	Sapper	Single	27	14
Daniels, Richard	5253	Sapper	Single	22	17
Edwards, Lewis Brinley	1414	Sapper	Single	29	10
Francis, Henry Frederick	2893	Sapper	Single	29	12
Horton, William Francis	1030	Sapper	Single	26	11
Kerby, Macklam James Martin DCM	1364	Sergeant	Married	30	21
Ladd, Albert Edward	1071	Sapper	Married	29	21
Lyons, Michael	1273	Sapper	Single	21	21
McLean, Hector	4421	Sapper	Married	31	21
Moore, William James	4402	Lance Corporal	Married	41	21
Nightingale, William	4431	Sapper	Single	37	13
Pember, James	1122	Corporal	Single	24	19
Praed, William James	4451	Sapper	Single	28	22
Prosser, Thomas Evan	5014	Sapper	Single	38	21
Reid, John	4456	Sapper	Single	32	21
Russell, Oswald John Shaw	4468	Sapper	Single	23	9

<sup>1</sup> The soldiers were buried in adjacent graves however, two other members of the same unit were killed on the 28<sup>th</sup> November 1916, Sapper Harold Cockton '970' and Sergeant Joseph Allen '4224' and were buried in graves 18 and 20 respectively.

Unit War Diary

**AWM4**

**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,  
1914-18 War**

Tunnelling & Survey

**Item number:** 16/4/9

**Title:** 3rd Australian Tunnelling Company

November 1916



AWM4-16/4/9

November 27, 1916

Army Form C. 2118.

WAR DIARY  
or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.)

3rd AUSTRALIAN TUNNELLING COY.

356

Confidential

War Diary  
of  
3rd Aust. Tunn. Coy.  
for  
November 1916.

J.B.S.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

RCDIG1007696

WAR DIARY  
or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

3rd Tunnelling Coy.  
22.

Army Form C. 2118.

356

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence Summaries are contained in F.S. Regs. Part II and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages will be prepared in manuscript.

(Erase heading not required.)

Summary of Events and Information

Place Date Hour

Nov. 24 The work in progress during the previous week was continued for the remainder of the month. All the mining was done in hard chalk. The total footage at all faces was 214 feet. Work was considerably retarded by the charging of 2 mines, the blowing of one mine by us & two mines by the enemy. Rescue work & the recovery of bodies followed on the two enemy "blows".

20 The enemy work with the push-pick or bayonet was heard close to N°22 Shaft R/L (90' level), being identified by 4 officers on different occasions. It was decided to blow 6000 lbs of ammonal.

+ At about 11.2 in N°21 DDL <sup>chamber</sup> ground was very broken with deep cracks. Sharp flow of water from face, which was plugged.

An enemy camouflaged opposite this gallery was blown at 12.40 a.m. on 27/11/16, destroying our gallery and killing 20 men. Charging had been completed by us & tampons about the started.

Opposite N°1 DDL Chamber, an enemy blow took place at 8 a.m. on 28/11/16, killing 2 men. (Sgt. Miller & Sapper Cockton)

COMPANY ORDERS. 197 - 4 Sappers killed in action 27/11/16. 1030 Sps. Hutton W. F., 1414 Sps. Edwards L.B. 4468 Sps. Russell of S. 1122 Sps. Parker J. killed in action 27/11/16. 970 Sps. Cockton H. " 28/11/16. + Sps. J. Allen killed in action 28/11/16. 17 C.R. repaired missing & Lt. H. Russell & 8 C.R. " gassed"

198 - 2270 Sps. Brockley J. R. 4309 Sps. Daniels R.E. 4421 Sps. Nightingale W. 4304 Sps. Coulton D. 2893 Sps. Francis H.F. 5238 Sps. Barker C. V. killed in action 27/11/16. 4364 Sps. James H. L. wounded 28/11/16.

also killed in action 27/11/16

124 Sps. Kirby M.J.M.  
4456 Sps. Reid J.  
4402 " Moore W. J.  
943 " Batson W. H.  
1313 " Christensen R.H.  
4451 " Reed W. J.  
5014 " Pinner T. G.  
4451 " McLean A.H.  
1273 " Lyons H.  
1071 " Dodd A. E.

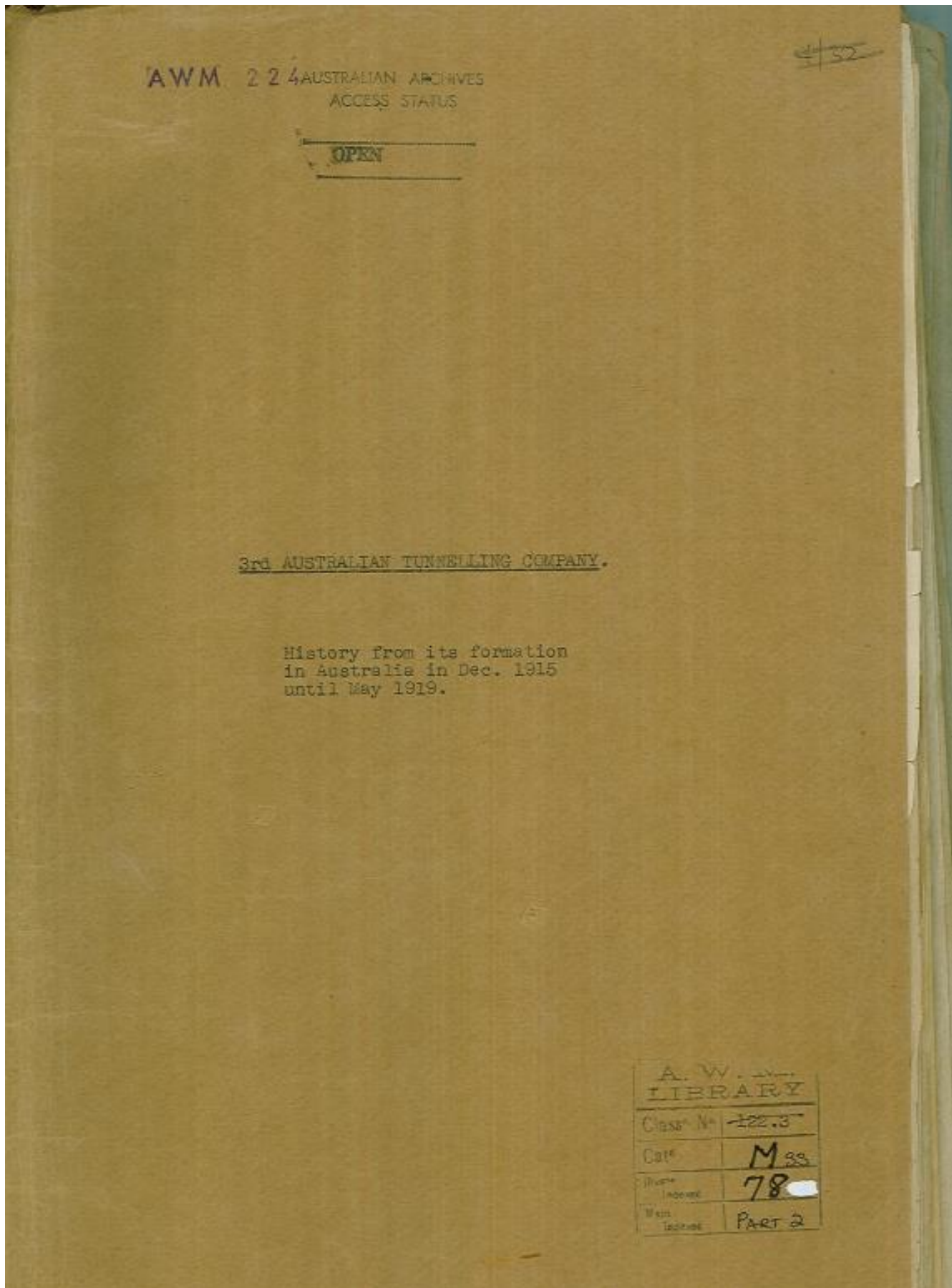
D. D. & L., London E.C.  
(10354) Wk. W. 1300/772 7200/000 3101 E. 889 Forms C/2118/16

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

RCDIG1007696

November 27, 1916

## Unit History





November 27, 1916

Appendices:-

- Page 102 Notes on assistance given to unit by "Comfords" and other War Funds in Australia.
- 107 Territorial Strength of Coy 1916-1918.
- 108 List of recipients of Honours & Awards.
- 110 Detailed casualty list.

Also:-

Pages 8-11 History of No. 6 Tunnelling Coy from its formation in W.A. in March 1916. to disbandment on 25/9/16

Formation & training in Australia

Training on Salisbury Plain July/Aug 1916.

" at Staples Aug/Spt 1916.

Absorbed by No. 3 Coy. 25/9/16.

12. brief mention of formation of Nos. 4 & 5 Coys.

November 27, 1916

No. 3 & 6  
Aust. Tunneling Coy

E 255/3/60

History of No. 3 Australian Tunneling Company  
[originally No. 3 Coy, Aust. Mining Corps]  
from its formation in Australia in December  
1915 until May 1919.

Page 1-2 Formation & training in Australia

3 Voyage to Egypt & Gallies

3 Disbandment of Mining Coy HQ May 1916

3 Attached to First Army. May 1916

3-7 } Work in Armentau sector, May/Nov 1916  
12-13, 15 } [including participation in Battle of Fromelles]

13-59 } Work in <sup>[Hill 70]</sup> Loos, Lens, Hulluch, Ewerichy, & La Bassue sectors  
64-80 } Nov. 1916 to Sept 1918

including —

P. 14. enemy "blow", 27/11/16

17 German raid 5/1/17

20 " 18/3/17

21 Copse Tunnel (Loos) Apr 1917

21 on Battle of Vimy Ridge Apr 1917

26 Participation in raid of 28/6/17

30 on With Canadian Coy in Hill 70 attack  
Aug 1917.

48 on construction of Hydro Tunnel subway system  
at Hill 70.

78 on participation in raid at Ewerichy 24/8/18

~~82~~ Jan

82 Transferred to Fifth Army Sept 1918

81 on In British advance Sept/Nov 1918

96-101 Dec. 1918 to May 1919.

53 } Detachment working in Armentau sector from  
59-64 } Feb 1918 onwards, including its participation in  
British defence during German attack in Apr. 1918.



November 27, 1916

On 19/11/16 splendid work was done by 4207 Sgt. J.W. Berry & 4400 L/Cpl. J.A. Monaghan at Loos. At about 8.45 a.m. on the 19th a Sapper of the 258 Coy. R.E. was buried by a minenwerfer shell obtaining a hit on Shaft 22. Rescue work was at once started by 4 men.

2 R.Es & 2 Australians (Sgt. Berry & L/Cpl. Monaghan) the R.Es. working from No. 2 Shaft & the 2 Australians on top. The two almost succeeded in freeing the buried man when another minenwerfer again buried him to the head, also burying the two rescuers. Notwithstanding the heavy T.M. fire, these 2 men on being freed, continued to work until 5.30 p.m. when the buried man was got out alive. The trenches in the vicinity were destroyed & access to the shaft was only obtained from the open behind the parados. These men kept the head & shoulders of the buried man clear as the sap was continually being shaken in & stayed with him while the trench was closing in on them.

The T.M. fire was intense for 1½ hours, the spot where these men stayed consisted of 6 feet of trench, being the only part in the vicinity not levelled.

For this work the following awards were given on 22/11/16

1st Corps No.56/194 4207 Sgt. J.W. Berry the M.M.  
" " " 4400 L/Cpl. J.A. Monaghan the M.M.

Hostile activity in the Hill 70 area towards the last part of November was considerable.

On 27/11/16 while preparing to tamp gallery 21.DD at (36 c.s.w.l. M.b.87.60) the charging of 17,500 lbs of ammonal having been completed, the enemy exploded a camouflet, which exploded our charge. Casualties were 1 officer (Lt.H. Russell) and the following 8 O.Rs. were "mine gassed" and the following 20 O.Rs. were killed :-

Gassed:- 4340 Spr. J. Gould.  
991 " J.J. Addison.  
4521 " G.J. Woods.  
1251 " S. Barsby.  
1304 " S.P. Wagner.  
4418 " W. McKnoe.  
1270 " B.J. Lear.  
4993 Cpl. L.G. Brown.

Killed:- 1030 Spr. W.F. Horton.  
4468 " O.J.S. Russell.  
1414 " L.B. Edwards.  
2370 " J.R. Brockley.  
4309 " R.E. Daniels.  
4431 " W. Nightingale.  
4304 " D. Coulton.  
2893 " H.F. Francis.  
5258 " C.V. Barker.  
1364 Sgt. M.J.M. Kerby.  
1122 Cpl. J. Pember.  
4451 Spr. W.J. Praed.  
4456 " J. Reid.  
5014 " T.E. Prosser.  
4402 " W.J. Moore.  
~~4402~~ " H. McLean.  
4421 " W.H. Batson.  
943 " ~~xxxxxx~~.  
1273 " M. Lyons.  
1071 " R.E. Ludd.  
1313 " Christiansen, P.M.

On this occasion after the enemy "Blow" Lt.O.R. Howie organised the rescue parties & wearing Proto apparatus, led them into the mine, thereby saving lives & performing valuable



November 27, 1916

- 15 -

exploratory work underground. He carried out this arduous & dangerous work for 24 hours until relieved.

For this work, added to his splendid record when firing a push pipe at Red Lamp Salient on 19/7/16, he went over the parapet under heavy fire & placed 50 lbs of ammonal on the unexploded position of the push pipe & successfully exploded it; added also to the work he did on the previous night for 2½ hours adjusting a push pipe under machine gun fire. Lt. O.R. Howie, was awarded the Military Cross. Authority M.S. Wire R.1687 dated 14/12/16.

On 28/11/16 the enemy exploded another camouflet (at 36.c.S.W.1. N.1a.45.95). Slight damage was done to our workings in the vicinity of the blow. The casualties were 3 O.Rs. mine gassed, 1 O.R. wounded & 2 O.Rs. killed.

4224 Sgt. Allen, J. killed.  
970 Spr. Cockton, H. "  
4364 Spr. James, H.L. wounded.

On this date, at the time of the explosion, Sapper E. Bird was in a gallery with 3 other men, one of whom was killed outright, the remaining 3 men were knocked over by the concussion & affected with gas. Sapper Bird & another reached the shaft, but on finding that one man had been left behind, returned to the drive at once & brought him out, half carrying & half dragging the almost insensible man up the 100 foot shaft. On reaching the top Sapper Bird collapsed through shock & gas.

Sapper Bird was awarded the M.M. on 11/12/16.

Authority 1st Corps R.Orders of 11/12/16.

On 29/11/16 at (36 S.W.1. M.6.b.93.72) a maximum camouflet was blown by us from a depth of 77 feet.

On 10/12/16 at (36.c.N.W.3 H.31c.65.20 (L.G.15)) a charge of 2500 lbs at a depth of 60' was fired.

On 20/12/16 at (36.c.S.W.1. N.1a.45.35) west of Cameron crater 9000 lbs of Ammonal exploded at a depth of 108 ft. (maximum camouflet). The enemy was charging 30' from our charge at the time of the blow.

The artillery assisted with bombardment of the enemy trenches in the vicinity of his mine shafts.

On 21/12/16, the enemy fired a camouflet at (36.c.S.W.1. M.6.b.85.65) at a depth of about 90' with the intention of destroying Seaforth Main fighting gallery, & in retaliation for our mine explosion on the 20/12/16. The chambering of this gallery was regarded as distinctly risky.

Casualties on this occasion were 1 officer Lt.D.A.Wentworth and 1 O.R. 2339 Spr. Wills, J.

Lt. Wentworth was with the men cutting the chamber in the end of the drive. The shock rendered all unconscious. Lt. Wentworth badly wounded about the head & much bruised, recovered first & ascended the shaft & started an electric fan to keep back the gas. He was then returning to the assistance of the other men when rescue parties arrived. Lt. Wentworth evacuated to hospital. Returned to Unit 16/3/17.

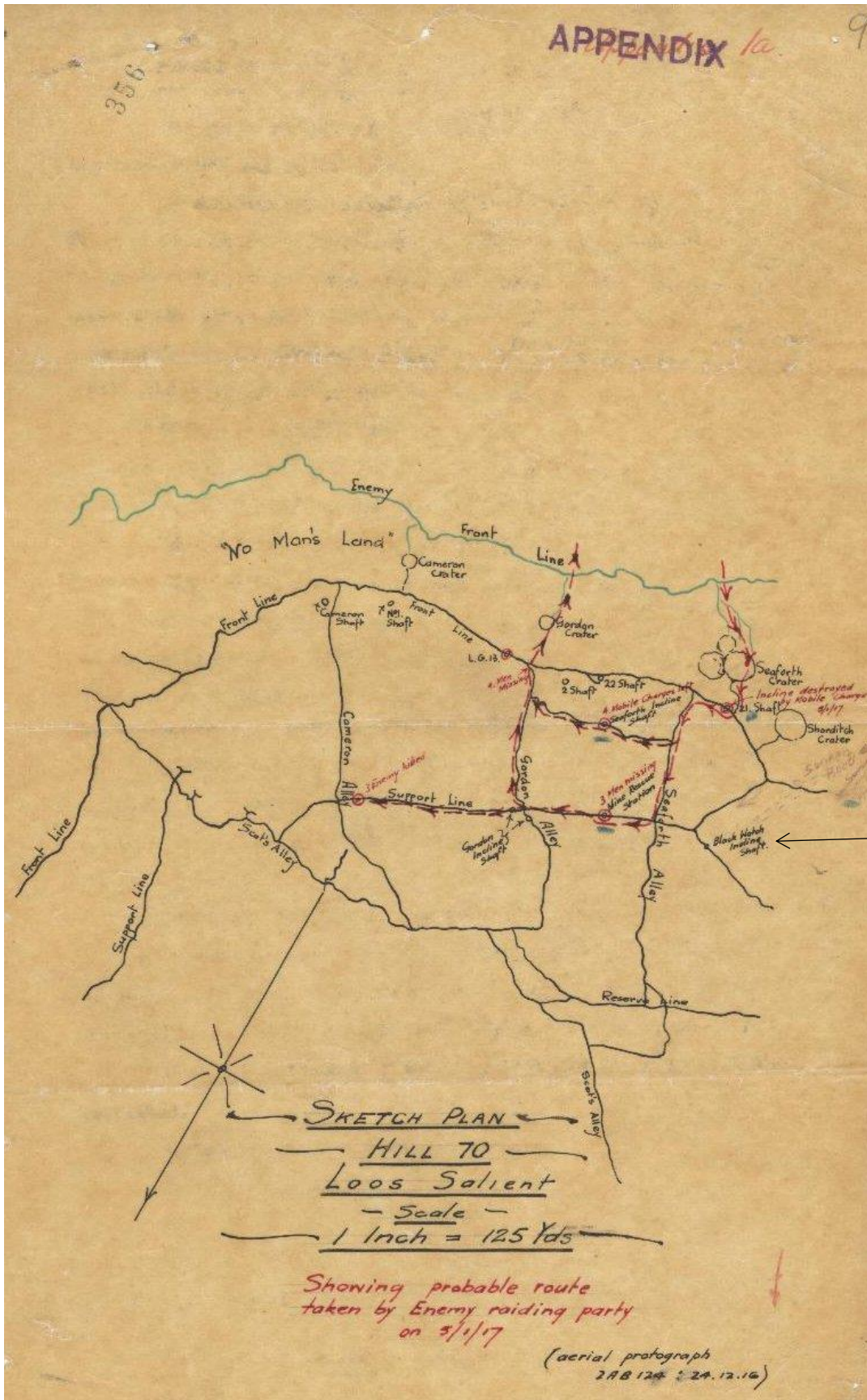
The following letter was received from the G.S. 24th Division:-

24th Divn.  
G X 231/22.



November 27, 1916

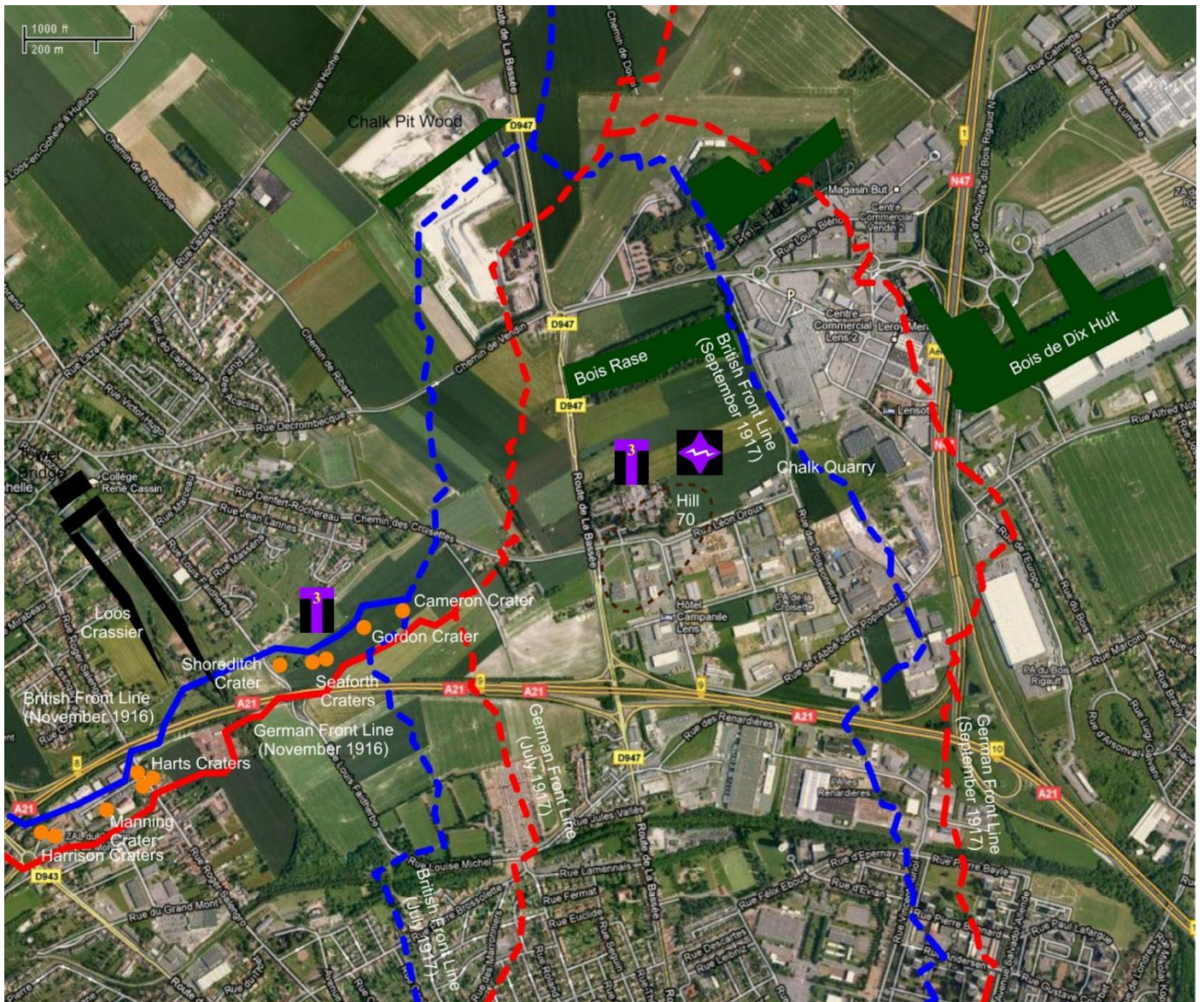
## Location Maps



Black Watch Shaft

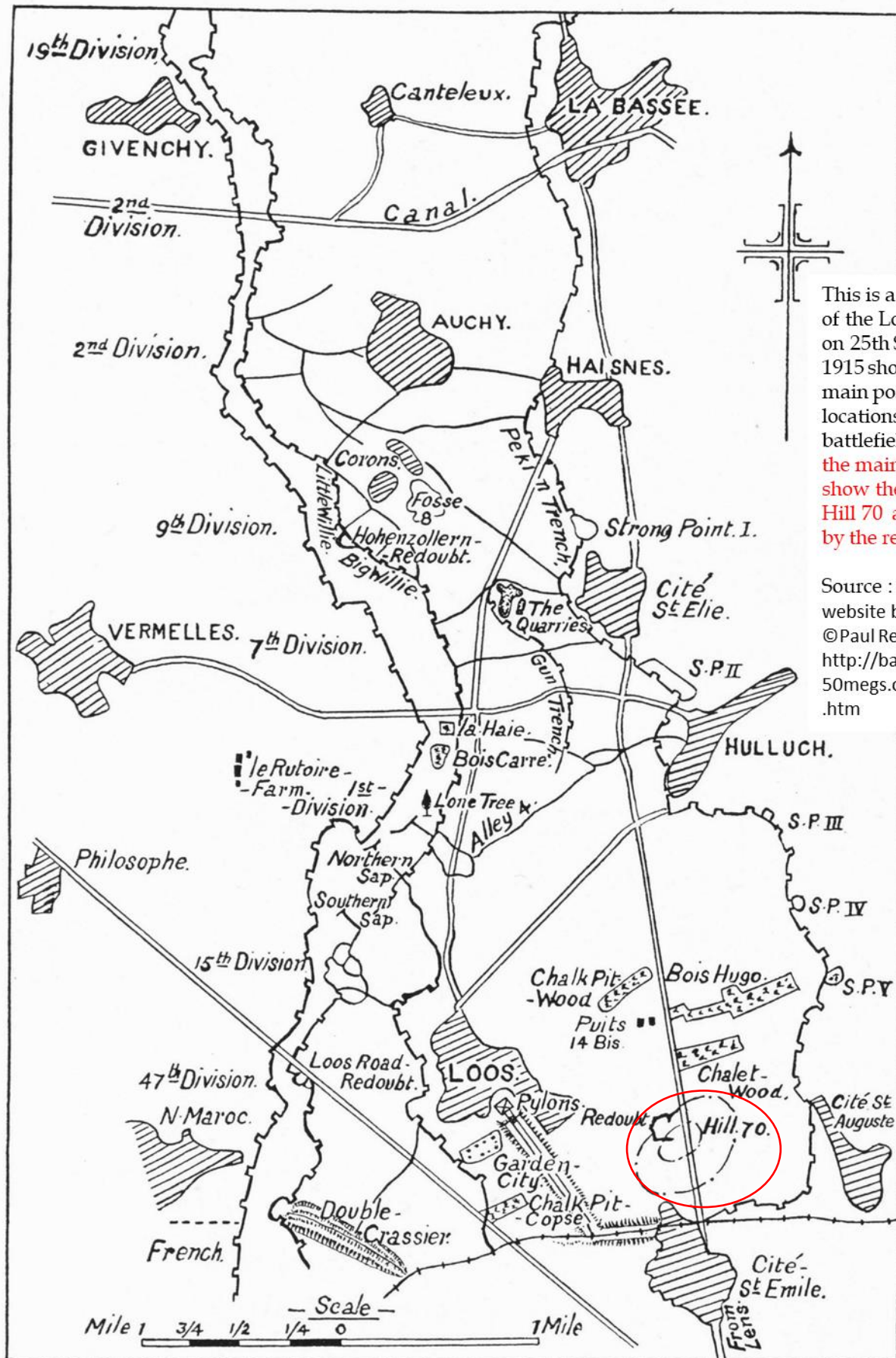


November 27, 1916





November 27, 1916



This is a general map of the Loos Battlefield on 25th September 1915 showing the main positions and locations on the battlefield, **however the main purpose is to show the position of Hill 70 as highlighted by the red oval.**

Source : Old Front Line website by Paul Reed - ©Paul Reed 2001-2013; [http://battlefields1418.50megs.com/loos\\_maps.htm](http://battlefields1418.50megs.com/loos_maps.htm)

THE BATTLE OF LOOS.