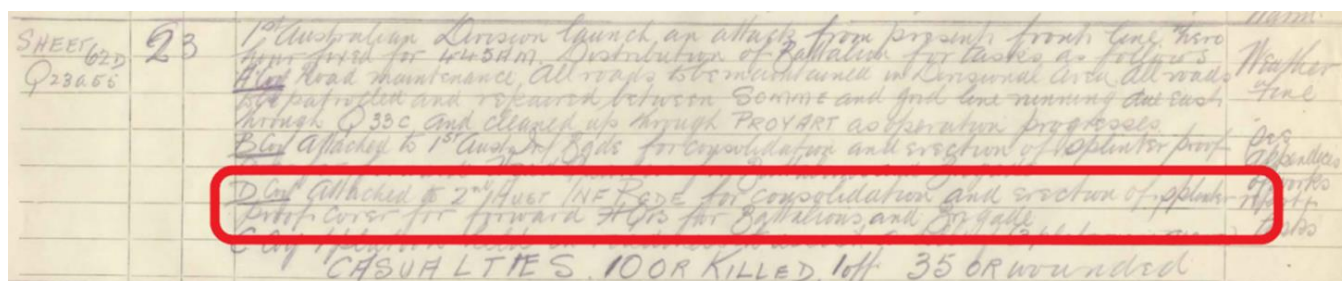


BATTLE OF CHUIGNES

23 August 1918

Extract from the War Diary of the 1st Pioneer Battalion AIF



1st Pioneer Battalion located south-east of Morcourt in the Somme Valley.

"1st Australian Division launch an attack from present front line. Zero hour fixed for 4.45 am. Distribution of Battalion for tasks as follows:

A Coy

B Coy

D Coy Attached to 2nd Aust Inf Bde for consolidation and erection of splinter proof cover for forward HQs for Battalions and Brigades.

C Coy

CASUALTIES 10 OR KILLED, 1 off 35 OR wounded"

Extract from Australian Victories in France in 1918

By

Lieutenant-General Sir John Monash C.C.M.G, K.C.B, V.D., D.C.L., LL.D.

The great attack by the First Division supported by the 32nd Division, which has come to be known as the Battle of Chuignes, was launched at dawn on August 23rd, and was an unqualified success.

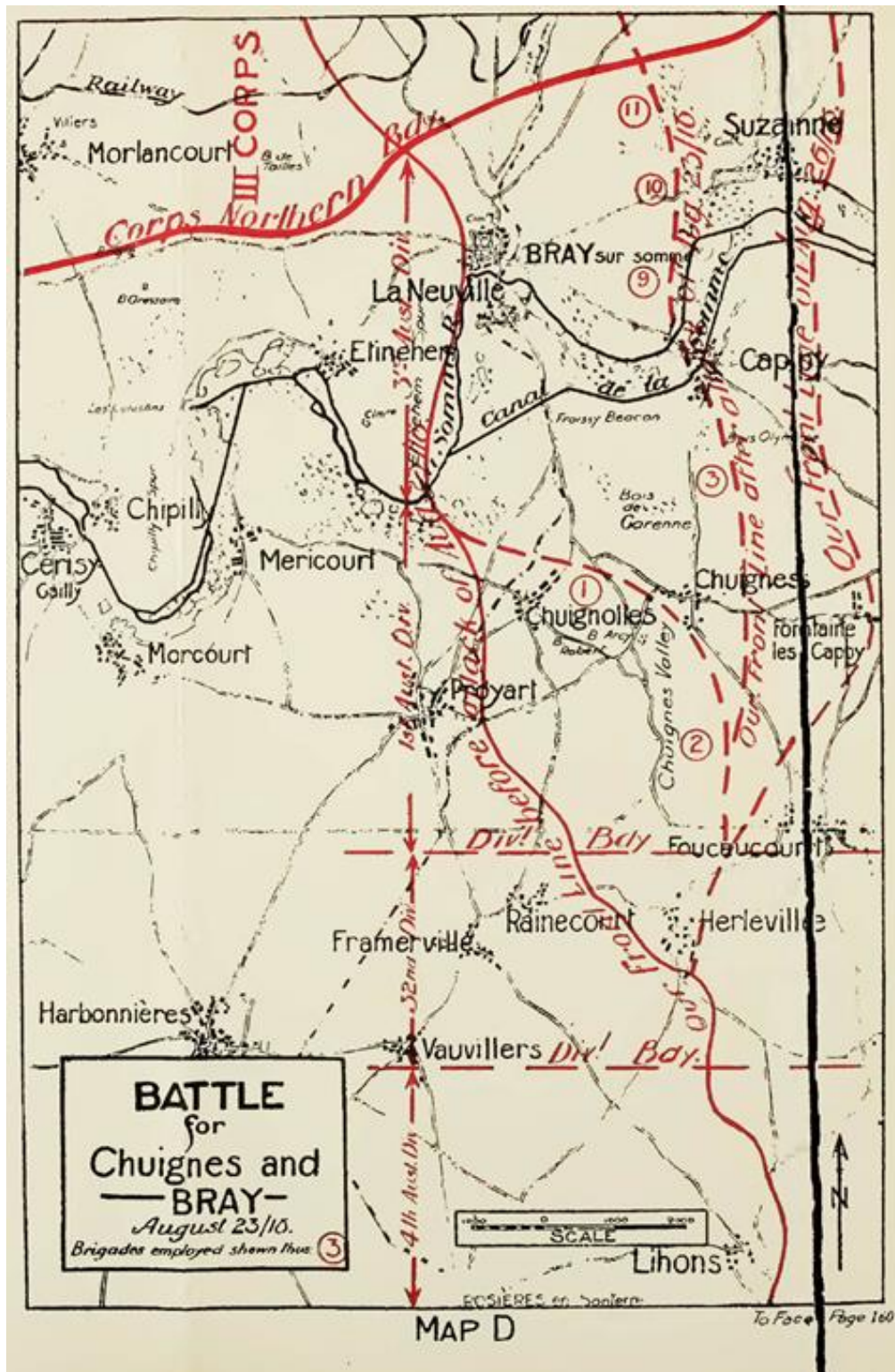
The main valley of the Somme in this region is flanked by a number of tributary valleys, which run generally in a north and south direction, extending back from the river four or five miles. They are broad, with heavily-wooded sides, and harbour a number of villages, such as Proyart, Chuignolles, Herleville and Chuignes, which cluster on their slopes.

One such valley, larger and longer than any of those which, in our previous advances, we had yet crossed, lay before our front line of that morning, and square across our path. It ran from Herleville, northwards, past Chuignes, to join the Somme in the Bray bend. It was the most easterly of all the tributary valleys to which I have referred, and it was also the last piece of habitable country before the devastated area of 1916 was reached, just a mile to the east of it.

The valley afforded excellent cover for the enemy's guns, and the expectation was that some of them would be overrun by our attack. It was also ideal country for machine-gun defence, for the numerous woods, hedges and copses afforded excellent cover, and had in all probability been amply fortified with barbed wire. It was a formidable proposition to attack such a position on such a frontage with only two Brigades.

The 2nd Brigade (Heane) attacked on the right, the 1st Brigade (Mackay) on the left, and the first phase was completed to time-table, with the green objective line, located on the east side of the long valley, in our possession. The only temporary hitch in the advance along the whole front was at Robert Wood, where the enemy held out, and had to be completely enveloped from both flanks before surrendering.

Then came the second phase, and no difficulty was experienced in advancing our line 1,000 yards east of the green line, nor in establishing there a firm line of outposts for the night.



KIA - 2184 Private Arthur Selwyn Shoobert

Private Arthur Shoobert was a member of D Company of the 1st Pioneer Battalion AIF. D Company was assigned to provide support to the 2nd Brigade (5th, 6th, 7th & 8th Battalions) under Brigadier General James 'Cast Iron Jimmy' Heane in the Battle of Chuignes on 23 August 1918.

D Company was responsible for construction of headquarters shelter and generally assisting the 7th and 8th battalions with consolidation on capture of the final objective.

From 2.00 am the troops began to assemble for the attack and by 3.45 am all were in position. Some casualties occurred during the assembly due to intermittent enemy shelling. At 4.45 am the allied barrage opened. It was a very even opening and perfectly placed. The tank support was late, but upon arrival provided invaluable assistance.

The attack formation was two battalions in line (5th & 6th) with the 7th and 8th Battalions following in support, in artillery formation, 100 yards in the rear. The latter Battalions had to pass through the enemy barrage line, which fell very quickly on the Proyart-Framerville Road, suffered some casualties.

It is possible that given D Company's supporting role that it was in the Proyart-Framerville Road area that Arthur Shoobert was killed by enemy shelling just as dawn was breaking.

Throughout the operation the enemy resistance on the left Battalion's front was unexpectedly light. On reaching St Martins Wood it was necessary to push the supporting Battalions through the companies of the attacking 5th Battalion to assist the mopping up. Despite some challenges the final objective was never in doubt.

On the right Battalion's front, opposition was much more severe. Despite the attack progressing favourably, casualties were heavy. By 7.30 am the objective had been reached, however, it wasn't until evening that the area was finally cleared of enemy.

Sadly, Private Arthur Selwyn Shoobert didn't make it. He was one on ten 'other ranks' of the 1st Pioneer Battalion to be killed in the Battle of Chuignes. His body was recovered from the battle ground and he was interred at Heath Cemetery, Harbonnieres.