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A RELUCTANT HERO: L-CPL PATRICK GOGGIN MM: The story of one man's war on the Western Front 1916-1918

Peter Dean[1]

For Patrick (Paddy) Goggin there was no rush for glory. There was no thirst to enlist for King or country. In fact, it could be argued that he had no interest in the business of war at all. August 1914 came and went, so did the first Anzac day and later the Australian withdrawal from Gallipoli. Still Paddy did not stir from his life in Yass in the New South Wales countryside.

We will never really know what persuaded Paddy to join up. Given his strong Irish bloodlines, loyalty to the crown was unlikely to dig at his conscience. More than likely he enlisted for the same reasons that motivated thousands of young Australians; because it seemed the right thing to do at the time, a bit of adventure in a lacklustre time.[2]

A labourer by profession Paddy was by no means an imposing figure. He was slim, stood at 5 ft 9 inches and still considered a mere boy at the time of his enlistment in January 1916.[3] With all his youthful enthusiasm he presented himself to the recruiting officer and soon found himself in D Company, 4th Training Battalion in Bathurst. From Bathurst, Paddy was posted to the 53rd Australian Infantry Battalion, Australian Imperial Force (AIF).[4]

Paddy, with the rest of 2nd reinforcements for the battalion, embarked aboard HMS *Ceramic* on 14 April 1916, and arrived at Port Said Egypt, on 16 May. At the time the 53rd Battalion was a relatively new unit, created after the doubling of the AIF in Egypt and originally populated with cadres from the 1st Battalion. Paddy, however, was not yet destined to cement his union with the battalion. After some preliminary training and a quick gaze at the local delights Paddy came down with pneumonia, a common affliction amongst the men, which landed him in the 2nd Australian Shore Hospital at Tel el Kidis after only six weeks in Egypt. From there Paddy was sent to the 3rd Australian General Hospital in Abbassia. In a telegram to his mother, Paddy's case was described as 'mild', but nevertheless he was to remain in hospital in Egypt and England for nearly three months. In the meantime the 53rd Battalion and its parent formation, the 5th Australian Division, had left for France and were receiving its baptism of fire on the Western Front.

The fickle fortunes of war may well have been smiling on Patrick Goggin. While Paddy was sent to England on the HMT *Kamwona*, the 5th Division was fighting for its life at

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1 Dr Peter J Dean is a military historian at the University of Notre Dame Australia (Sydney Campus) and the great nephew of Lance Corporal Patrick Goggin MM.

2 See Richard White, 'Motives for joining up: self-sacrifice and social class, 1914-1918', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, No. 9, 1983, p. 3. White argues that working class motives were less concerned with duty, honour and middle class morality and more as a result of 'judicious self interest'.

3 Paddy's enlistment in January 1916 coincided with a surge in AIF recruitment at the end of the Gallipoli campaign. January 1916 was the third highest month in the war for enlistment. See K. H. Obson, 'First AIF enlistment patterns and reasons for their variation', *Australian Defence Force Journal*, no.132, Sept/ Oct 1998, p.61-66

4 The majority of the source material for this article has is from: Australian Army Service Record, National Archives of Australia, B2455 Goggin Patrick, SERN 1662, & AWM4 23 /70, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF.

Fromelles. Here, in a battle that has been referred to recently as the 'lowest point of military incompetence in the Great War'[5], the 53rd Battalion lost 24 officers and 601 other ranks.[6]

Paddy's absence was also to keep him from the disastrous battle fields of the Somme in 1916. He was to remain bed ridden until 16 September 1916. By now Paddy had been laid up, through no fault of his own, and useless to the army for nearly three months. His health would to continue to plague him, and the Army, throughout the course of the next few months. However the cause would prove to be much more of a taboo affliction than pneumonia.

After his discharge from the hospital he was sent to the 1st Australia Base Depot at Pershaw Downs. With some accrued leave on hand Paddy wasted no time in employing his Australian charm (and undoubtable his back pay) in recreational pursuits which heralded his return to hospital, on 26 September 1916, this time with venereal disease (VD). Unfortunately for both Paddy and the Army alike, VD was to be a recurring health problem for the AIF throughout the war.[7]

Paddy's first bout of VD kept him in Buford hospital until 15 December 1916, a stay of some 54 days. Soon after, the relapse of his condition, again landed him back in hospital, this time for only a month, and he was released back to his unit on 25 February 1917. The Army attempted to solve the problem by transferring Private Patrick Goggin to a third training depot in England this time at Hurdcott. Within a short space of time however Paddy was to foil the good intensions of the Army and by 18 March 1917 he was caught in Wilton, after disobeying a routine order (to stay out of town), and promptly marched into hospital. This time the army got tough and in an effort to mend the mischievous Private Patrick Goggin he was charged by a military court, fined and placed on restricted duty.

The AIF, thinking that it had at last administered the justice and rehabilitation that Paddy needed, sent him on his release on the 25 March 1917 back to Hurdcott. Paddy initially seemed to have reformed and got on with the arduous task of training for the Western Front. The distraction of military training however proved only temporary and when Paddy was allowed leave he went straight back into Wilton, which necessitated his fourth dose of VD in the space of seven months. Paddy's second charge resulted not only in a loss in pay and restriction to barracks, but also a prompt transfer, this time far from Wilton or Pershaw Downs. The Army obviously regarded France and the front line as a distinctly harder place for Paddy to try and enhance his infamous and painfully won reputation.

Private Patrick Goggin had done his utmost during his time in England to help cement the AIF reputation for larrikinism and a lack of discipline. As Ashley Ekins has noted, the discipline problems of the AIF were widespread. By 1918 the AIF's prison rate of 17 per cent was nine times higher than that of the rest of the British Expeditionary Force (BEF). The AIF had the highest rate of court martials amongst the BEF and the highest rate of VD

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5 Ashley Ekins, 'The battle of Fromelles', *Wartime*, Issue 44, 2008, p. 21.
6 C.E.W. Bean, *The A.I.F. in France 1916*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1934, p. 442.
7 Venereal disease was a major problem for the AIF and it was generally considered that the AIF had the highest infection rate amongst the Allied Army's on the Western Front. During the last 2 years for the war over 235,000 soldiers went on sick leave due to VD. See Peter Dennis et al (ed), 'Venereal Disease', *Oxford Companion to Australian Military History*, Oxford, Melbourne, 1999, p. 608.

infection.[8] Now after some time with the 14th Training Battalion at Folkstone Patrick Goggin was given his chance to help live up to the other AIF stereotype; as a member of one of the best fighting formations on the Western Front. So on 1 July 1917 he was released from the confines of the tiny British Isles and unleashed on the European mainland.

* * * *

By the time Paddy made it to France the war and the army that he had left behind in Egypt had changed dramatically. The fresh faced Australian troops of 1916 that had arrived in France, full of spirit and eager to get at the 'Hun', were long gone, destroyed by the realities of modern trench warfare. The 'Hun' proved a more resilient and professional soldier than 'Johnny Turk' and the AIF had to adapt to, and learn new methods of warfare. The Australian's introduction to war on the Western Front in 1916 had been bathed in blood. Names such as the Somme and Fromelles became synonymous with Australian casualties. In July and August the Australians had fought at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm on the Somme, a place that C.E.W. Bean regarded as 'more densely sewn with Australian sacrifice than any other place on earth'.[9] From Pozieres the Anzac's had soldiered on throughout the winter and into the meat grinder at locations like Bullecourt, Messines and Passchendaele. By mid 1917 the Anzac soldiers had thrown off the shackles of 'colonial amateurs' and had emerged as consummate professionals.[10]

Paddy spent the month of July moving around France before arriving at the 53rd Battalion on the 4 August. The 53rd (NSW) Battalion belonged to the 14th Infantry Brigade of the 5th Australian Division, 1st Anzac Corps. During July the Corps had enjoyed what Bean called 'the finest rest ever given to British Empire troops in France.'[11] It was during this time that the AIF was thoroughly trained on the old Somme battlefields, and the soldiers first began to refer to themselves as 'diggers'[12].

Paddy was not the only member of his family to have an association with the 53rd Battalion. He had been preceded by his two cousins, Tom Goggin and Richard Callaghan. Tom's association was brief, only about a few weeks, but Richard had a much more long term relationship with the battalion. He had arrived in the unit while it was still forming in Egypt and had been with it virtually ever since. By the time that Paddy arrived he was already an accomplished veteran corporal in D Company. Unfortunately for Paddy, he was not able to re-equate this relationship with Richard as he was seconded to the 14th Training Battalion as an instructor in July and would not return until May 1918.[13]

The 53rd had been 'blooded' at Fromelles in 1916 where it suffered heavily but joined the other Australian divisions in the Somme Valley for the freezing winter of 1916–17. In the first half of 1917, the 53rd participated in the advance following the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line and in defending ground captured by Australians in the Second Battle of Bullecourt. Paddy arrived at the battalion on 1 August 1917 in the vicinity of Lynde. The

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8 Ashley Ekins, 'Fighting to exhaustion: morale, discipline and combat effectiveness in the armies of 1918', *1918 Year of Victory: Australian War Memorial International Conference*, 27-28 November 2008.

9 C.E.W Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, Penguin Books, Victoria, 1993 (1st edition, 1946).

10 Eric Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion*, Cambridge, Melbourne, 1993, pp. 93-117.

11 Ibid, p. 363.

12 Patsy Adam-Smith, *The Anzacs*, Sphere, Melbourne, 1981, p. 376. According the Adam-Smith the word 'digger' actually came from the New Zealanders who took it from their gum-diggers.

13 AWM4 Roll 90, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF

unit was in billets and Paddy formed one of 65 men, led by Major Percy Higgins, who came up as reinforcements. Upon arrival he was posted to C Company.[14]

August and September was a relatively quiet month for the 53rd. During this time the unit was occupied by brigade manoeuvres, a sports day, concerts, and training. At the beginning of September Lieutenant-Colonel Croshaw resumed commanded from Lieutenant-Colonel Norris. On the 17 September the battalion moved up to Steenwoorde and five days later they made their way to 'Half Way House'.[15] The 53rd was moving up with the 1st Anzac Corps to take part in General Haig's Third Ypres or Passchendaele offensive.

* * *

The 1st Anzac Corps moved up to support the British offensive on 20 September. The 1st and 2nd Divisions were the first to be involved, forming the centre of an eleven division assault. The Battle of Menin Road was undertaken in one of the first periods of fine weather during the campaign and was successful, but at the cost of 5,000 Australian casualties. Fighting at Menin Road was another of Paddy's cousins, John Carnel Goggin, whose 20th Battalion had fought and won the ground over which the 53rd Battalion now advanced. Prior to this period the Australian troops had time to rest and train in their new tactics. These tactics and developed out of the experiences gleamed from the battle of the Somme and also as a reaction to the German's construction of concrete blockhouses. Every Australian infantry platoon now consisted of rifle-grenadiers and a Lewis gun to support the riflemen and bombers.[16] This reorganisation was to go hand in hand with new British strategy of controlled advances. Each attack would never go beyond the range of the Allied artillery and as soon as possible the assault troops would be relieved by fresh reserves to handle the inevitable German counter attacks. Once the artillery had moved up, the advance would leap frog forward 'step by step' again. These attacks would be like "blows from a sledge hammer" that would each wear the Germans down.

As planned the 4th and 5th Australian Divisions were moved into the line to replace the 1st and 2nd Divisions. As a result Paddy was about to take his part in his first major offensive. The 53rd had spent the period of 20 to 22 September in support in the vicinity of Chateau Segard before moving up to 'Half Way House'. The battalion strength stood at 21 officers and 676 ranks. The 23rd September was a day of delight and regret for Paddy Goggin, his self assurance and adaptability, along with his grasp of basic infantry minor tactics led to an interesting cross road in his career. Paddy was a self-styled individualist and larrikin. His exploits in England had left him with a hard won reputation to live up to amongst his mates and the other privates in the battalion, but it also left him with a hard reputation to live down amongst the battalion's officers and senior NCO's. Despite this, Paddy had proven on his arrival in France his newfound maturity. The high causality rates amongst the battalion as well as the desolate and destructive sight of the Western Front had been a sobering experience. It had done much to put pay to Paddy's mischievous ways. On the eve of the offensive an apprehensive Private Patrick Goggin of C Company 53rd Battalion was ordered to report to company headquarters. Paddy's heart was in his mouth, his mind churning as to which one of his latest indiscretions had come to the notice of those in

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14 Ibid
15 Ibid
16 For a detailed discussion of the changes in tactics used by the British Army at this time see Paddy Griffiths, *Battle Tactics of the Western Front: The British Army's Arts of Attack, 1916-1918*, Yale University Press, 1994, chapters 4 & 5 and Peter Liddle (ed) *Passchendaele in Perspective: the Third battle of Ypres*, Leo Copper, London, 1997.

authority. However, Paddy was to be pleasantly surprised. Instead of the tongue lashing Paddy expected he was received warmly and with correct military etiquette. In fact Private Goggin was there to be told he was now Lance-Corporal Goggin. This news was received with delight and apprehension. Despite his enlistment in 1916 he was still fairly 'new' to the unit and would the men accept his promotion? The other factor weighing on Paddy's mind was that did he want to become a NCO? No longer a humble digger, but a man of responsibility. Paddy walked out of the headquarters tent resolved to do two things, be the best lance-corporal that he could and avoid just as vigorously any and all attempts for more promotions and responsibly.

The battalion remained at 'Half Way House' until the night of the 24-25 September when they moved forward to Glencourse Wood. The nights were cool and clear with the sounds of the battle ahead clear in the moonlight. They moved in artillery formation to avoid casualties, but this was no sure-fire safeguard. Almost as soon as setting out the Germany artillery opened. 77 mm and 5.9 inch shells screamed across no man's land and drove themselves deep into the soft ground around the 53rd. They came in continuous barrages. The German 77's sent over 'whiz-bangs' which arrived with the noise of giant firecrackers and the 5.9's shells screamed and wined as they approached before ending their lives 'with vicious, ill-tempered crashes.'[17] All of this noise and confusing was only punctuated by the sounds of the heavy German guns bombarding the support areas far behind the area where Paddy sheltered from the storm. Their shells drove over the Australians head like express trains and crashed into the earth with a terrible dull thud. As the battalion settled into position there was a brief pause in the shelling. Then as they took position another huge barrage hit the battalion position. As the shells screamed into the lines the dim cries of the wounded could be heard. Paddy looked up to see the shells impacting right on top of the company to his left. When the smoke and the dusted settled Lieutenant Jennings and two diggers had been killed.[18] The bombardment caused not just physical injuries, but mental scars as well. The tremendous and constant barrage that the battalion had suffered was having adverse effects on the men's moral and shortly after the assembly was complete Lieutenant Pain, the Lewis gun officer, was evacuated with shell shock.

By now, midnight on the 25th, the battalion was in position and waiting for the signal to attack. The shelling became internment and most of the artillery landed behind the 53rd in the positions they had moved out of shortly before. They formed up on a two company front. A company occupied the front left section of the line with B Company in immediate support behind their position and D Company occupied the front right with Paddy and C Company in support. The companies had their sections set out in single file and where possible the men crawled into shell holes for protection and laid down to await the advance.

Punctually at 5:50 am the barrage opened. Again two Australian divisions (4th and 5th) formed the centre of the advance, along a seven division front of six miles. The shells screamed down in front of the men and the order was given to advance. The men doubled across no man's land to a point 60 yards behind the artillery screen where they knelt down and waited for it to creep forward. As the barrage lifted the company officers ordered the scouts forward and the lines of sections and platoons advanced. The rear companies, amongst them Paddy's C Company advanced in columns of platoons. As the men moved out

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17 Bean, *Anzac to Amiens*, p.327

18 AWM4 Roll 90, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF, Appendix 4, September 1917, Account of operations taken part in by the 53rd Battalion between 22nd and 30th September 1917.

a heavy mist enveloped them and kept them hidden from the enemy machine guns. The men emerged out of the wood and into the flat expanse towards the edge of Polygon Wood and the butte of the old rifle range that formed their objective.

As the artillery lifted over the German lines their machine guns opened a deadly chatter. Despite the screaming shells and the fire off the enemy machine guns the Australians maintained their order and carried out their tasks. As the pillboxes were approached the platoons closed in. Officers directed the Lewis guns into positions. They soon 'opened up' sending .303 rounds from the light machine guns and rifles into the slits and firing ports of the concrete boxes. As they laid down covering fire the rifle sections moved around the flanks keeping low and out of sight. As the enveloping parties moved in they threw grenades at the pillboxes that exploded with a tremendous crash. All around the confusion of the battle reigned.

Artillery pounded both the German and Australian lines, machine guns spat deadly fire at their adversaries while NCO's and officers tried to maintain control and the keep the momentum of the advance. As they approached the pill boxes the men lobbed their last mills bombs at the bunkers and as they exploded the officers screamed the charged. The men drove forward with the bayonet pushing up to the walls of the boxes and throwing bombs and firing through the slits in their sides. As the men advanced the Lewis gun section and their NCO's 'switched fire' catching the Germans as they emerged from the rear of the boxes or as reserves moved up to counter-attack the Australians. As the men took the boxes and pilled into the enemy trenches sentries were placed at all of the entrances. Bombing parties were then organised and with bags of grenades they made their way down into the dugouts. Many of these parties were meet with fire as they advanced and the Australians retaliated with rifle fire and grenades forcing the Germans down into the last dugouts destroying any of the enemy who refused to surrender.

As the men advanced onto the position enemy artillery and machine guns in concealed positions opened a deathly fire. The shells and bullets fell amongst the reserve companies and BHQ that were now being pushed forward to take the trench line. As the men piled into the trenches a notable exception was the discovered. A large part of battalion headquarters was absent as was the Commanding Officer. As the men pushed back into no man’s land the CO's body was soon discover riddled by machine gun fire and command of the battalion passed to Captain Johnson. The death of Lieutenant-Colonel Croshaw D.S.O. soon impressed upon all the men the disregard that the machine gun held for rank and status.

The objective was secured by 6:25 am and the men began to dig in, consolidate and prepare for the inevitable German counter-attack that followed every offensive. As the artillery advanced to the next phase line a new threat developed. The men ducked, weaved and crawled for cover as enemy aircraft came in flying low, strafing the battalion area. Soon after the supporting brigade machine guns came up to strengthen the line. Patrols were sent out in the battalion area to deal with the incessant snipers and the guns were set up on the buttes to give plenty of observation and good fields of fire. The 53rd Battalion had captured 2 officers and 56 ranks as well as capturing or destroying 9 machine guns.

Within minutes of the successful assault the enemy launched a counter attack with their slender reserves. This was easily repulsed and 20 more prisoners taken. Not long after the German artillery again began to fall. This shelling fell mainly in the battalion rear areas and forced these rear service troops to push forward to the mainline to avoid the hail of shrapnel. The first heavy counter-attack fell on the Australians at 7 pm, but these attacks

were easily beaten back with the support of machine guns and artillery. From the 26–30 September the men were occupied by strengthening their newly won position until they moved back to Half Way House on the night of the 29 September. The only break to this routine had been on the morning of 27 September when a German heavy bomber attacked the battalion area but was brought down by Lewis and machine gun fire to the rear of the battalion near its right flank.[19]

Yet again the sacrifice of the Australians had been great. 'Mates I have played with last night & joked with are now lying cold', a sapper wrote after Polygon Wood. 'My God it was terrible. Just slaughter. The 5th Div. was almost annihilated. We certainly gained our objectives but what a cost [?]', an infantry private confided, 'The reaction is still to come and I'm rather frightened of it - I feel about eighty years old now.'[20] By the time the 53rd was withdrawn from the line, three officers and 63 ranks had been killed in action, four officers and 222 wounded, including those missing and sent to hospital the total causalities came to eight officers and 342 men or around fifty percent of the battalion. Despite the enormous causality figures the objective had been secured and the men's morale remained firm. The AIF suffered 38,093 casualties in the Third Ypres offensives and during 1917 the infantry of the Australian divisions in proportion to their strength suffered 97 per cent casualties.[21]

On 9 October, the battalion move up into the line in the vicinity of Zillebeke relieving the 60th Battalion. They remained here until the 16 October carrying out routine work parties before moving into the support line behind Anzac Ridge relieving the 57th and providing support to the 56th. They remained for another day under constant enemy aerial activity. On 21 October they withdrew back to Dickerbusch for a rest which lasted until the end of the month. The good news for the men was they received a fresh change of clothing.[22]

The beginning of November saw Paddy issued with a new box respirator and given a refresher course in bayonet training before the battalion moved on 10 November into the Kemmel area. Paddy had performed well in the attack in the previous assault and as a result of his action and losses within the battalion he was given command of his own section. On the 12 November 1917 the CO issued Operational Order No. 5. This was the outline of the relief by the 14th Infantry Brigade, including the 53rd, of the 21st Brigade on the 13/14 November. The 53rd was tasked with taking over part of the line occupied by the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment (British Army) in the reserve line on the 12 November and the 2nd Battalion Yorkshire Regiment in the front line on the 13 November. As they moved into the front line C Company was given the right front section on the line. Their responsibilities included 'tying in' with the 55th Battalion on the extreme right of the battalion frontage.

The battalion came into the line in front of the town of Wytschaete in a section of the line named after the town. Wytschaete lay to the north of the town of Messines in northern France and had been taken by the IX British Corps in June. The southern or right flank on the battalion, sat on the road that ran east out of Wytschaete and through the little village Wambeek, here C Coy, formed the right flank of the 53rd Battalion however the position

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19 Ibid.

20 B. Gammage, *The Broken Years*: Australian Soldiers in the Great War, Penguin, Australia, 1985. p. 189-190. These words were written by Sapper McKay, 15th Field Coy, Fibro plaster of Fitzroy, Victoria, on 26/9/1917.

21 C.E.W. Bean, *The A.I.F. in France 1917*, Angus and Robertson, Sydney, 1943, pp. 936 & 948.

22 AWM4 Roll 90, War Diary 53rd Infantry Battalion AIF

was difficult to judge as the road had all but ceased to exist as a result of the fighting. Within the brigade the 54th Battalion was on the northern or left flank and the 55th on the southern or right flank. As the men advanced into position they did so in the harshest conditions. The fine weather that the battalion attack had been made in September had abandoned the Allies and Flanders was once more under water. On the night that the unit moved up the battalion war diary recorded the conditions as "mud as bad as that experienced on the Somme." So much so that the front-line companies, C and D, were all issued with gumboots.

As the company filed into position Paddy was called into company headquarters for a briefing. He was informed that he was to move into no man's land and occupy the company's advance post. This was to be Paddy's first test of independent command and furthermore he was to occupy the most important and dangerous section of the company's line. Advanced posts were an essential part of trench warfare. They were normally situated in shell holes or specially constructed dugouts far into no man's land. Their purpose was to provide early warning to the main firing line in case of enemy raids or attacks. The catch was that they were usually more exposed to enemy fire and if they weren't properly 'dug in' or camouflaged, the enemy often capitalised on their vulnerability by send parties into no man's land with the specific objective of destroying these small posts. This could also be achieved easily if the men in the posts were not vigilant and alert.

Paddy and his six men filed off into no man's land on the night of the 13th to occupy the post. There they relieved the men of the 2nd York's. Much to Paddy's chagrin he found the position in a pitiful state. The York's had done virtually nothing in the weather to improve the posts comfort, protection or its fields of fire. The post was almost completely unsatisfactory. It lacked both drainage and cover, which meant that in the atrocious weather it was awash with mud. As Paddy and his men settled down they took no comfort from the cold wet mud in which they were forced to lie. The mud stuck to everything; skin, clothes and equipment and it became a major struggle just to keep their weapons clean.[23] Once in position the word was passed down the line. C Company had been the last of the battalion to move into the line and shortly after "Rum Jar" the code word for relief complete was given to BHQ.

Unknown to Paddy the advance posts of the York's had been under meticulous observation from the Germans for sometime and their exact position and strength was catalogued with great detail. The Germans had noticed the activity to their front and would have quite easily recognised that a relief was taking place. The German battalion commander in the area opposite the Australians would have noticed that opposite his left flank was where the relief had proceeded the longest. Assuming that his new comers would be tired after their march to the line, and confused by not having seen this part of the front in daylight he planned a nasty little welcome. The German commander knew that he must also discover the identity of the new unit across from him as undoubtedly his regimental commander would request it on the following day. This piece of intelligence was vital in keeping track of all Allied units along the Western Front. The battalion commander walked back clumsily through the mud to his headquarters. There he sat down and issued his night orders. Calling for the company commander of his left flank company he informed him that he wanted a dozen of

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23 The poor state of the advanced post is clearly outlined in the battalion war diary, Appendix 7, November 1917. By the time that the battalion had left the front three of the five posts had been abandoned and rebuilt elsewhere with proper protection, drainage and fields of fire.

his men to go out into no man's land discover the identity of the newcomers, hopefully capture a prisoner for interrogation and destroy that advance post before dawn.

The German company commander would have most likely anticipated the order that he received to destroy the post and had already selected his men. He brought the dozen selected men in for a briefing and outlined his plan. The men were to advance into no man's land under the cover of darkness making full use of the shell holes and any cover available. They were then to wait for first light, make certain of the objective and assault it during dawn. Once the position was taken they were to retrieve whatever intelligence they could find and bring back any of he surviving "Tommy's" before the full light of dawn exposed them to any enemy retaliatory fire. It was all routine procedures, just one of thousands of such raids carried out all along the Western Front by both sides.

Paddy meanwhile had had an uncomfortable night. The cold, mud, wet and his apprehension had meant that he got only the briefest amount of sleep. After the relief had taken place sentries were posted while the others rested. He surveyed the ground towards the German lines straining in the dark to see any pieces of dead ground or cover that the Germans could use to sneak up on his post. After he had made up the picket roster he settled down to try and catch a few hours sleep. He woke several times during the night and checked the sentries were awake and reminded them to wake him for the last shift. It was always best for the NCO to do the first and last picket duty. Firstly to make sure that everyone settle down all right and to get a good look around and view of the ground. Secondly, in the morning it allowed him be alert and awake before first light and to make sure that all of his diggers were up for stand to before first light. As dawn approached Paddy struggled to get his wits in the cold morning air. By November the winter was fast approaching, the dawns were getting later and the snow would fall in about a month.

On the other side of the line the German NCO in charge of the raiding partly would almost have certainly not relished his task. It would, of cause, not be difficult as jobs go. He knew the precise location of the post and he knew that he would outnumber the enemy by about two to one. However, any job was dangerous and sneaking across no man's land was no one's favourite pastime. A few hours before first light he briefed his men and pushed out into no man's land stopping short of his objective, checked his men were right and waited for the light to attack.

Both Paddy and his fellow digger on sentry strained their eyes and their ears trying to catch and sound or movement to their front. First light was fast approaching. Both men suddenly went very still as over the sounds of the far away artillery and in the fading light of a far off flare they heard a new sound. The sudden clank of equipment and the soft squelch of boots. Paddy was going to take no chances. He quickly woke the rest of his men, informing them in dull whispers to 'stand to'. Paddy then gently and quietly raised his head over the parapet and looking into the blackness. With his heart pounding, hands sweating despite the cold and nervous tension he glimpsed movement to his front. First one, then two, three and more of the enemy came into sight all silently creeping up on his position.

Paddy turned back to his men and using hand signals informed the men of the direction of the attack and their approximate numbers. The men, most of them now veterans of many long nights on the Western Front, carefully collected their Mills bombs, primed the detonators and waited for Paddy's signal. Paddy took one more glimpse over the top and saw the Germans advancing fast. He turned and nodded to his men. With all of their strength they hurled the grenades in the Germans direction, reached for their rifles and

'opened up'. The Germans stunned by the crack of rapid rifle fire charged only to be met by the hail of more bullets and the muffled explosions of the grenades in the soft mud. The sudden noise caused the Australian main line to 'stand to' while Paddy battled for fire supremacy over his adversaries.

The initial fire and grenades had done their job well and Paddy could hear the cry of the German wounded as they continued to battle it out. The German's were aware that their little surprise had gone wayward and after a brief but vivacious fight they decided the prudent course of action would be to retire. As the German's moved back Paddy and his men continually harassed their withdrawal. The German's left two men dead and several made their way back to their lines with obvious wounds.

Paddy and his men's skirmish in the no man's land did not go unnoticed by either side. The Germans recognised that they were up against a skilled and determined foe, while Paddy's plight also gave an insight to the Australian commanders on the nature of their outpost line and started immediately on rebuilding them in more appropriate positions. Paddy's effort and dedication to duty did not go unnoticed. The battalion War Diary on the day recorded that:

> At 6 am an enemy patrol of 10-12 men attempted to raid C Company's advance post. They succeeded in crawling up to our wire and then commenced throwing bombs. Our men easily repulsed the enemy with rifle fire and bombs, who retired leaving 2 killed. Several were obviously wounded and carried off with difficulty.

Paddy's citation for the Military Medal (MM) read in part:

> L/Cpl. Goggin set a splendid example of bravery and determination and the enemy party was driven off leaving two killed. Several of the enemy were wounded.

The award was quiet an accomplishment. The Military Medal was the third highest award that Australian soldiers could receive for bravery behind the Victoria Cross and Distinguished Conduct Medal. There were only 9,926 MM's awarded to the AIF which constituted only 3% of the 330,000 who enlisted.

After the excitement of the 14th the men settled down to the ordinary and deadly boring routine of the Western Front. The battalion remained in the line until the 28th, a stay of 17 days. From there they moved to a rest area during December, where they spent Christmas out of the line in reserve. Here Paddy fresh from his own triumph put his best skills to work and secured himself a job as a coal guard for 5th Division HQ's, far removed from front line duty. Paddy remained in this pleasant little occupation until the 21 February 1918 when he returned to the front at the familiar Wytschaete sector. Here things remained quiet until the start of the German spring offensive on 21 March when the battalion received heavy artillery fire.

With the start of the German offensive came a change for the battalion. At first things along the British front look bleak and Haig issued his infamous "Backs to the Wall" bulletin. The battalion moved around continuously throughout the rest of March, before settling outside of Villers-Bretonneux after relieving the 17th (British) Lancers on the 5 and 6 April. During this time they were told to expect major attacks and any time. Artillery fell continuously and the position was so exposed that no movement during the daytime was possible. During the early morning of the 8th, the battalion went over the offensive and

advanced 500 yards. A and B companies advanced against the German 48th Infantry Regiment.

The battalion was relieved on the 9th but back in the line on the 13th where a trench raid revealed the enemy to the elite Prussian "storm troopers" who spearheaded Lundendorff's offensives. On the 17th the area around Villers-Bretonneux was pounded by German gas. This gas attack took a very heavy toll of the Battalion with 12 officers and 155 ordinary ranks having to be evacuated.[24] In fact the attack was so sever that some areas that the battalion occupied were evacuated and the battalion was transferred to take over the lines in the 56th Battalions positions. During this period of March and April 1918 out of strength of 14 officers and 321 O.R's who became casualties gas accounted for 11 officers and 195 O.R's. Only 5 men were killed of wounds sustained in combat.

Gas was again used on 23 April and at dawn on the 24th the Germans attacked and broke through the British lines. The 13th, 14th (Paddy's) and 15th Brigades were hurried into the fight. At 10 pm the Australians launched one of the most successful pincer movements of the war and the town of Villers-Bretonneux was retaken and at dawn it was cleared by British and Australian troops. After the war Paddy told his sister Gladys, that his battalion occupied basements in the town of Villers-Bretonneux, where much of the gas remained. It was in this action that he received the gassing that was to plague him for the rest of his life.

During May the battalion and Paddy were sent to reserve and Lieutenant-Colonel Holland from the 55th took command. During the rest of May and June the battalion oscillated between frontline and reserve duty in the vicinity of Hamel and Querrieu. On 9 July Paddy along with one other O.R. was sent to the 14th Brigade Infantry School and returned to the battalion on 3 August.[25] A few days later on the 13th Paddy was sent to hospital from the field were he remained for 13 days. Although it is not recorded as to why Paddy was evacuated the medical report for August states that "We had a few cases of influenza, but in nearly all cases they have not had to be evacuated". Of course it is entirely possible that Paddy was one of the exceptions to this rule. The Regimental Medical Officer Captain Butt, did comment in his report that "Early in the month the Battalion were out in billets, but as I was not with the battalion then I do not know what prophylaxis measures were taken for venereal disease … they all had to be evacuated". It remains open to speculation as to why Paddy was evacuated. To his credit Paddy was not with the battalion during the early part of the month, but he was at the training depot far to the rear of the frontline and close to many leisure venues. Despite this Paddy was not charged on release from hospital and given his prior record this would in all likelihood mean that he had succumb to influenza, most likely affected by his exposure to gas at Villers-Bretonneux on Anzac Day 1918.

This hospital stays lead to another crossroads in Paddy's life and military career. On release from hospital he was not sent back to the 53rd but to the Australian Infantry Base Depot (AIBD) on 25 August. He remained at AIBD until 19 September when he was transferred to the Australian Veterinary Hospital with a class B1 medical listing (not fit for frontline duty). It is not recorded as to why Paddy was reclassified but given his turbulent medical history and recent expose, on numerous occasions, to gas it is entirely understandable.

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24 Although Paddy was not evacuated it is quiet possible that this is where he received the gassing that was to plague him for the rest of his life on his return to Australia.

25 It is not recorded why Paddy was sent but he most likely scenario would be as an instructor or for a junior NCO's course on infantry tactics.

Paddy spent only a month at the unit before receiving leave to Great Britain in October. He remained with the Vet Corps through the armistice and Christmas of 1918 before transfer to England in February of 1919 for the long journey home. He remained in England at various training battalions until 19 April when he finally boarded the HMT *Sardinia* in Devonport for the journey back to Australia.

On return to Australia Paddy spent time rehabilitating at the Lady Davidson Hospital for Veterans at Turramurra. After being demobilized he was granted a soldier settlement allotment at Yass which he later sold. In 1920, he married Ida Caroline Giddens at Annandale and he spent his time indulging his love of horse and trying to forget about the nightmare experiences of the war.

Despite having escaped death or injury on the battlefield during the war Paddy paid his dues on his service for the rest of his life. Ill health plagued him until at the premature age of only 43 he passed away at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital of pulmonary tuberculosis, the result of gas poisoning. To the end he remained a larrikin, faithful to the ideals of mischief and mateship that personified the 1st AIF. An Irish Australian rouge and a humble war hero he, like all of his fellow 'diggers', was a man who had devote his youth and ultimately his life to the 'war to end all wars'.

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