

History Assignment – Brigadier General Sir Raymond Lionel Leane CB, CMG, DSO, MC, VD

Question 1 Describe His/hers background before departing for the war



Figure 1: Raymond Lionel Leane in his military uniform (South Australia Police, 2008).

Raymond Lionel Leane ('Leane') was the second youngest of five sons, born on 12 July 1878 to Thomas and Alice Leane of Prospect in South Australia..

Leane was educated at North Adelaide Public School until the age of 12 (Mallett, 2004). After school he worked in a retail and wholesale business. His employer sent him to Albany, Western Australia. He became interested in militia soldiering and was commissioned in the 11th (Perth Rifles) Infantry Regiment in 1905. Before this, on 14th of June 1902, he married Edith Louise Laybourne at Christ Church, Claremont, Perth (Hopkins, 2006). At that time he was employed as a commercial traveller.

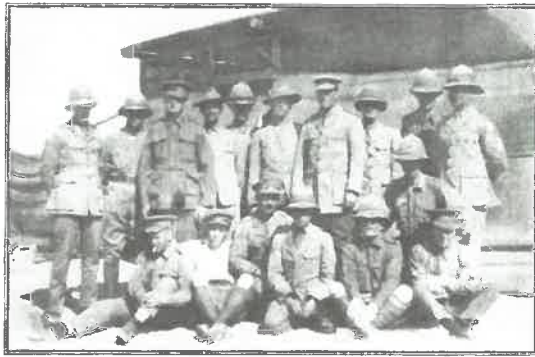
He lived in Claremont for six years where he was elected to the local council. In 1908 he bought a retail business in Kalgoorlie and became a successful merchant. He also resumed militia training by the transferring to the Goldfields Infantry Regiment and was subsequently promoted to captain in 1910.

On the 25th of August 1914, Leane joined the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) as a commander of a company for the 11th Infantry battalion, with the rank of captain (Mallett, 2004). Four of his brothers served in the war, as did nine of his nephews. The Leane's were to become one of Australia's most distinguished military families.

Question 2 Describe his life and service on the Western Front

This is an account of Brigadier General Sir Raymond Lionel Leane's service on the Western Front. It is set after the time served at Gallipoli where as Captain and Company Commander he landed at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915 and led a raid on Gaba Tepe, for which he was awarded the Military Cross. Wounded on 28 June during an assault on Pine Ridge and again on 31 July in a successful attack against a Turkish trench, that became known as Leane's Trench, he was promoted to temporary Major on 5 August. He commanded the 11th Battalion on 11 September. He was mentioned twice in despatches for service at ANZAC. During that time he was named "Bull" his *"tall square –shouldered frame, immense jaw, tightly compressed lips, and keen, steady humorous eyes made him the very figure of a soldier"* (Hopkins, 2006)

Remaining in Gallipoli until 16 November, Leane was subsequently confirmed as Major and appointed to the command of the new 48th Battalion on 26 February 1916. Appointed Lieutenant Colonel on 12 March he led the 48th Battalion to France in June 1916 (Browning, 2009).



48th Battalion Officers: April 2nd 1916
 Rear L-R: Lt D Grinlinton, Lt G.F. Evans, Lt F.W. Roberts, Lt B.E. Bardwell, Capt J.R.B. O'Sullivan, Maj A.P. Inlay, Lt Col R.L. Leane, Capt W.G. Hartley, Lt W.G.A. Walter, Lt O. Jilley
 Front L-R: Lt G.C. Dyke, Capt B.B. Leane, Lt M.S. Brearley, Lt T.C. Farley, Lt H.W. Bush, Lt H.A. Hamersley, Capt H.H. Woollard

Figure 2: The 48th Battalion's officers as at April 2nd 1916 (Browning, 2009).

The 48th Battalion which Leane led during the Great War, was to become known through the AIF as 'the Joan of Arc Battalion' (Made of All Leanes). The men of the Battalion were mainly from regional South Australia and Western Australia. The Battalion formed part of the 12th Brigade of the 4th Australian Division (Australian War Memorial, 2012).



Figure 3: Raymond Lionel Leane with his four brothers (Australian War Memorial, 2012).

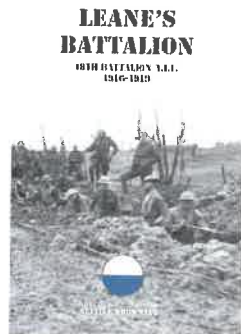


Figure 4: The 48th Battalion in the trenches (Browning, 2009).

It has been said that Lieutenant Leane was one of the most highly respected commanders in the AIF (Laffin, 1992). The decisions he made on the Western Front, his approach to battles and his loyalty to his Battalion at the risk of his own career set him apart from so many.

The move of the Battalion to France saw Leane's leadership and military skills tested time and time again through loss and hardship, as he and his men were involved in the heaviest fighting on the Western Front (Australian War Memorial, 2012).

Pozières

The first major battle for the 48th Battalion on the Western Front was Pozières. Here, the Battalion was tasked with defending ground that had already been captured. The battalion endured, what was said to be the heaviest artillery barrage ever experienced by Australian troops and they suffered 598 casualties (Australian Military Books, 2012).

The battle of Pozières was Leane's first real test as a leader of the 48th Battalion. Committed to the front line on 5 August 1916, Leane firstly inspected the line with his company commanders (Mallett, 2004) during a heavy barrage from the German army. He was not impressed with what he observed to be a lack of preparation and placement by the British Army (Browning, 2009). He was aware that what they were facing was no ordinary barrage (Mallett, 2004). Leane's Battalion had two tasks to complete. The first one was to take over the portion of the OG trenches in its sector, which linked with the remainders of Arnold Brown's company. The second task was to remove the Australian wounded which lay on the ground, crowded in the trenches (Charlton, 1986).

Within hours, Leane and his brigade commander, Glasfurd, clashed. Glasfurd ordered Leane to occupy the forward trenches with two companies. Leane argued to do so would expose his men to unnecessary risks because the trench was overcrowded. Glasfurd responded with a written order for Leane has to place his two companies forward of Pozières (Charlton, 1986).

'I was now faced with this problem,' Leane wrote in a letter in 1923, recalling the incident. *'If I obeyed orders I felt that the men would be shot to pieces ... If I disobeyed the order and lost the ridge my career as a Military Officer would be over'* (Bennett, 2011).

Although disobeying Glasfurd was a breach of discipline, the historian Charles Bean noted: *'Disobedience to orders in war is a most dangerous practice, but on this occasion the action appears to have been fully justified by his results'* (Deayton, 2011). It has been said that Leane's disobedience was born of conspicuous common sense and great moral courage (Dayton, 2011)

Leane did in time deploy both 'A' and 'B' companies in to the front line between the Elbow and the Windmill. The march into the front line took three hours, during which the 48th Battalion was constantly besieged by German shellfire (Browning, 2009).

Leane wrote: *'We suffered heavy casualties in taking over. No trenches were constructed, the place being just one mass of craters. No communicating trenches. Attempts had been made to dig them, but they did not go beyond jumping off the trench in front of the Tramway Trench. This meant about 400 yards over the open to get up ration and water, all wounded had to be carried back in the same way. Communications were kept up by runners. The 27th Battalion had fallen back from O.G.2 only on the morning of August 5th. I instructed my company commanders that O.G.2 would be held, strongpoints to be constructed, also strong patrols to be sent out in front of O.G.2. Sergeant D.A. Twining, in charge of scouts, I ordered to reconnoitre the Windmill near Bapaume Road and to*

establish a strongpoint. The 48th Battalion relieved the 27th Battalion under a very heavy barrage of enemy artillery' (Browning, 2009).

Leane's ability to look beyond himself also extended to acknowledging the bravery of others in service. During the battle of Pozieres, Leane came across Captain H.H. Woollard who was established near the supply dump. Due to the distance between the front line and the aid post many men were killed. Woollard was a stretcher-bearer who tried to save as many lives as he could. Leane wrote 'I came upon Woollard surrounded by wounded men, the trench being torn with heavy shellfire. He told me that many of the men needed immediate attention and that the carry was too far to enable medical aid to be given in time. I can see him now as he looked up at me and said, "I'm as frightened as hell, Colonel," I patted him on the back' (Browning 2009).

Leane recommended Woollard for the Distinguished Service Order, which was downgraded to a mention in despatches (Browning, 2009).

After what has been described as a most furious German attack the 48th Battalion met and turned back a full scale German counter attack. The loss in one day and two nights was 598 men for the 48th Battalion (Mallett, 2004).

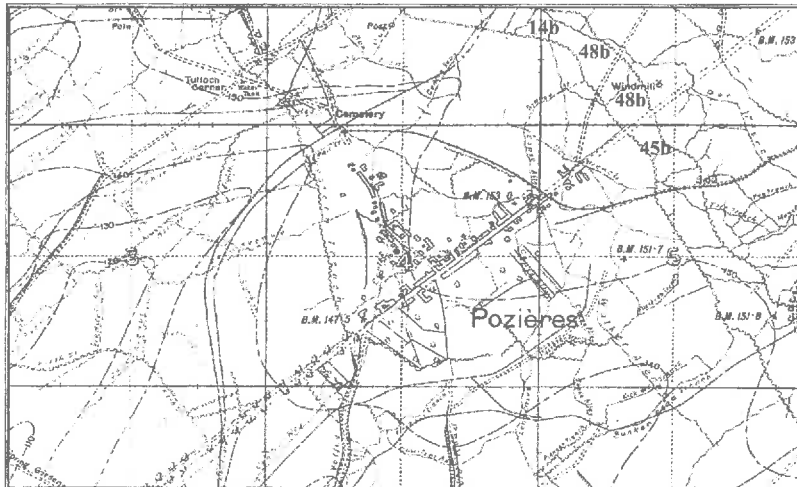


Figure 5: The 48th Battalion's position in the Battle of Pozieres (Browning, 2009).

Pozieres. August 1916. 48th Bn's sector in O.G.1 and O.G.2, with the 14th Bn on the left and the 45th Bn on the right

Mouquet Farm

Raymond Leane and his battalion marched from La Boisselle during the evening of August 30th 1916 and they relieved the 13th and 16th battalion in the front line near Mouquet Farm after they had made an unsuccessful attack on the enemy front line. At one time the entire 12th Brigade, that included the 47th, 48th, 46th and 45th Battalions, were all in the front line facing Mouquet farm. Leane then established his command post in the support line, as he considered that the old headquarters was too far back from the line (Browning, 2009). They were subsequently relieved.

Bullecourt

In 1917, the 48th Battalion fought two major battles, the first battle in Bullecourt in France, the second battle at Passchendaele in Belgium. The Battalion was forced to withdraw on both occasions with significant losses, as a result of poor planning and inadequate support. The Battalion, however, fought with courage and skill.

Leane's professional approach to his duties was also witnessed when his brother Major B.B. Leane was struck by a 77mm shell, which also blasted a leg of Lance Corporal H.R. Beechey, who died before aid could be given. Major Leane was killed instantly by the blast of the shell (Browning, 2009).

When Raymond Leane found his brother's body, he buried them behind the railway embankment and erected a makeshift cross. N.G. Imlay wrote *'Ray Leane was made of case hardened steel. To be with him that morning after the discovery of Ben, and see him concentrate on his job without an outward sign of mental distress was but to verify that statement; but what he suffered inwardly no one ever knew'* (Browning 2009).

The 48th Battalion was ordered to take over the German support line and they were successful in doing so but the men were stretched. There was insufficient support to withstand a German counter attack. Bullecourt was to be an utter disaster (Deayton, 2011).

Notwithstanding the defeat, Leane wrote *'My battalion held the trenches for one hour and ten minutes after the rest had retired. No words of mine can express the pride and admiration I feel for those brave men. Officers and men alike did wonderful work and I feel that had troops come up on the left of Bullecourt and captured the trench we would still be in the position'* (Browning, 2009).

Passchendaele

The battle for Passchendaele was yet another example of poor planning by the British commanders but demonstrated the bravery and courage of the 48th Battalion under Leane (Browning 2009).

After the fighting got intense near Assyria, Leane ordered for the SOS rockets to be fired with artillery assistance. This fell through and the 48th Battalion suddenly found themselves being outflanked by the Germans (Browning, 2009).

Despite this the 47th and 48th Battalion were able to halt the German advance but unfortunately Lieutenant-Colonels R.L. Leane and A.P. Imlay were wounded in the battle (Browning, 2009).

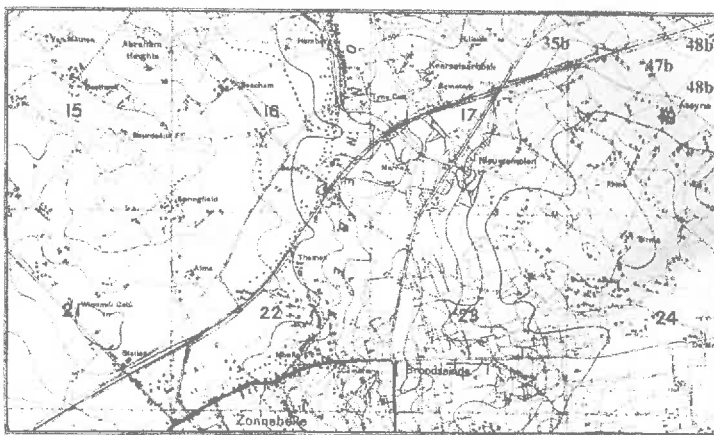


Figure 6: The 48th Battalion's position in the battle of Passchendaele (Browning, 2009).

Dernancourt

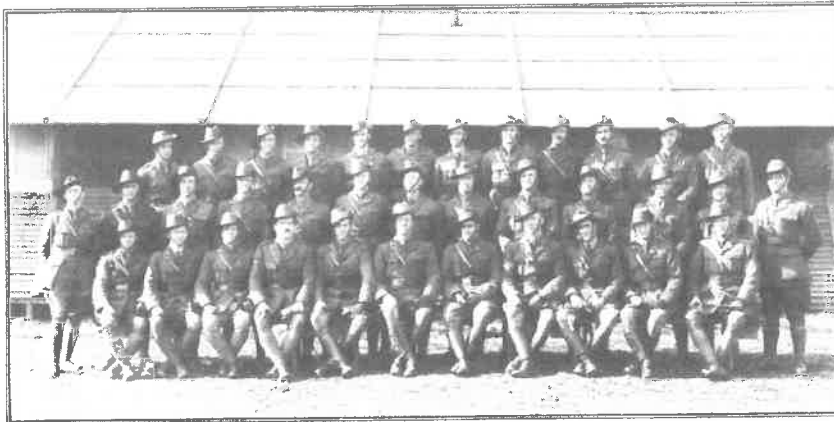


Figure 7: The 48th Battalion's officers in March 1918 (Browning, 2009).

48th Battalion Officers, March 1918
 Rear: Left to right, back row: Lt G.P. Leane, Lt R.S. Rafferty, Lt R.C. Beechmore, Lt C.W. Stoerkel, Lt G.D. Mitchell, Lt J.A. Bingley, Lt E.G. Helton, Lt H. Downes, Lt R.N.J. Fletcher, Lt A.R. Allen, Lt W.D. Pritchard, Lt R.E. Potts
 Middle row: Lt A.P. Ford, Lt A.J. Gelston, Lt I. S.J. Brown, Lt H.J. Burnett, Lt A.H. Lawrence, Lt D.H. Clarke, Lt H.W. James, Lt W.B. Carr, Captain G.A. Pavy, Lt A.S. Ferguson, Lt J. Whittle, Capt N.G. Inlay, Lt P.E. Nimmo
 Front row: Lt L.G.R. Challen, Capt W. Caldwell, Capt T.H. Elliot, Capt F. Anderson, Major A.G. Moyes, Lt Colonel R.L. Leane, Capt D.A. Twining, Capt L.L. Carter, Capt D.G.C. Cumming, Capt V.C. Brown, Chaplain J.C. Flood.

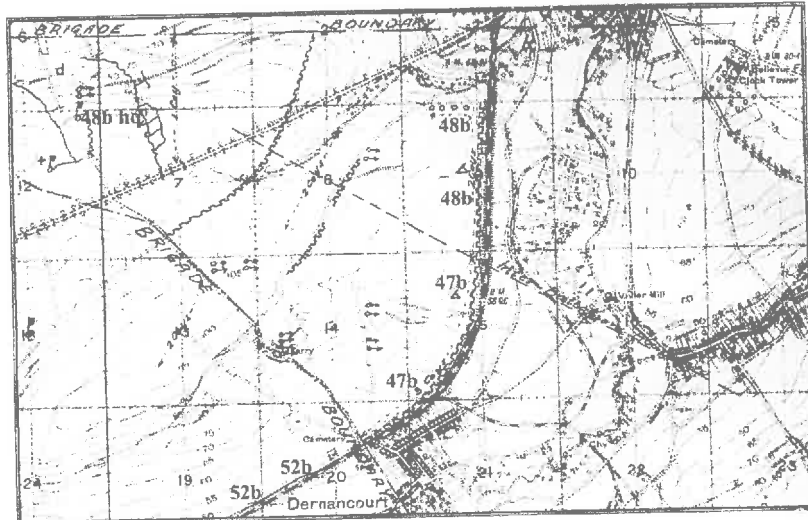
Lieutenant Colonel R.L. Leane having being wounded at Passchendaele on October 12th did not return to duty until 1918. He led the 48th battalion during the Battle of Dernancourt.

At 11am on March 25th, the 12th Brigade boarded Lorries and went to Beaumetz. The 4th division was moved to position in front of Souastre and they were asked to dig in and hold the Germans off. At 6.30 pm the 48th Battalion was ordered to move forward as a 'blocking force' onto the high ground between Millencourt and Dernancourt (Browning, 2009).

The German troops massed for another attack but advance warning was given by the observation posts and the men were ready. The German troops attacked in waves but encountered a hail of rifle and machine gun fire from the 48th Battalion (Browning, 2009).

From Dernancourt, Leane commanded the 48th at Albert in March-April, was appointed temporary colonel, commanding the 12th Brigade on 19 April and was confirmed in rank and promoted temporary brigadier general on 1 June. Under his leadership the 48th Battalion was prominent in halting the German advance on Amiens on 5 April and he commanded the 12th Brigade at Villers-Bretonneux in April-May, in the attack on Proyart on 8 August and in the battles of the Hindenburg outpost line in September. His AIF appointment ended on 3 January 1920.

He was mentioned in despatches eight times (Hopkins, 2006). For his efforts on the Western Front he was awarded a Military Cross, Distinguished Service Order, Order of St Michael and St George, Order of the Barth, the French Croix de Guerre and was also knighted for his war contributions and his post war contributions (Australian War Memorial, 2012).



Dernancourt, April 5th 1918 47th and 48th Bn positions marked before the withdrawal

Figure 8: The 48th Battalion's position at the battle of Dernancourt (Browning, 2009).

Part 3 Describe how his/her service on the Western Front reflected the ANZAC spirit

Raymond Lionel Leane's service on the Western Front reflected the ANZAC spirit, best described by the historian Charles Bean's history in the Great War, ANZAC to Amiens as follows:

'...But Anzac stood and still stands, for reckless valour in a good cause, for enterprise, resourcefulness, fidelity, comradeship and endurance that will never own defeat (Australian War Memorial, 2012).'

Raymond Lionel Leane was a Brigadier-General and was head of the 48th Battalion. At Pozieres, despite potential consequences for disobeying orders issued by a superior he placed his men, their lives over his career. Some would say his decisions were reckless but he was an experienced, highly skilled leader who balanced his options in the face of a ferocious attack he had not seen before and the protection of his men.

He endured so much. It is difficult to even imagine how he continued to battle when his brother died as a result of a 77mm shell at Bullecourt. He buried him and then proceeded to lead a battle that sustained much loss.

Leane also was injured twice, he was shot in the head once and he was also caught in the blast of a shell from the Germans (Australian War Memorial, 2012).

Notwithstanding being severely wounded at Passchendaele on 12 October 1917 he again returned to the Front to fight with his men. His sense of duty to his men and country reflected the ANZAC spirit.

He was constantly concerned for the well-being of his men, respected for his strength, skills and discipline and needlessness of danger (Hopkins, 2006).

Whilst some considered his disobedience of orders a problem, his decisions it can be argued were justified due to his understanding of the business of war and his unwavering commitment to his

men. In return his men fought for him and Australia. As was noted by the historian Bean, that the 48th Battalion showed extraordinary skill at Dernancourt despite loss, to the extent that the Germans had scratched in pencil on two rough wooden crosses beside 48th's old post: *'Here lies a brave English Warrior* (Bean, 1918).

After the War

Leane was appointed the Commissioner of the South Australian Police force from 1920 to 1944 and he was knighted on his retirement. It is said that in the two decades that he commanded the police force that he raised morale and introduced many reforms. He took a strong stand against those involved in civil disobedience, including strikers and communist supportive demonstrators. Leane also introduced a school for recruits and a system of promotion which demanded merit more than seniority. His main contributions were to police education and conditions of service (Hopkins, 2006). He commanded a militia brigade until 1926, and was a senior officer of the Volunteer Defence Corps during the Second World War (Australian War Memorial 2012). He remains a legend in the South Australian Police Force (Hopkins, 2006).

The unwavering commitment of Sir Raymond Lionel Leane to his country and his community should not be forgotten.



Figure 10: Sir Raymond Lionel Leane as the Commissioner of Police for South Australia (Australian War Memorial, 2012).