



A story from the history of Australian Artillery:
Commemorating 150 years – 1871-2021

3584 GNR Charles Valentine Paynter MM
49th Battery, 13th Field Artillery Brigade, AFA
'No Comms, no bombs!'



By 8 October 1918, with the seemingly impregnable Hindenburg Line now breached, the Allied forces had the Germans on the run. Gunner Charlie Paynter, who initially enlisted as a member of the Light Horse, was a 28-year-old farmer from Rupanyup, Victoria. Following a successful transfer to the Australian Field Artillery, he was posted to the 49th Battery of the 13th Field Artillery Brigade, tasked as part of a Forward Observation Party, temporarily attached to the U.S. 30th Infantry Division.

The Americans were advancing hard in the vicinity of French village of Montbrehain. So as to ensure that vital field telephone communications were maintained between the forward observer and the guns, Paynter was detailed to man a vital relay and transmitting station. The station was little more than an unprotected hole in the ground, which was subjected to the heaviest portion of the hostile artillery barrage from Zero Hour, until the advance commenced. In spite of the danger, Charlie Paynter would crawl out repeatedly to repair the broken communications lines, so that vital corrections to the artillery fire could be relayed from the front. As the forward troops advanced, Paynter had to run out ever further lengths of telephone line, even though he was subjected to enemy machine gun fire from a very close range.

As the enemy started to withdraw, Paynter was able to re-join his Observation Officer for the continued advance. Encountering some dogged resistance, Paynter and the officer turned an abandoned German 4.2" Howitzer around and used it to engage the enemy at a range of 1,000 yards, inflicting casualties.

Throughout the operation, Charlie Paynter showed a total disregard of the dangers around him, and was largely responsible for the successful manner in which his Forward Observation Officer carried out his duties.

His citation for the award of the Military Medal denoting "*His excellent conduct and devotion to duty are deserving of special recognition*".

Sources:

National Archives of Australia: B2455, WW1 Service Records, 3584 Gunner C.V. Paynter
AWM 28, Recommendations Files for Honours and Awards, AIF, 1914-18 War, 3584 C.V. Paynter
AWM 8, Unit Embarkation Rolls, 4th Light Horse Regiment, 1914-1918 War

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