

In focus

War film on doorstep

Storyline depicts heroes defending Belgian mines

By ISIS SYMES

THE final poster design is complete, the tag line is approved and shooting will start in eight months.

The \$5 million Australian WWI epic to be filmed in Townsville from March may have had a name change, but everything is well and truly under way.

Originally titled *The Silence*, then changed to *The Silence Beneath*, producer Bill Leimbach said the yet-to-be-filmed movie had yet again changed titles.

"We needed a name that conjured up more than this was a First World War film rather than a mystery suburban thriller," Mr Leimbach said.

"We have chosen the new name of *Beneath Hill 60* because it is much more international. The English and Americans all know about Hill 60 and so it's immediately recognisable," he said.

Set in WWI, Mr Leimbach said *Beneath Hill 60* surrounded the 1st Australian Tunneling Division who was responsible for the mines set under Hill 60 and The

Caterpillar – two high points that dominated the Flanders region in Belgium.

"They were led by Captain Oliver Woodward (who will be played by Brendan Cowell) who had started his mining career in Charters Towers," Mr Leimbach said.

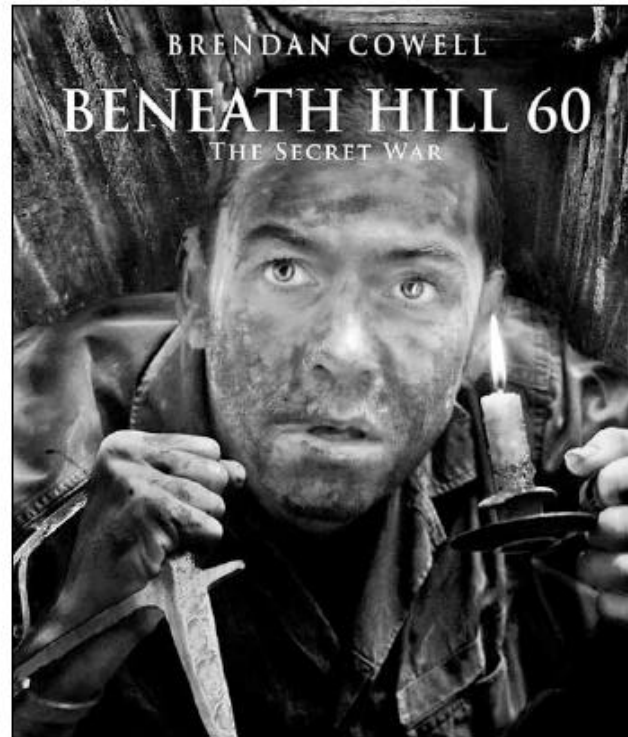
"His bravery in guarding those underground mines and their subsequent massive explosions broke the gridlocked trench warfare of the past three years."

Mr Leimbach said Hill 60 and The Caterpillar were only slight hills made from the diggings of the railway line to the city of Ypres in Belgium.

They both had German bunkers on top but all efforts by the British to take them out had proved costly in lives and failed.

"The order was given to take the struggle underground. The miners began from an entrance in the bank of the railway cutting – to pass 90 feet (27.43m) below the surface."

Finally Hill 60 was charged with 25,000kg of high explosive. The gallery under The Caterpillar was charged with more than 30,000kg of explosives.



"Captain Oliver Woodward and the 1st Australian Tunneling Company were assigned the task of holding on to those mines until the order was given to go. This entailed endless fighting above and below ground to keep the enemy from discovering the galleries and charges."

Mr Leimbach said the name change would mean

the film would need a new tag line.

"Tag lines are very important for a film – the new tag line is: Brendan Cowell, *The Secret War* ... *Beneath Hill 60*," he said.

"Marketing is going faster and better than ever – we've got a financial plan with Moneypenny who are the biggest financial investment accounting firm for feature films and they



REAL LIFE . . . Captain Oliver Woodward, front left, with officers of 1st Australian Tunneling Division in 1917

just finished with *Australia*, the Hugh Jackman film."

Mr Leimbach said he had scored a prop from Jackman's latest Wolverine film *X-Men Origins: Wolverine*.

In *X-Men*, Jackman travels back in time to WWI to a trench scene. That set was given to director Jeremy Sims by Jackman and is now on its way to Townsville. Mr Leimbach

said he would be in Townsville in the coming weeks with Sims to not only launch the film to the city but also on scouting duties.

"It's getting exciting," he said.

"We're just about to embark on the next layer of the script and we're on the lookout for a leading lady who's a 17 to 18-year-old girl to reflect Oliver's fiancée Marjorie Moffat Waddell."