

AWM4

**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War**

Remount

Item number: 28/1/8 Part 1

Title: Australian Remount Depot

December 1918



AWM4-28/1/8PART1

CONFIDENTIAL.

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Australian Imperial Force.

WAR DIARY

OF

AUSTRALIAN REMOUNT DEPOT.

FOR

MONTH OF DECEMBER 1918

191



Signature of Officer compiling

A. F. Little

Lieut.

Signature of Officer Commanding

D. McLeish

Colonel.

COMMANDANT



WAR ----- DIARY -----

A U S T R A L I A N R E M O U N T D E P O T

File 11

- DECEMBER. 1st. Horses in Depot 719, Mules 264.
Lieut LITTLE and party returned from Suez with 12 horses returned from the Hedjaz authorities; 6 others from same source died before reaching Suez. Those brought to Depot were in very low condition. They were sent to No 2 Field Veterinary Detachment to be malleined. (It is difficult to imagine any animals in worse condition, to live.) There is nothing to show what the conditions are under which these animals worked; shortage of water probably the principal cause of the trouble. *JH*
- " 3rd. Major BOURNE and party, conducting animals (ponies captured from Turks) to Jericho for the King of the Hedjaz Forces, returned to camp to-day. The party were nearly 2 days in Jerusalem as no train was available for their return. The whole of the men saw the Holy places and surroundings of Jerusalem. The trip was uneventful, the ponies arriving at the place of delivery in good time. To reach Jericho the party had to march at 2 a.m. from Jerusalem. *JH*
- " 7th. The C.O. went to Cairo on duty. He saw the G.O.C., A.I.F. Egypt, who said he would take the 25 men (reinforcements for Remounts) who volunteered for Light Horse Regiments. *JH*
- " 10th. Lieut. FOOT who had been in Somaliland buying Camels for the Director of Remounts returned to the Depot. The report of his trip is attached. He was recalled when the armistice was signed and was delayed at Berbera for some time, no boat being available. *JH*
- " 13th. A number of mules arrived here en route for Belbeis from Kantara Remounts, conducted by Imperial Reservists. They are for sale, I believe. *JH*
- " 15th. Horses in Depot 692, Mules 259. *JH*
- " 17th. A Thanksgiving Service was held at Moascar. Two troops of Remounts attended. Major PATERSON in command. *JH*
- " 20th. The Veterinary Officer, Capt PENROSE, has aged the horses sent in by Training Centre and drafted out over 30 he considers quite unfit for further service.
Two P.B. L.D. horses issued to Training Centre. *JH*
- " 22nd. Two Chargers issued to Flying Corps, Moascar. *JH*
- " 24th. General Chauvel inspected the Remounts to-day. He noted that the clothing and hats were not satisfactory. It was pointed out that the clothing was as issued- second hand stuff- none other being available, the same with respect to the hats.
The General spoke of the necessity for men to always "play the game" and also said a few words in commendation of the work done by the Remounts. The parade was very hastily arranged. *JH*
- " 25th. Capt. TYNDALL and party returned to camp from Jericho where they delivered mules to representatives of the King of the Hedjaz. The party stayed two days in Jerusalem. *JH*
- " 26th. At the Moascar Military Sports Meeting run by the Training Centre the Remounts won 7 Firsts and 5 Seconds. *JH*



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DECEMBER 28th.
(continued).

The C.O. proceeded to Cairo to see Commandant, A.I.F. on several matters, notably promotions, clothing, discharges & c. *JH*

" 29th. Notice received that one of the Remounts, Tpr. A.G. FOGG had died. He was in Cairo on leave when he contracted pneumonia, was admitted to hospital and died day of admission. The death occurred on 25-12-18. The C.O. wrote to his father, the deceased having no wife. *JH*

" 31st. Capt. BRIGHT proceeded to Port Said to see his wife and child off. She is returning to Australia on the "Orontes" *JH*

During the year just ended, owing to the armistice and defeat of the Turks in Palestine and Syria, considerably less animals have been sent forward from this Depot than in previous years.

A considerable number of captured animals- ponies and mules- have been sent forward conducted by this Depot, many going to the valley of the Jordan for issue to representatives of the King of the Hedjaz; these particular animals were loaned for agricultural work. The horses and mules so disposed of are small and in fairly low condition. Although so weedy they have wonderful vitality and were able to do the treks well, carrying a man and kit with apparent ease. Owing to the narrowness of the roads near Jerusalem and Jericho not more than two animals can be led, i.e. ride one and lead two. It has been noticed that there is considerably more unsoundness in the horses received into this Depot this year than in previous years. This is understandable as no fresh ones, Australian or New Zealand, have been imported for nearly two years, and a considerable number of those in use are over 14 years old. Amongst the Light Draughts quite a number show sidebones, in not a few cases ringbone also, while comparatively few cases of spavin are noticed. Roaring is quite common, but scarcely any broken wind. It is not clear what causes roaring, probably colds, catarrh, and possibly dust. The C.O. witnessed a couple of interesting operations for roaring recently by two Veterinary Officers. In each case the left valve in the larynx was found to be not acting. This is usual, it is understood, owing to paralysis of the left nerve. Both operations were successful. It takes a considerable time for the wound to heal.

A few cases of un-nerving have been successfully carried out by the O.C. in charge No 2 Field Veterinary Detachment. These operations are done in cases of ringbone. It is stated that there is much uncertainty as to the success or otherwise of such operations.

Also there have been one or two operations for stringhalt. The operation consists in cutting certain sinews in the hind legs. As stringhalt is comparatively rare, very few operations appear to have been performed over in Egypt; it is not known if these operations performed were successful or not.

It has been remarked frequently the comparatively small number of sore backs in horses during the operations in Palestine. This fact is eloquent testimony to the value of the present Universal saddle. The lack of a good type of saddle in the early part of the South African War caused the loss of many valuable horses.

The health of the Personnel has been good on the whole, only one death occurring during the 12 months. One Officer and Nine Other ranks have been boarded to Australia for various medical reasons. *JH*



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W A R D I A R Y

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DECEMBER
(continued)

As before shown 55 N.C.O's. and men were returned to Australia on account of age and family reasons etc. These men had done very satisfactory work at all times.

55 reinforcements arrived in Egypt of whom 26 volunteered for fighting units and were drafted into the Light Horse. The remainder, 27, were drafted into Remounts. The whole of these men are young and of good physique.

The discipline of the Remounts has been very good indeed, very few cases of crime being recorded. *JH*

D. McLish COLONEL.
COMMANDANT
AUSTRALIAN REMOUNT DEPOT.

WAR DIARY

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LIST OF APPENDICES.

No.

Subject.

1.

Report by Lieut. C. M. FOOT, Australian Remount Depot, of trip to Somaliland with Camel Buying Commission.



A U S T R A L I A N R E M O U N T D E P O T

E 14/5

Report by Lieut C.M.FOOT of Australian Remount Depot of trip to Somaliland with Camel Buying Commission.

The Commission consisted of Major T.P.GOODCHILD, In Command.
Lieut A.C.HAYWARD
Lieut C.M.FOOT.
3 Other Ranks, British personnel.

I left Moascar on morning of 16th. September 1918 for Port Tewfik, Suez to report to S.E.O. On arrival there I learned that the boat would not be in for a few days so I reported to Staff Captain and arranged with him that I stay at the Hotel Sinai. Here I met Lieut HAYWARD who had only arrived from Port Sudan the evening before.

On the morning of 18th. September, Hayward was in communication with G.H.Q. Cairo and he left by the 11 a.m. train for G.H.Q. Cairo. I remained at Suez.

On evening of 21st. September 1918 Major GOODCHILD, Lieut HAYWARD, and 3 other ranks arrived from Cairo by 5 p.m. train, - When I informed them that no boat would arrive before 25th inst.

Next morning 100 Riding Camels arrived with 21 Nafais. These Camels were for the Somaliland Protectorate.

We loaded the camels on morning of 26th. Sept. and embarked on the S.S. "Cooyanna" and left the docks at 3 p.m. same day.

After a good trip over we arrived at Berbera, the capital of British Somaliland, on the morning of 2nd October 1918.

After unloading the camels and 150 tons of fodder I left the boat about 2100 on 3rd. Oct.

The District Commissioner, Mr. Jebb gave us bungalows to live in while in Berbera.

The loading and unloading of animals at Berbera is all done by hand winches, as the boats lie out some distance from the shore.

I waited in Berbera until the 14th. October when I started for Hargeisa with 1 O/rank and Interpreter and a native servant, 1 Police escort all mounted on camels; all our luggage going by caravan (camels).

We arrived at Hargeisa on the morning of 19th October and found that the District Commissioner, whom I had to report to was away and would not be back for some weeks. However he arrived back on the

morning of 21st inst. so I called on him and made arrangements to commence buying camels next morning.

All animals are paid for in Rupees which causes a lot of trouble in carrying the money out, as Hargeisa is about 150 miles distant from Berbera.

The country around Hargeisa is good and thousands of acres could be cultivated with good results in average seasons- there was a drought on while I was there. The Government have a reserve just below Halaire where the grazing was good, although a little dry.. Water is plentiful at a shallow depth from 2 to 30 feet in the Nullars and along its banks.

I believe the country further inland near and adjoining the Abbassynian border is very fertile.

Stock fairly plentiful although they lost heavily the year before.

The export trade from Berbera runs between 1000 to 1500 head of sheep and goats and about 150 to 200 head of cattle per month.

All stock look well especially the sheep and goats but cattle, horses and camels were only in fair condition.

There was great shooting to be had around Hargeisa and Halaire, where I spent several days, after Deer, Dick Dick Partridge, and Guinea Fowl; the two latter were very plentiful.

The price of cattle with the natives dealing between themselves was about 12 to 30 rupees; sheep 2 to 7 rupees; Horses (ponies) 40 to 400 rupees and camels 15 to 30 rupees.

There is also a big trade with sheep and goat skins, but from what I learnt, America has the whole trade.

I got orders on the 5th. November to return to Berbera as soon as possible or convenient, so I left Hargeisa on evening of 8th. Novr. and went as far as Halaire where I met Capt. Adams and Lieut Creagh, both officers of the protectorate.

I stayed with them until 3 p.m. on the 9th. November 1918, then left on our journey home and got into camp about 9 p.m.

Left next morning at 3 a.m. and reached our camp, called Arduddly about 12.30, when we camped until 4 a.m. next morning.

On reaching the pass I don't think a prettier sight could be seen. The pass drops about 2000 feet to the Goban country in about 3 miles, high rocky mountains on each side. Being very stoney we walked and led our mules down. The mules we were riding were under 12 hands in height. We stayed for breakfast at a place called Maderia, where there used to be a Fibre Mill; all the machinery is now destroyed. My interpreter could not tell me much about it but it belonged to some British firm. The fibre was used for ropes and is something like sisel hemp only stronger and coarser.

We got into camp that night early.

From next morning until we reached Berbera at 7 a.m. on 14th. Novr. there was nothing much to relate as, here in the Goban, the country is suffering from the drought and all the brush is fast dying.

All the timber and brush in Somaliland is prickly and thorny and does not grow to much size.

The trip from Hargeisa to Maderia is most interesting, as we passed over several large plains which would carry thousands of sheep and stock in good seasons but it had not rained there for several years. Since I left I have heard that good rains have fallen.

Labour is cheap and plentiful and the boys appear to be hard working and energetic.

The stock are all herded out by day and brought back and put into Zarebas at night to be safe from the wild beasts which are plentiful; mainly hyena, leopard, and lion.

The natives themselves live in warbs within the zareba.

The stock are herded by little boys and girls, one per 100 camels or 200 sheep and goats, and it is nothing to see as many as two or three thousand sheep and goats, also camels, all grazing within sight.

We had our concentration depot for the camels at Dubbar, a distance of 10 miles from Berbera. Lieut Hayward was left behind with 3 other ranks with them.

The water supply for Berbera comes from Dubbar, where there are large hot springs and the water runs to Berbera by gravitation in a 12 inch pipe. The temperature of the water is, I believe, between 85 and 95 degrees; far too hot to drink.

The number of British officials in Berbera is about 9. They have Indian clerks and all appear to be fairly busy.

The whole Protectorate is run by one High Commissioner and 7 District Commissioners who are scattered over the country, each District having an Indian garrison.

Major Goodchild and myself left Berbera on a small boat called the "Woodcock" on November 20th, arriving at Aden on the 21st. Novr.

On arrival there we were informed that we would not get a boat for about a week. We were much annoyed and our wait there was miserable as it is such a barren place, the only place of interest being the Tanks. These were supposed to have been built about the Queen of Sheba's reign and were discovered by the British Governor in 1857.

The Tanks range in size from 200,000 to 9,000,000 gallons and there are 9 in all, each one below the other in a small rocky gorge.

The tunnel, which is 1½ miles in length, is also wonderful; all cut out of solid rock.

On the evening of the 1st. December 1918, Major Goodchild got word to embark on the morning of 2nd December on H.M.S. -----, leaving me to follow when I could get a boat.

I was lucky for one came along on the 4th. Decr. and I embarked at 9 a.m. arriving at Suez on morning of 7th. Decr. I caught the train and reported myself to G.H.Q. Cairo, where I got word to return here so I left Cairo on the 9th. December and arrived at Moascar at 9-30 p.m.

Moascar
4-1-19.

fool
Lieut.
AUSTRALIAN REMOUNT DEPOT.