

AWM4
Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War

Chaplains

Item number: 6/3/3

Title: Senior Chaplain, Presbyterian,
Headquarters AIF, London

March 1918



AWM4-6/3/3

Senior Presbyterian Chaplain's
(Australian)

WAR DIARY (Rev W. Floyd Shannon)
A. I. F. Headquarters
London

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence
Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II.
and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages
will be prepared in manuscript.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	March 1918.		<p>The month of March was characterized by a considerable amount of excitement and hard work and "general liveliness" along the Western Front, and most of my chaplains were kept particularly busy during that time.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. C. Neville (5th Battalion) kept the Y.M.C.A. hut, near Loere, well provided with comforts with reading and recreational materials. He had made arrangements to administer two coffee stalls in the forward area, when orders to another district upset the plans. On the evening he was to take charge of these stalls they were both blown up by enemy shells, and many casualties resulted. Later the battalion moved into reserves at Verstratt, & later into Panet. Here also he took charge of a hut most successfully. It also gave him the opportunity of getting into close personal touch with the men who were doing fatigue duty near the front. The censorship of letters fell to him, and entailed a good deal of labor, as anticipation of going into an attack always incites men to write details that are forbidden. Church parades and voluntary services were held every Sunday, and Communion frequently. No Bible class was possible during the month. Personal contact is often better than many classes.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. F. W. Rolland (14th Battalion) ran a hot drink and comfort shack near the line and was able to give the men in the front line a feed of hot in the ham and eggs. He speaks very highly of the irrepresible character of the Australians, and indeed he keeps quite cheerful himself, — he says "A shell got our dump; exit books, papers, etc. This will make our future travelling easier." — What a happy nature to be able to take serious things so lightheartedly! This Chaplain is the very heart and soul and life of the Battalion — & the men almost worship him.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. J. A. Forrest (5th Divisional Artillery) says his men have had a very trying time but have kept up splendidly. The other artillery divisions have also been very busy and frequently been in action, and moving.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. T. McVitie (in the 4th Divisional Artillery) went round the various batteries, and visited the men though it was not possible always to hold services. He held</p>	

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		March 1918	<p>services at the Wagon Lines, and ran successful concerts, erected crosses over the graves of fallen soldiers, and superintended the Canteen.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. J. E. Nicholls (1st Aust. Genl. Hospital, Rouen) says he was kept busy dealing with casualties from the big Push. Over 5000 passed through the Hospital during March, many of them severely wounded, & a very great number of letters had to be written on their behalf. Ward concerts were out of the question during these strenuous times, but the Chaplain did other work to help the patients. Regular services on Sundays, visits to the wards, singing and playing for the patients when possible, holding weeknight services, censoring letters, occasionally visiting Australian patients in other hospitals in Rouen, helping in Band practices, &c. take up a great deal of a padre's time.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. E. G. Petherick (3rd Aust. Genl. Hospital, Dartford) was not long in this hospital till his influence and work began to tell for good. Sunday services were held regularly, and the average attendance rose from 12 to 60 in the morning, and from 20 up to 250 at night. The weeknight service also showed the same advance, from an attendance of about 4; it steadily rose to about 24. Communion was also held regularly. Mr. Petherick took charge of the library, and got it into excellent working order, and largely increased the number of books, and helped to provide entertainment for the men generally.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. R. C. Forster (1st Command Depot, Sutton Army) held regular parades on Sundays in the U. A. B. Hut, with over 200 present, and ran song services in the evenings. Being able to play the piano well, he also gave the men a considerable amount of pleasure by music. He also joined with another Chaplain in having evening prayers in the hut every evening. Ran a concert frequently. Did much in the way of providing and distributing literature, and took his part in the visitation of the Hospitals in the neighbourhood, & gave a song service to the men at the Group Clearing Hospital.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. W. G. Bradley (1st Training Brigade, Sutton Army) has done good work in the parades &</p>	

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		March 1918	<p>drafts marching out from Camp, and also in the regular systematic visitation of the hospitals close by. Joining heartily and willingly in the united services with other Chaplains the work has been well sustained throughout the month.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. W. J. Gray (Engineers Training Depot, Brightlingsea) has been only recently posted here but has grasped the position and already got into excellent working order. He has a hymn & prayer with every draft of men leaving for France, and in addition to the usual Sunday services sees the men in billets, and in camp every evening. He also visits regularly the Colchester Hospitals by special arrangement from these Headquarters. He is also on the Sports Committee & on the Entertainments Sub-committee. The Church Parades are now held in the local Anglican Church building on the invitation of the vicar of the Parish - and this arrangement seems to work quite harmoniously.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. E. H. Merrington (Tidworth Headquarters) recently appointed, works in the Camps at Parkhouse along with the O.P.D. Chaplain, and at the Headquarters, and visits and holds services at the Pineford General Hospital.</p> <p>Senior Chaplain the Rev. W. F. Shannon (Headquarters, London) in addition to the usual administrative work, visited Hospitals at Epsom, Brighton, Eastbourne, Guildford, Croydon, Winchester, Southampton, Brockenhurst, Netley, Portsmouth, Chichester, and interviewed applicants at four different places for Scholarships for Overseas Soldiers, conducted a soldier's marriage, and a funeral, and visited the Detention Barracks at Lewes.</p>	

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