

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

Formation Headquarters

Item number: 1/4/3 Part 3

Title: General Staff, General
Headquarters, Mediterranean
Expeditionary Force

June 1915



AWM4-1/4/3PART3

D354

AUSTRALIAN AND NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

Army Corps Headquarters.

1st June 1915.

My dear Braithwaite,

Would you kindly read the enclosed letter which I send you quite privately. It is from Esson, A.Q.M.G. of the New Zealand Division, whom we sent to Alexandria to represent Divisional interests there. A number of returned Officers from Egypt keep on assuring me that there are many Officers and men there, who went down very slightly wounded and are most anxious to return, but are not allowed to do so. I have even heard that some have been put on garrison duties in Cairo, though this seems hardly likely. There are however, apparently a number who might well be got back to their regiments, and who from every point of view must be much better here. I am trying to get Officers, who have made representations to me on the subject, to put down specific cases to me in detail when I will represent them officially, but, in the meantime, if you can have any action taken in the matter of a general rounding up of all these people, I shall be very grateful. I am so afraid of the same sort of thing happening in Egypt as happened in South Africa, when places like Capetown, Durban, and Maritzburg, became crowded with loafers who did nothing but draw their pay and eat their rations. Will you please return Esson's letter which as I say is private.

Yours sincerely,

(SGD) W.R. BIRDWOOD.

5355
General Headquarters.

June 3rd 1915.

Dear Keyes,

Our information tends to show that there is a good deal of leakage as to movements of troops between MUDROS and HELLES, and I am inclined to think that it may occur through too much talking by signal or other subordinates at these two places. I therefore suggest for your consideration that, whenever stores of ammunition or bodies of troops of more than 100 men are being brought across, the advisory telegram from N.T.O. to "W" Beach should be sent in code instead of in clear.

I am also told that the time of the fleet sweeper's departure and arrival is always the same. Do you think it would be advisable to vary these timings as much as possible ?

(SGD) WALTER BRAITHWAITE.

P.N.T.O. Referred for your remarks please,

(SGD). R. KEYES.

3.6.15.

C.O.S. Remarks herewith.

(SGD) R.F. PHILLIMORE,

P.N.T.O.

5.6.15.

5356

FROM

To:

The Principal Naval Transport Officer,
H.M.T. "Aragon".

Chief of Staff.

5th June 1915.

Information of
Movements of
Troops.

Concur. "Playfair" Code Messages
have been sent for the last 48 hours.

Arrival & Depart-
ures of Fleet
Sweepers.

Practically the time of arrival and
departures cannot vary - more than
half an hour or so, unless they ran
in daylight. The two Fleet Sweepers
(in normal times) run to HELLES every
other day.

1st Day. If not coaling - start at 6
or 7 a.m. (according to programme of
work) embarking ammunition and Stores,
then embark Troops and recovered men.
7.30 pm. sail for HELLES.

2nd Day. Arrive HELLES between
midnight & 1 am, disembark Troops,
recovered men and ammunition.

9 am. begin embarking wounded, 11 am.
or Noon sail for MUDROS.

4 pm. arrive MUDROS. Disembark serious
and light cases, (two different ships
or ship and shore hospital).

Anchor for the night.

I always run the Troops across in the
darkness, so this really regulates the
time of departure.

The fleet sweepers
are really too large
& too slow for day
work in presence of
submarines.

i.e. before the Mudros boom is
closed.

Also, as a rule, by the time the
Fleet Sweeper has embarked New Stores
and Men, it is generally quite 7.30 pm.
and often later. Moreover, at the
other end, she has her work cut out
to get rid of her ammunition and
stores before the wounded begin to
arrive at 9 am. Often she is late
leaving MUDROS, and I have to ask
S.N.O.'s permission to have boom open,
but this is very undesirable for obvious
reasons.

As will be seen, the Fleet Sweepers
have a pretty full programme and, as a
rule, lately at all events, have had
to run Troops in their night off as
well, so were it not for the trawlers,

the/

Leakage of
News.

the ammunition supply would suffer.

I find that it was common knowledge at Mudros that the battle was to be fought yesterday, June 4th. Apparently it came down by all the steamers from the three outlying bases.

(SGD) R.F. PHILLIMORE,

COMMODORE.

P.N.T.O.

D357

AUSTRALIAN & NEW ZEALAND ARMY CORPS.

Army Corps Headquarters.

7th June 1915.

My dear General,

I cannot tell you how disappointed I was at not having been able to hold on to the enemy's trench which we took two nights ago. We rushed out at 11 pm. and knowing from previous experience that we should be enfiladed in it from both sides by maxim guns, we made all preparations to meet this - partly by also attacking the position from which one of these guns came, and partly by sending a working party with sandbags immediately in rear of the attacking party. This at once erected traverses and prepared parapets facing the enemy's position. At 3 am. I got messages that all was right, and I had every hope we had effected our object in occupying a frontage of about 60 yards of the enemy's trench. I then intended the following night to have broken out again, and to have occupied about 60 yards on each side of this, and so gradually to have thrust them out and back. At 6 a.m. I received messages that this trench was being severely bombed by the enemy from all sides except of course the rear which was facing us. I sent word to say they were to hang on, and that corrugated iron sheets that had been sent to the post the night before were to be utilised for head cover, which was what they were intended for. At 7, however, I received a message to say they had found it impossible to get the sheets through the communication trenches, and that the bombing was so severe they had had to abandon the trench. I may explain that this part of the enemy's trenches is called the "chess board", as it is a complete ramification of trenches everywhere, so they were probably able to hurl bombs into it from at least half a dozen different trenches. We had a large number of men badly injured by bomb wounds, and I suppose there was nothing for it but for them to come back, but as I say I very much regret this, for I had quite hoped we had got a solution of the difficulties we are in where the enemy's trenches entirely hem us round. This having failed, I am now continuing (not that we ever stopped) mining hard, and when I have a real good number of mine heads right under if possible two of their rows of trenches, I will have them all high in the air.

As I am sure you know, we are most anxious here to do anything we can to take advantage of the enemy being at any time temporarily reduced in numbers before us, and you will also realise how extraordinarily hard it is for us to know this, in this extremely difficult country where we are to all intents and purposes blind, for we cannot send out any really efficient scouting parties, and the aeroplanes cannot detect troops in this thick scrub. Where their trenches are not within a few yards of us - all along in front of Pope, Quinn, and Courtney's positions they vary from 10 to 100 yards - I have sent out strong patrols to feel what is in their front. On every occasion they come back to say the trenches are strongly held and they have been able to effect nothing. We of course know that even a very few men may give the impression

of/

of strongly holding a trench, but unless one is in a position to go forward and permanently occupy a large portion of the enemy's front, it does not seem possible to do much beyond probing. The key of the whole of this position being the high ground up towards 971 (which will require a real lot of taking when the time comes) it is not possible to go forward over Plateau 400, as I should otherwise like to do. The enemy there have two good strong positions known as "Lone Pine" and "Johnstone's Jolly". Both are strongly held with many maxims, and to take either will be a big operation entailing heavy losses, which I do not feel justified in undertaking unless one is in a position to retain them permanently, which we cannot do while the enemy hold command of the higher ground. Down towards my right front I could certainly advance along a couple of spurs, but it would be objectless to do so, and it would leave me with troops exposed and in the air, instead of secure as at present with my right on the sea.

It may interest you to hear that we got our 31 prisoners two nights ago by capturing them bottled up in one of their own bomb-proofs. The Turks are apparently terrified of our bombs (as we nearly are of theirs) and are now making a great many of their trenches close to us with overhead cover. Our boys ran over the top of one of these, and got in at either end, and thus secured the prisoners in the centre. I only wish we could capture many more. We try our best, but somehow prisoners do not seem to come our way. We are now manufacturing some most effective locally made bombs of guncotton, and these are producing the most terrifying effect on the Turks.

In a telegram I sent you yesterday, I mentioned that a prisoner had told us that two of the Divisions opposite us were to be sent away to Maidos, as they had been told they were inefficient in having failed to shove us into the sea, and that two new and better Divisions were to replace them. Some of these have I think evidently arrived and were in action against us last night. As you know, we have been trying all sorts of ruses to draw the enemy's fire and for a considerable time these thoroughly succeeded. Of late, however, they have been much more cautious and have refused to be drawn. Last night we found we only had to fire a Japanese bomb when they again broke into a tremendous fusillade, and this went on at intervals for several hours, so they must have got through a tremendous amount of ammunition. I have now asked Egypt to send up some fireworks. A few nice Chinese crackers thrown into their trenches will I think shake their nerves a good deal, and when the wind is favourable I am going to send up a series of fire balloons. I think they are sure ~~to~~ to look upon these as some tremendous devilry, and will be looking out for all sorts of attacks, and I hope we may even draw a good deal of gun-fire on them.

We are all so very glad that Hunter Weston has got 550 prisoners, but we are rather in the dark as to the general situation South. How we all wish Achi Baba was ours.

When you next come here, I hope you will have time to see some of my trenches.

Yours ever,

(SGD) W.R. BIRDIE.

P.S. It will I am sure interest you to glance at enclosed report which I have just had from Monash. I only send it for your information so that you may see the work our boys have had here - would you very kindly have it returned to me.

593

SECRET

THE NAVAL SITUATION - WITH REGARD TO FUTURE
LANDING OPERATIONS.

Survey of present situation.

Personnel.

The naval responsibility with regard to the army, now on the Gallipoli Peninsula and based at Port Mudros, entails a large personnel for transport, beach parties, manning of various craft, etc., and this demand for officers and men has only been met by utilizing survivors of ships which have been sunk during the operations in the Dardanelles. (It is to be hoped that no future supply from this source will be available). At the present moment the fleet can deal with the work but if another army had to be landed elsewhere additional staff and personnel would be required.

Materiel.

The difficulty of securing suitable tugs and small steamers is very great. At present it is necessary to use, for the duty of supplying the army, various craft belonging to the Fleet, such as auxiliary and trawler sweepers and picket boats, which should be employed at other - and their legitimate - work. Suitable craft would therefore have to be sent from England if another landing of any considerable force was undertaken. The number of lighters we have at present is barely sufficient to meet existing demands.

Landing Places.

The present situation differs from that which obtained when the landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula was effected, owing to the presence of enemy submarines. The position for disembarkation in any future landing on the coast should, as far as possible, be proof from torpedo attack.

Reviewing possible places from a naval point of view - Enos is not recommended, it is a shallow lagoon and the disembarkation would have to take place on the beach outside the harbour, exposing ships to submarine attacks. The actual landing would not present any serious obstacle and, with sufficient transport available, could be accomplished. The above applies to any part of the Gulf of Xeros. Suvla Bay, north of Gaba Tepe, would be a good landing place during summer months and more protection could be given to supply ships, etc. there than at present exists off Anzac.

To/

To the south of the Dardanelles Bezika Bay and YUKYERI Bay, opposite Tenedos Island, are open anchorages where troops could be landed, but transports would be open to submarine attack.

If an attack on Smyrna by the Army were contemplated Mytileni Island, has two fine harbours, Ports Iero and Kalloni which could be used as advanced bases, the actual disembarkation taking place at Aivali or Foggia. Without entering into the military considerations, the naval difficulties in connection with this landing operation would be less here than at any other place to the northward. The two harbours named in Mytileni are practically proof against submarine attack. They are close to the mainland and the small harbours on the mainland would facilitate the landing of supplies.

Office of the Vice-Admiral.

7th June 1915.

D358

Headquarters.
29th Division.

13th June, 1915.

Dear Sir Ian,

I send you herewith an account of the small night incidents which have taken place during the last few days in this Division.

They are of no importance, but indicate what I have been trying to impress on my Brigades, that even trench warfare can be made offensive, and when this is done the offensive spirit of the troops is maintained, even when it is not possible - for various reasons to make any substantial advance.

1. On the night of the 11/12th June a successful night operation was carried out by two regiments of the 87th Brigade. On the left the South Wales Borderers and on their right the Border Regiment made a simultaneous attack on an advanced Turkish Trench from two sides. The assaulting party of the South Wales Borderers gained the trench, but were bombed out of it. It was taken a second time, but again our troops had to retire. At two o'clock in the morning of the 12th, having sent for a fresh supply of bombs from the neighbouring Brigade, a third assault was made, this time successfully. These assaults were led by two fine young Officers, brothers, of the name of Inglis. At the same time the assaulting party of the Border Regiment rushed a snipers post and gained a Turkish communicating trench, pushing on to within 30 yards of the advanced post captured by the South Wales Borderers. These two posts are now established and connected by a trench. The following morning a counter attack was made by the Turks, 50 of them rushing forward with bombs. This party came under the machine gun fire of the Naval Motor Maxim Squadron and were practically wiped out, at least 30 dead being visible close in front of our trenches.

2. The following night, with a view to advancing our trenches on the left of the Gully Ravine to the same level as the new advanced post captured the previous evening, an officer's patrol went out by night to the position reached on the 4th June by the 14th Sikhs. They found it occupied by two Turks only, and the party returned bringing with them a maximum gun belonging to the 14th Sikhs which had been abandoned on the 4th June, when the machine gun detachment were annihilated. They also brought in 3,000 rounds of ammunition.

Small incidents of this nature, dangerous as they are, go far to raising the spirits of our men, and increase their power of attack when the times comes for us to advance.

Both the brothers Inglis were wounded by bombs, but I am glad to say not seriously.

Sincerely yours,

(SGD) H. DE B. DE LISLE.

General Sir Ian Hamilton, G.C.B.

General Officer Commanding,

A & N.Z.A.C.

5359
June 25th 1915.

It is noticed from the map of your position forwarded to G.H.Q. today, that there appears to be a considerable increase in the number and extent of the Turkish trenches on your left flank and in the direction of CHUNIK BAIR.

The General Commanding is most anxious that as little attention as possible should be directed to that flank. He hopes that you will constantly bear this in mind, and will only initiate such minor operations in that direction as you deem absolutely necessary for the security of your present position.

In this connection, your last daily summary contains a report of some combined firing undertaken yesterday by the Navy and the Army against the Turkish trenches near FISHERMAN'S HUT. It is by no means suggested that this operation was unnecessary, but you will not lose sight of the vital importance of preventing suspicion being aroused in the enemy's mind as to any future action which may be decided on.

(SGD).W.P.BRAITHWAITE.

Major-General,

C.G.S.

Med. Exp. Force.

O.A.

Re R.N.D.

The impression I received was that the 2 Brigades now here probably have got another attack in them - though not, of course, an attack of a very desperate nature. But that they need pulling out, resting and reorganising more urgently than other troops - I have, however, little to go on, and have not yet seen the 42nd Division.

General Paris' expression to me this morning on the subject of 2nd Bde. was that they are on the verge of mutiny. I gathered from R.N.D. Staff & from Gen. Paris that this was due to Comdr. Backhouse' weakness. They say they think latter is tired of land warfare and wants to get back to a ship - All 2nd Bde. is at Imbros, or just returning. You will see from the orders that are going to you that the important part of the attack in the R.N.D. Section is being done by 155 Bde. If they succeed the task of 3rd (Marine) Bde. will be an easy one. I do not think there is reason to suppose they will not carry it out.

The men I saw in the trenches today were quite cheery. An Officer complained that continual diarrhoea was affecting them badly.

Re 29th Div. attack, for which I understand orders are going to you, Staff of Division and Brigades appear confident. 86th Bde. is being kept back until last portion of attack, no great faith being placed in them.

General De Lisle's view was "I shall be quite satisfied if we do 2/3rds of what we are setting out to do".

To my mind the key to the present line on the left is J.13.

I enclose latest R.N.D. diagram The Trench * * has just been constructed to form the kicking off line for the attack, and is being prolonged to the French on the right.

(SGD) E.C. ANSTEY, Capt. G.S.

27.6.15.

5276

SECRET.

FROM:-

General Hanbury Williams, RUSSIAN G.H.Q.

TO:-

Sir Ian Hamilton.

No.31. June 8th.

Despatched 9.6.15.
Received 10.6.15.

12.30 p.m.
8.30 a.m.

Following from Captain COBBAN:-

"New Black Sea Expeditionary Force expected to be ready about beginning of July. Commander General KAULBARS. Force will be employed as soon as conditions permit. In the meantime co-operation is to be restricted to minor steps on coast. Authorities would be grateful if detailed instructions as issued for our landing together with results of our experience could be sent by sure route for transmission to them."

B277

From. G.H.Q.

To. Gen. Hanbury Williams,
Russian G.H.Q.

M.F. 317.

10/6/15.

Your 31. All papers were sent to War Office
and we have asked them to transmit all orders instructions
direct to Russia AAA Greatest essential is to properly
allot troops to transports and you will find instructions
on this point.in the papers which will be forwarded
to you.

5278

Reply General Hanbury Williams.

10th June, 1915.

412.

Your 31. Presume you telegraphed this information to War Office. Am requesting War Office to send copies of the orders and instructions for our landing direct to Russia which will be a quicker method than sending them from here.

G. H. Q.

Medforce.

B279

From. Sir Ian Hamilton.

To. Troopers, LONDON.

M.F. 359.

22nd June 1915.

Despd. 10.25 p.m.

Have just seen Reuters telegram dated LONDON 16th June in which it is stated Press Bureau issues despatch in which occurs following sentence - begins Day and night they (the Turks) have to submit to capture of trenches ends. This information is incorrect and has not been sent from here with our knowledge. Should be glad to trace whence this false news emanates which puts me in a false position with my own troops who know it to be untrue.

Addressed War Office, repeated Superflux, CAIRO.

A280.

From.
Lord Kitchener.

To.
Sir Ian Hamilton.

5669 cipher.

22nd June, 1915.

Despd. 11.45 a.m.
Recd. 8 p.m.

Private and confidential. General LEGGE
passing through Egypt apparently telegraphed to the
Minister of Defence, Australia, an appreciation of the
situation in Egypt which, considering his experience, Mr
Maxwell considers unjustified. I do not consider
that an officer in General LEGGE'S position should do
this without referring to G.O.C.

D281

PARAPHRASE.

SECRET.

From. 8th Army Corps.

To. G.H.Q.

H.W. 337.

23/6/15.

Despatched 8.20 a.m.
Received 8.38 a.m.

Your B.93. I have consulted General GOURAUD and have decided with him that it would be best for us to carry out, as arranged, the attack on our left as soon as the French Artillery are ready. This will be probably 28th inst. This to be followed immediately by an attack on the high ground where the French join our line. Some necessary preliminary operations will be carried out by the Naval Division meanwhile.

D282

From. Sir J. Maxwell.

To. Sir Ian Hamilton.

1328 E.

23.6.15.

Desp. 11.30 a.m.
Recd. 3.45 p.m.

Your M.F. 359. I take entire responsibility for this telegram which was compiled by me from your telegrams of June 14. I issued this to the Press bureau at CAIRO chiefly for Egyptian native press; but of course the other papers got it too. According to instructions from home I send by telegraph to Lord Kitchener a copy of all I issue to the press here. I presume you send other communiquees home irrespective of what you send me.

Addressed Hamilton. Repeated S. of S. for War.

A283

From. G.H.Q.

To. ANZAC.

B. 98. 23rd June, 1915. Despatched 1600.

Priority. Have you accommodation for
4 more 5" howitzers, if so can send at once.

FROM:- A.N.Z.A.C.

To:- G.H.Q.

G.A. 275. 23.6.15. Desp. 1628.
Recd. 1630.

There are no five inch howitzers here. If
ammunition can be supplied with them any howitzers will
be acceptable.

5284

From
Lord Kitchener.
To
Sir Ian Hamilton.

5708. 23.6.15. Desp. 5.25 p.m.
 24.6.15. Recd. 8 a.m.

Private and confidential. Your telegram M.F. 362. MAHON commands the 10th Division (which is complete) Without being methodical he is a fine leader, much believed in by his men; he knows his division thoroughly and has trained them well. In a tight place or a hand (to hand ?) fight MAHON will shine more than in ordinary daily work. His staff officer is KING-KING. HAMMERSLEY who commands 11th Division is a thoroughly good soldier and knows his division which he has trained well. He may have to be watched to see that strain of trench warfare is not too much for him. Staff officer MALCOLM Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders. SHAW who commands 13th Division was promoted for service in the field and is a painstaking and methodical officer who thoroughly knows his work. His chief staff officer is W. GILLMAN R.A.

D285

From.
War Office.

To.
G. H. Q.

12431. Despatched 23rd June 1915. 7.50 p.m.
 Received 24th " " 8 a.m.

Your M.F. 359 and G.O.C. Egypt's 1328 E.

It is suggested that you should instruct G.O.C. Egypt what you wish published which telegram should be distinct from your ordinary operation telegrams. Publication should be as far as possible simultaneous and identical in LONDON, CAIRO, AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND.

5286

FROM:- Sir Ian Hamilton.

TO:- Sir John Maxwell, CAIRO.

M.F. 367.

24.6.15.

Your 1328.E. AAA Am glad when you publish my
cables and so are my troops AAA No harm deletion
passages provided thereby meaning of remainder message
is not altered as for example by cutting out a negative
AAA But if it is politically desirable to add to or
alter them please let the message be supposed to emanate
from elsewhere than the front, ATHENS for instance AAA
Otherwise the effect will be militarily bad especially
on present type of troops many of whom are educated men AAA

A287

FROM:- Sir Ian Hamilton.

TO:- Troopers, London.

M.F. 366.

24.6.15.

Your 12431. I have no objection G.O.C. EGYPT publishing any telegram I send him as I write them for that purpose AAA What I object to is addition of news which is untrue and which can surely be seen through by any reading public for if we can take trenches at our will, as EGYPT adds, why are we still this side of ACHI BABA? AAA In compliance with Lord Kitchener's 4926 of 26th May I send a telegram to "PROEMIAL" and repeat it to CAIRO AAA Also to AUSTRALIA and NEW ZEALAND if it affects those dominions AAA Please see your 10475 of 31st May instructing me to do this and my M.F. 285 1st June AAA These telegrams are practically identical when they leave here and are intended to be used as a communique and be published instead of which I find a mutilated and misleading CAIRO telegram reproduced in London papers instead of the true version I sent to PROEMIAL AAA Please also see my O.B. 117 dated 6th June to which no reply has been received AAA May I repeat we are only anxious to do what you wish but remember please cables are being worked to full capacity AAA

D288

FROM:- Sir Ian Hamilton.

TO:- Vice Admiral.

O.B. 165.

26.6.15.

2.45.

ANZAC reports hostile six-inch howitzer at sq.202.0.5. caused great damage shelling beach this evening AAA This gun is 7,500 yards from our line beyond range of any shore guns AAA Can HUMBER be off ANZAC to-morrow from 9 a.m. till 6.30 p.m. to engage these howitzers AAA Can spot from shore.

D289

PRIORITY.

From. C. G. S.

To. G. O. C. ANZAC.

0.232.

28.6.15.

8th Corps is making attack on its left flank
at 11 a.m. to-day AAA General Commanding is sure
that anything you can do to prevent reinforcements
leaving you for the south will be done AAA

D290

PARAPHRASE.

From. ANZAC.

To. G. H. Q.

G.A. 26.

28/6/15.

Despatched 1125.
Received 1200.

Your O.232.

I am arranging to demonstrate along the whole line and, with artillery support, to attack on right flank in the direction of 224 W 3 and 6.

The HUMBER has been ordered to engage 193 H 1 where the big battery of enemy can fire either here or towards ACHI BABA. The big battery at present is bombarding our beach. A destroyer will also engage enemy near KABA TEPE.

Repeated in Cipher to 8th Army Corps and G.H.Q. Post of Command, in O (a) C 212. Despatched 12.45.

A291

FROM:- Sir Ian Hamilton.

TO:- V.A., MUDROS, LEMNOS.

B.105.

29.6.15.

2000.

Probability troops holding ground gained yesterday will be heavily counter-attacked to-night AAA Have asked Hunter Weston if WOLVERINE and SCORPION would help him if you could send them as they know ground and position of our troops AAA Have taken liberty of asking him apply you direct as if either these ships available am sure you will help if required and time will be saved if he wires direct you.

5292

FROM:- G. H. Q.

TO:- General Hunter Weston, 8th Corps.

B. 106.

29.6.15.

2015.

In view probability counter-attack to-night would
WOLVERINE or SCORPION or both be of assistance if they
lay off your left flank AAA Both know ground and
position your troops AAA Might help with gun fire or
searchlight AAA Wire direct Vice Admiral, MUDROS, who
has been told you will wire him if you do or don't want
them and repeat to me.