

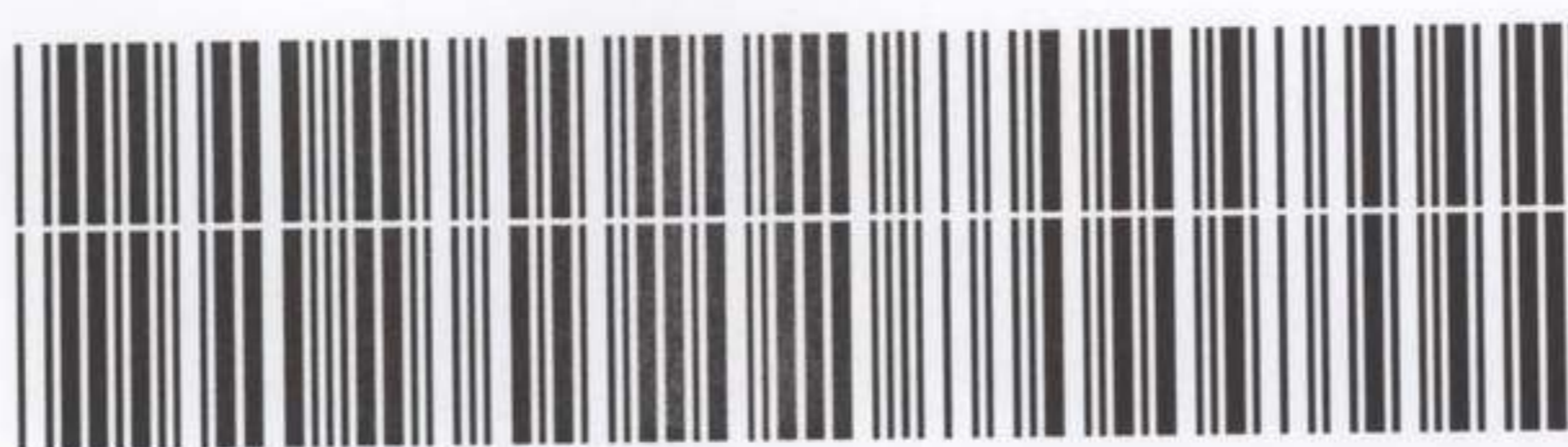
AWM4
Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War

Infantry

Item number: 23/22/1

Title: 5th Infantry Battalion

August 1914 - April 1915



AWM4-23/22/1

WAR DIARY

FORMATION, PRELIMINARY ORGANIZATION AND TRAINING OF THE 5th BATTALION
A.I.F. (13th AUGUST TO DATE OF LEAVING EGYPT)

The C.O. 5th Battalion was appointed on the 12th August 1914. The Battalion was recruited from the Territorial Area of 13th Brigade, (Less 48th Bn) and from past members of the old Victorian Scottish Regiment and Victorian Rifles.

Major F.W. LeMaistre as 2nd in Command and Captain J.C. Stewart as Adjutant were provisionally appointed on the 13th August and reported for duty that day.

The Headquarters of the Battalion were fixed at the Sturt Street Drill Hall South Melbourne on the 13th August, and Recruiting Depots at 52nd Infantry Drill Hall South Melbourne, the 49th Infantry Drill Hall, Commercial Road, Prahan, the 51st Drill Hall Albert Park, and the 46th Infantry Drill Hall Elsternwick.

Recruiting commenced on the 14th August and the undermentioned officers were provisionally appointed as Company Commanders.

Captain Fethers	"A" Coy
Lieut. Clement	"B" Coy
Captain Flockart	"C" Coy
Lieut. Luxton	"D" Coy
Captain Greig	"E" Coy
Captain Carter	"F" Coy

2nd Lieut. Lillie was placed in charge of the Depot at Elsternwick where "H" Coy. was being formed, and Captain Walstab was provisionally appointed as Coy. Commander on the 17th August.

Recruits enlisted at the 52nd Infantry Drill Hall formed the nucleus of "A" and "B" Companies, those at 51st Drill Hall "C" and "D" Coys., those of the 49th Infantry Drill Hall "E" and "F" Coys., and those at the 46th Infantry Drill Hall "H" Company.

The first attestations were made on the 15th August of men who had been previously medically examined and passed as fit, and the first draft of 790 was sent into Camp at Broadmeadows on the 19th August.

The provisional Company Commanders were authorised to choose their subaltern officers subject to the approval of the C.O., and these were provisionally appointed and with the exception of one officer as Depot Officer at each Depot, went into Camp with the first draft on the 19th August.

The second draft of 200 on the 21st August and thereafter smaller drafts until the 29th August when the Depots were closed.

Captain R. Saker was provisionally appointed to command "G" Company on the 28th August.

A number of men in excess of the authorised establishment were enlisted and sent into Camp, but on a second medical examination being made by the M.O. of the Battalion, the most of this excess was wiped out by men found to be unfit. In many cases the medical examinations were carried out in an extremely unsatisfactory and perfunctory manner and caused much trouble subsequently.

The first drafts enlisted consisted of men who were serving in the Citizen Forces, or had served in the Militia Forces, or who had seen service, but a small percentage of the later enlistments had practically no military training to record. In these cases the men were mostly enlisted for special qualifications likely to be of use in the Battalion.

On the 2nd September authority was obtained to recruit up to 5% over the establishment. This reserve was used up by wastage mostly by men discharged as medically unfit, but in many cases as the result of pressure brought by Members of Parliament and other Officials.

Upon arrival in Camp Companies were organized and provisional appointments of N.C.O.'s made.

The fact of all appointments of both officers and N.C.O.'s being provisional only was a great assistance to the staff in getting the most suitable men for the appointments, and a great many were tried before the final selection was made.

Four of the officers provisionally appointed were not finally selected. The final list of appointments appears in the Gradation List. Training. During the first two weeks in Camp recruit training was

carried out and this was followed by Company and Battalion training.

Musketry was carried out at North Williamstown, 5 Companies leaving Broadmeadows by train in the morning, 2 to mark and three to fire in the forenoon, and the other three Companies leaving Camp at noon and firing their course during the afternoon. The two Companies marking in the morning stayed in the trenches all day, and returned to the range to fire the following morning their marking being done by the next Battalion on the roster.

By this means the whole Battalion was exercised in Part 1 Table B and men who proved to be in need of coaching were given a further course to fire.

Members of the Rifle Clubs Union acted as instructors with the Battalion Instructors and proved of great value.

Backward men were also exercised in Miniture cartridge practice. A course of lectures for Officers was carried out by the Brigade Staff which proved of great value in the training.

Company and Battalion Training in attack and defence was carried out, special attention being paid to the use of the intrenching tool and cover.

During the latter part of the Camp the Battalion was practised in manoeuvre Battalion versus Battalion, and two Battalions working as a Brigade versus the other two Battalions.

Outposts and night operations were also carried out. Clothing Equipment etc. When the first drafts were sent into Camp, equipment was quite sufficient, but a long period elapsed before the equipment and clothing for the Battalion was available. The want of great coats was severely felt as the weather was wet and cold, and a great number of men in the Battalion were without overcoats of any kind.

The boots issued were in many cases defective in make and badly finished causing bad feet. After a great deal of trouble these boots were replaced by others but they are not satisfactory.

The clothing issued appeared to be off lots, the great coats in particular being in very large sizes, and only a few small or medium. It was found impossible to change these at Ordnance Department.

A large number of dismounted breeches issued appeared to have been made for cadets and were quite useless. In one case 200 pairs were sent, and it was impossible to use any of them. These were eventually replaced. A great deal of trouble was experienced in obtaining the final issues of different articles and only for the fact that for nearly a week the Quartermaster of the Battalion attended at the Ordnance Department in Melbourne, the list of articles deficient would have been very much larger. Some shortages were caused by men deserting with kits and men transferred to other units with clothing in lieu of which it was impossible to obtain a fresh issue. These were adjusted a few days before embarkation.

The list Appendix ii shows the articles still deficient from issue. It is understood that these articles will be supplied in London also a further issue of clothing.

In consequence of large numbers of men going into Camp in private clothes and requisition for clothing and equipment not being promptly complied with it became necessary in the interests of health, sanitation and efficiency to provide many articles of clothing and other necessaries out of private funds. There were no Regimental funds available and without private expenditure the organization of the Battalion and necessary work could not have been carried on. The burden of this expenditure is still borne by individual Officers.

Without this expenditure the organization and administration of the Battalion would have been impossible. Absolutely no funds were provided for these purposes.

On the 21st October the Battalion embarked on H.M.A.T. "Orvieta" No. A3 which left Melbourne on same day and reached Albany on 26th October.

While lying at Albany the whole of the Battalion was inoculated once against enteric except one man who refused and was discharged. Three men of the Battalion were landed at Albany - two to Hospital and the one discharged for refusing to be inoculated.

Left Albany on 1st November and arrived at Colombo on 15th. Between Albany and Colombo the second inoculation against enteric was completed.

On the 9th November when the convey was about 50 miles away from the Cocos Islands H.M.A.T. Sydney, one of the escorting warships

sunk the German Cruiser "Emden". At Colombo the following members of the crew of the Emden were placed on board the Orvieto as prisoners of war.

4 Officers
3 Warrant Officers
46 Men,

and as no parole was obtained from them they were kept in close confinement on board.

Left Colombo on 17th November and arrived at Aden on 25th Novr. Left Aden on 26th November and arrived at Port Said on 1st December. The German prisoners were transferred to H.M.S. "Hampshire" at this port.

"A" Company disembarked here and went by train to Cairo as advanced party to the Division. Between Colombo and Port Said the whole Battalion was vaccinated.

Left Port Said on 2nd December and arrived at Alexandria on 3rd December. Four Companies disembarked and were sent by train to Cairo on same day, remainder of Battalion on 4th and 5th December.

During the voyage from Melbourne to Alexandria training was carried out continuously, the ship giving fair facilities in the way of space. The health of the Battalion was good and with the exception of two cases of Appendicitis operated on the ship there was no serious cases.

The whole of the Battalion with the exception of a small party left in Alexandria at a Rest Camp had arrived at Mena Camp, about 10 miles from Cairo, where training commenced on 10th December.

Upon checking clothing and equipment at Mena it was discovered that there were a fair number of deficiencies, particularly in the transport vehicles. This was caused in carelessness in the packing of these with the other Battalions of the Brigade in Melbourne. These deficiencies were mostly made up.

The horses of the Battalion were on the Transport Karoo. During the voyage from Australia 3 died. The remainder arrived at Mena in good condition.

At Mena the troops were put on the Imperial Scale of rations and this was not sufficient. Later on a messing allowance of 6d. per head per day was made and this amount expended to supplement the issue ration proved satisfactory.

On 1st January 1915 the four company system was adopted.

On 12th January 1915 Sergeant H. Turner of "A" Company died of heart failure.

On 3rd February 9 men were returned to Australia ex Karoo being medically unfit.

On 9th February the 1st reinforcements arrived - 1 Captain and 63 other ranks. These were distributed over Companies of the Battalion.

On 24th February a further batch of 25 reinforcements were received. From this time on Reinforcements were drawn periodically to keep the strength of the Battn. at 10% above the establishment. The Battalion left Mena Camp on the 4th of April. & ~~was~~ by Rail Battalions proceeded to Alexandria, and embarked on Transport A12 "Nevean" at that Port on 5th April 1915. From this date the official War diary has been taken into use.

Appendix (1) Battalion Orders and Ships Orders

" (ii) Field return of embarkation from 5/4/15.

NOTE BY AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL.

NO APPENDICIES AVAILABLE

FOR BINDERS.