

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

Baths & Laundries

**Item number:** 18/1/2

**Title:** Australian Corps Baths and Laundries

May 1918



AWM4-18/1/2

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

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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.

or  
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
VIGNACOURT	May 1st to May 10th		Continued to exchange clothing for divisions and Aust. Corps Troops.	
AILLY-SUR-SOMME	May 11th		<p>Moved clothing exchange to Ailly-Sur-Somme. Nothing of note has happened this month. Divisions are running their own baths but are drawing clean clothing from the clothing exchange. This however, has one source of supply only viz - No. 1 Area Laundry Abbeville, and it is absolutely inadequate. Until the supply of clean clothing is assured it is useless to attempt to organise the Corps Baths scheme, and we are still waiting for an assured supply of clothing.</p> <p>Two portable de-lousing baths are now being built, one at Coisy and one at St. Gratien, principally for the use of Corps Troops, but they are not finished yet.</p>	<p>See Appendices 26/39.</p> <p><i>[Handwritten initials]</i></p>
AILLY-SUR-SOMME	May 31st		Nothing further of special interest except that towards the end of May a further issue from Base of 5000 each shirts drawers and pairs of socks was made to each division and 10,000 to Corps Troops.	
" "	June 30th		<p>Corps Clothing exchange is still situated at Ailly-Sur-Somme. Divisions do not now send to Abbeville direct for clothing but bring their dirty clothing to Ailly. Lorries leave Ailly at 8 a.m. daily fully loaded for Abbeville and return loaded with clean clothing the same afternoon. During the past month the demand for clothing has not been very heavy, as owing to the fine weather many men bathe and wash their own clothing. Sufficient clean clothing has been received from Abbeville to meet all demands. Baths with portable fittings for ironing men's breeches and tunics have been established beside the water points at Coisy and St. Gratien; Nessen huts are not obtainable but huts covering the same ground space have been built and each one does sixty men per hour. These two baths and also the shower set at Pont Noyelles are controlled by Corps.</p>	<p><i>[Handwritten initials]</i></p>

WAR DIARY

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices										
ILLY-SUR-SOMME	June 30th Contd		<p>The following baths also exist and are controlled by the divisions occupying the areas.</p> <table border="0"> <tr> <td>Bussy</td> <td>Blangy Tronville.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Bonnay</td> <td>Cardonette.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Corbie</td> <td>Beours</td> </tr> <tr> <td>La Houssoye</td> <td>Lamotte Brebiere</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Heilly</td> <td>Rivery.</td> </tr> </table>	Bussy	Blangy Tronville.	Bonnay	Cardonette.	Corbie	Beours	La Houssoye	Lamotte Brebiere	Heilly	Rivery.	
Bussy	Blangy Tronville.													
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310 War Diary  
Australian Corps Baths  
310 Appendix NO 26 APPENDIX. 26<sup>2</sup>

Australian Corps

Baths & Laundries

Reference to today's conversation, I think the following scheme would best suit the present circumstances

- ① Corps should control the Baths & the supply of clothing, because, under the present arrangements, Corps troops cannot get clothing from the Divisional Baths
- ② Laundries. - Abbeville is the nearest, and its work is at present satisfactory
- ③ Disinfection of underwear should be done at Abbeville
- ④ Supply of clothing is now in the hands of Divisions each of which runs lorries to Abbeville and supplies all its Brigades, even when they are far away from the Division. The supply of clothing could be much more economically worked under Corps control with a clothing exchange at Vignacourt. Runs for the lorries would be arranged so that they would take clean clothing on the outward trip and return with dirty clothing. Dirty clothing

would be despatched from Vagnaco to Abberville by train, and clean clothing vice versa. No lorries (except in case of emergency) would run to Abberville.

⑤ Transport. 5 lorries (1 supplied by each Division (out of the 3 now attached to each D.H.Q.) and 1 to represent Corps Troops should be sufficient.

⑥ Baths. These should all be furnished with ironing facilities. As far as the louse problem is concerned, and with it are bound up the problems of scabies and trench fever which not as of so many infestives it is almost useless to give a man a bath and clean change of underclothing if his breeches, tunic & blankets cannot be treated at the same time.

A Nissen hut furnished with pigeon holes, tables and partitions, as erected at 5<sup>th</sup> Div wing in our last area would be quite satisfactory and could be quickly & cheaply erected.

⑦ Blankets could be disinfected by means of the present Gorden & West disinfectors, plus a certain

number of small portable steam disinfectors on the basis of those recommended by 4<sup>th</sup> Army

⑧ Personnel - Officers only would be required one for C & B Divisions and one for A & AI Divisions. The NCOs and men at present on both work would be sufficient to commence with, but more would have to be added when the drying systems were brought into all theatres. It is possible that both require 1 NCO and 14 men for work at all times and be more than four can be put through.

The clothing cartage is now working at Vignacourt but it is desirable to bring in the proposed change of system gradually, so as not to interfere with the present supply of clothing to Divisions.

*[Signature]*  
Lt Col [Name]

29/4/18

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APPENDIX.

5  
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War Diary  
"C" Form.  
MESSAGES AND SIGNALS.

Army Form C. 2123.  
(In books of 100.)

No. of Message

Prefix.....	Code.....	Words.....	Received.....	Sent, or sent out.....	Office Stamp.
		£ s. d.	From.....	At..... m.	
Charges to Collect			By.....	To.....	
Service Instructions.				By.....	

Handed in at..... Office..... m. Received..... m.

TO Corps Barks office

*Sender's Number.	Day of Month.	In reply to Number.	AAA
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Reference your report  
 aaan Wa & WMA  
 directs it be put  
 into operation at  
 once

FROM	Coast Corps
TIME & PLACE	

\* This line should be erased if not required.

100,000—John Russell Ltd.—3/17—3141. Forms C2123

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War Diary APPENDIX  
 Aust Corps Backs  
 appendix No 28

6

No 9

Austriacian Corps

(18)

Underclothing - The Corps does not yet hold sufficient underclothing to enable it to keep up a constant supply to the Backs in the area.

The amount burnt and left in IX Corps area, as shown by my statement of 22/4/18 was

	shirts	vests	pants	socks	shoes	Total
Received from Base 4/5/18	83,090	47,990	99,830	121,720	27,450	380,080
under Army arrangements	35,000	—	35,000	35,000	—	105,000
Balance required	48,090	47,990	64,830	86,720	27,450	275,000

May a special effort be made please to obtain this clothing until it comes to hand. I recommend that the present system of a clothing exchange at Railhead be continued.

H Macpherson  
 Corps Backs office

5<sup>5</sup>/<sub>18</sub>



War Diary  
 Australian Corps Posts  
 & appendices No 29  
 Australian Corps

Transport of clothing to Abbeville

We have now established a clothing exchange where the main road crosses the canal, near the Railhead at Ailly-sur-Somme

(62E K 16 C 44). The normal method of sending clothing to Abbeville is by rail & this is supplemented by road transport when necessary.

If & when heavy fighting takes place it will be impossible to get either trucks or lorries for the transport of clothing, and the canal suggests itself as being by far the most reliable & the cheapest method of transport.

The I.W.F are willing to put a self propelled Barge entirely at our disposal and the trip up-stream will, they say, take only eight hours.

(2)

We could do the loading + unloading of the barge at Ailly, but Abbeville Laundry should have to do the unloading, disinfecting + loading at their end.

The canal flows right beside the road outside the Laundry where lorries now unload.

By building a simple wooden tripod + swinging arm the clothing could be lifted out of the barge + onto hand carts on the road, or sent by a "Flying Jock" right into the disinfecting shed.

Might G.H.Q. be asked, please, to make these arrangements, as the amount of road + rail transport saved would be very great, and our supply of clothing would be less uncertain.

8/5/18

Corps Baths Officer

War Diary  
 Australian Corps Baths  
 Q. appendix No 30  
 Aust Corps

Vests

Q 2<sup>nd</sup> Aust Div have asked whether these may retained. I understand that a special G.R.O. was published last year & also the year before allowing the Australians to retain their vests. This year, however, there is no exception made to the withdrawal of vests (G.R.O 3934) and Abbeville Laundry have orders to return them all to the Base. Therefore, as fast as we send them to that Laundry for washing they will be taken from us. If it is desired to retain the vests throughout the summer special permission will have to be obtained.

13/5/18

Corps Baths Officer

Clean clothing

At present our only source of supply is Abbeville Laundry. I visited this place today & found that they are now quite unable to deal with the work. The O.C. Laundry has orders not to supply to any Division or Corps Troops more than 30,000 pieces of clothing a week. This means that we cannot draw more than 150,000 pieces a week, whereas our Australian personnel alone should receive 200,000 pieces a week if every man is to be issued <sup>with</sup> a change each ~~per~~ week. However with the number of formations now drawing from the Laundry it is unlikely that we will be able to get more than 75,000 pieces a week for the whole Corps. This will certainly be absolutely inadequate & unless a better arrangement is come to at once we will very soon be short of clean clothing. I should suggest that application be made for a definite weekly allotment of 200,000 pieces. If this cannot be granted perhaps we would be allowed to deal with some civilian laundry or start one ourselves; but I have not yet found any suitable place.

Another very serious question is the one

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of transport. If we ~~are~~ run lorries to Abbeville we would require 6 running constantly to handle 200,000 pieces a week from railhead to Abbeville.

Results so far have shown that the minimum time taken by trucks to go to Abbeville from our railhead is 4 days. <sup>Assuming</sup> ~~Among~~ that they are loaded & returned immediately, it means 8 days enroute at the very least.

The total stock at present held by Corps & the Divisions in the area is about 210,000 pieces so that there would be absolutely no working margin & the system must break down.

Unless we can be issued by Army with the amount of clothing already asked for viz. 275,000 pieces the rail transport will prove too slow & our men will suffer.

Therefore I very strongly recommend that we make use of the I.W.T. as outlined in my letter of 8<sup>th</sup> inst. Instead of the voyage to Abbeville & return taking a minimum of 8 days<sup>as</sup> it now does by rail it could be done regularly in 48 hours by barge, and the barge is large enough for all our requirements. Up to 13<sup>th</sup> inst we have sent trucks of clothing to Abbeville as follows & 1 only has been dispatched from them

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(3)  
Sent to Abbeville

APPENDIX 3/12

Date sent	Date Recd at Abbeville	Truck No	Shirts	Vests	Drawers	Sox	Towels	Total.
4.5.18	8.5.18	26871	6435	1972	3977	3858	811	17,053
6.5.18	10.5.18	57100	4000	1500	3590	4270	320	13,690
7.5.18		64202	3550	2040	3580	4360	540	14,070
9.5.18		4702	3268	2019	2323	3579	222	11,411
10.5.18		266093	4558	2213	2530	1906	-	11,227
11.5.18		160257	1850	820	890	370	160	4,090
11.5.18		88592	3590	1870	2360	4830	180	12,830
			27,251	12,444	19,270	23,173	2,233	84,371

16/5/18

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War Diary  
Aust. Corp Bath

appendix No. 32

## Aust Corps

### Abbeville Laundry

Attached are copies of ops of  
Corps Clothing Exchange and the  
four Divisions with Abbeville Laundry.  
These show that for the three  
weeks ending 25<sup>th</sup> inst the  
Corps and Divisions sent to  
Abbeville altogether 279,375 pieces  
of dirty clothing.

In exchange Abbeville Laundry  
issued 89,732 pieces of clean clothing.

Reckoning Corps Troops as one  
Division, this means that 17,948  
pieces of washing were issued per  
Division in 3 weeks, or at four  
pieces to the set 1,495 sets  
per Division per week.

Even these amounts were  
not received by us, as  
14,000 pieces out of the 89,732  
are still on the rails.

The O. C. Laundry advises me  
that we are getting as much  
washing as possible at present.

32A

2

Therefore it will be seen that the Laundry is not able, at the present time, to supply us with anything approaching our requirements, and unless some other arrangements be speedily made, our supply of clean clothing will again become inadequate.

*Attachment*  
*Corps Officer*

25/5/18



War Diary  
Aust Corps Baths <sup>33</sup>  
Appendix No 33

Aust Corps

Bath Sets

Three types of these are at present on issue

- ① Nissen 3-spray set
  - a) Very light
  - b) Easily dismantled and re-erected but wooden stands have to be built to carry the tanks
  - c) The 3 sprays can be fitted up in a very small room.
  - d) Require about 8 cart of coal per week.
  - e) Rather extravagant with water
- ② Bain Douche 6-spray set  
These are undoubtedly the most useful sets, as well as being the most economical.
  - a) very light
  - b) Easily dismantled & re-erected and are complete with tank stand
  - c) The sprays can be set up in a room 5'6" x 9'

2

- (d) Require only about 3 cwt. of coal per week.
- (e) Use absolutely the minimum quantity of water.
- (3) H. J. Cask & Co 12-spray set.
- (a) Far too heavy to be easily removed. I have no means of ascertaining the weight but should judge it to be at least  $1\frac{1}{2}$  tons.
- (b) The work of dismantling and reassembling is not only heavy, but very complicated!
- (c) The sprays as fitted to the piping issued require a room about 21' x 11'
- (d) Require about 14 cwt of coal per week
- (e) as the 12 sprays are all large ones a great deal of water is used.
- These sets are far too unwieldy for general use & I strongly recommend that the Bain Douche be obtained whenever possible

26/5/18.

H MacKinnon  
 Capt R.A.M.C.

*Aust War Diary*  
AUSTRALIAN CORPS.

**APPENDIX**  
Headquarters,  
29th May, 1918.

310  
Headquarters,  
FOURTH ARMY.

*Appendix 34*  
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The situation as regards Laundry work and the supply of clean underclothing for this Corps is in a most unsatisfactory state at present.

Of 291,914 pieces sent to ABBEVILLE Laundry between 4th and 25th May, 95,318 only have been returned, including 14,000 still on rail. 196,838 pieces are with the Laundry.

The 30,000 new sets indented for under your instructions are coming to hand, but while so little is being returned from ABBEVILLE, the new clothing will be used as fast as received, and the position after a few days will be worse than ever.

A total of 65,000 sets new clothing only has been drawn for the Corps.

The O.I/c, ABBEVILLE Laundry has been directed that he may not issue more than 30,000 pieces per week to each Division or Corps Troops, but in practice only 19,063 pieces were available for the Corps in three weeks, or 1,588 sets only per Division or Corps Troops per week.

The weekly requirements may be set down at 8,000 sets per Division or Corps Troops, which is quite beyond the capacity of ABBEVILLE to provide, and in order that serious results to the efficiency of the troops may be averted, it is asked that :-

(a) Authority be given for this Corps to draw weekly from Ordnance 30,000 new sets - which, with the average 8,000 sets received from Laundry weekly will meet immediate needs.

It is pointed out that excessive time is occupied in rail transit of clothing to and from ABBEVILLE. The enclosed particulars furnished by the Corps Baths officer of Corps and Divisional accounts with ABBEVILLE show trucks occupying up to a week between despatch and arrival: trucks consigned to the Laundry on 10th, 11th, 13th and 18th had not reached their destination on 25th. This excessive delay to clothing could be avoided if the washing were performed nearby; and a certain easement of the Railway Service afforded. At present, notwithstanding the great demand on M.T. for other work, it is necessary to send lorries to ABBEVILLE to maintain the very scant supply of clothing available.

May the matter be treated as urgent, please, and early approval given for the further drawing from Ordnance.

Signed W.R. BIRDWOOD  
GENERAL  
Commanding AUSTRALIAN CORPS.