

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

Railways

Item number: 15/1/12

Title: Headquarters, Australian Railway
Companies

February 1919



AWM4-15/1/12

CONFIDENTIAL.

ORIGINAL.
~~DUPLICATE.~~
~~TRIPLICATE.~~

351

Australian Imperial Force.

WAR DIARY

OF

H.QRS AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY COMPANIES.

FOR

FEBRUARY 1919.

Signature of Officer compiling

Blanc Lt-Colonel.

Signature of Officer Commanding

Blanc Lt-Colonel.

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
LACALOTTERIE	3 rd	Feb.	Received Copy of letter from a.s.f. HQ to DGT. re Aust. Rly Coy HQ. Letter from Ofc. War Records Section. AWE 4379/55/7. re maps of L.R areas. Interviewed Lt Col PICKARD ADLIR(O) regarding information re L.R. Proceedings of Court of Inquiry into Pilfering at BERGUES received.	APP I APP II
LACALOTTERIE	6 th		Letter sent to O in C. War Records.	APP III
LACALOTTERIE	15 th		Received copy of letter from DGT to AGUCAIF.	APP III A
LACALOTTERIE	16 th		Letter sent to a.a.g. a.s.f. with proposals re Aust Rly Coy HQ	APP IV
LILLE	18 th		Called ofc. 3 rd Aust LRF Coy CANTELEU, No 1 Section at ANAPPES.	
COURTRAI.	19 th		Arranged Court of Inquiry into loss of motor car 25382 HQ Aust Rly Coy. Saw 2 nd Coy at COURTRAI.	
BERGUES.			Went on to BERGUES Saw C NEWMAN.	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
LACALOTTERIE	20			
DUNKERQUE	20		Called at 4 th Aust BGR Coy. Called at BOULOGNE Drew 140 fr. pay. Paid staff	
LACALOTTERIE			Letter received from L ^t PRICE 2 nd Aust with account of gas attacks from Light Railways in which 2 nd ALR Coy took part	APP V
CONCHIL	21		Called at 5 th Aust BGR Coy	
TINCOURT	22		Called at 1 st Aust LR Coy. regarding alleged grievances.	
TINCOURT	23		1 st ALR Coy. Arranged to send me man who should have been demobilized on to Base	
LILLE	24 th		Called at 3 rd Aust LR Coy. Arrangements re Demobilization 1915 men. Received Drawing of human switch used on Light Railways	APP VI
S ^t JEAN	25 th		Called at 2 nd Aust LR Coy at MANNERS. 6 th BGR Coy at ROULERS.	

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WAR DIARY

OF

HQ^{RS} AUST RLY Coys

FOR

FEBRUARY 1919

LIST OF APPENDICES.

- | No. | Subject. |
|-------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| I | Letter from GOC AIF to DGT re HQ Aust Rly Coys |
| II | |
| III | Letter to AUST WAR RECORDS re Models |
| III A | Letter from DGT to GOC AIF re HQ AUST RLY Coys |
| IV | Letter to GOC AIF re Aust Rly HQ. |
| V | Account of Gas Attacks from Light Railways during Autumn 1918 in which 2 nd LRO Coy participated |
| VI | Sketch of German Light Railway Switch |

357 COPY.

APP I

A USTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.

D.A.G.AIF. 50/2.

A.I.F. Headquarters Detachment,
C/o. H.Q. Australian Corps,
27th January 1919.

D.G.T.,
G.H.Q.

1. Approval has been given for the early repatriation of Lieut-Colonel S.H.Hancox, D.S.O., O.C. Australian Railway Companies.

2. It is asked that arrangements be made to release him from his duties as soon as possible, and for his despatch to Headquarters, A.I.F., London.

3. When Lieut-Colonel Hancox leaves it is recommended that:-

(a). The Australian Railway Companies on Broad Gauge Operating be kept together as much as possible, and that, under the O.C., R.O.D., they be placed under the command of an Australian Railway Officer to be appointed an Officer Commanding a Medium Group of Railway Operating Companies.

(b). That the one Company still on Light Railway Operating also be under the command of this officer, except for work, but that it be placed under his command for work also as soon as this is possible.

(c). That the clerk, motor car and driver now with H.Q. Australian Railway Companies, be transferred from your Headquarters to the location of the new C.O.

4. It is understood that at present the O.C. 6th Aust.B.G.R.O.Coy has control of the technical work of the 1st 2nd and 6th Companies, and that the change could be effected without much disorganisation. It is considered advantageous that all Australian Railway Companies should, as far as possible, be under the O.C., Australian Railway Companies, for work as well as for administration.

5. If this recommendation is agreed to, it is proposed to appoint an adjutant to assist the new C.O. with the extra work which would thus be placed upon him.

6. I would be glad to be advised of your views on this matter, and of the name of the Australian Railway Officer whom you would recommend for appointment as C.O. Australian Railway Companies.

(Sgd) J.J.Talbot Hobbs
for General.
Commanding Australian Imperial Force.

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APP III A

COPY.

DGT/159/130(P1).

G.O.C.,
Australian Imperial Force.

With reference to your letter DAG/50/2 dated 27-1-19, I agree to the release of Lieut-Colonel S.H.Hancox, D.S.O., but I do not consider it advisable to change the present system of controlling the work. It is necessary that the O.C., R.O.D., and the A.D.L.R.'s respectively, under whom the units are working, should remain responsible for the work. There is no vacancy for an O.C. of either a Large or Medium Group of Operating Companies, and therefore it is regretted that the Australian Railway Officer selected could not hold one of these appointments.

Under these circumstances, if, in view of Demobilisation, you consider the appointment of a successor to Lieut-Colonel Hancox necessary, I recommend that the same arrangements as now in force should continue.

(Sgd) S. D'A Crookshank, M.G.
D.G.T.

G.H.Q.,
14th February, 1919.

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APP IV

A.A.G., A.I.F.,
Att'd H.qrs Aust. Corps.

With reference to your memo of 27th inst. and 50/2 to D.G.T., and the reply thereto - DGT/159/130/(P1). - The following recommendations: *are submitted*

- (1). Abolition of H.Qrs Aust. Railway Coys. Under the present Armistice & Demobilisation conditions, there is not sufficient work to justify its continuance.
- (2). Companies to carry on as Independent Units as they did prior to the formation of Head Qrs. It is not now likely that there will be a recurrence of the troubles which rendered the formation necessary.
- (3). Arrangement of details for (2) as follows:-
 - (a). O.Cs of Companies to deal direct with A.I.F.H.Qrs, A.A.G., A.I.F., Demobaust, D.M.T.S., and other formations.
 - (b). Promotions up to and including rank of W.O.11. to be made in the Company by Commanding Officers. For Officers & W.O.1. recommendations to be submitted to the Military Secretary.
 - (c). Transfers between Railway Companies to be mutually arranged by Commanding Officers.
 - (d). Reinforcements will no longer be received.

16-2-19.

Lt-Colonel.
C.O. Australian Railway Coys.

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APPV

FROM:- O.C. 2nd Aust. L.R.O. Coy.

TO:- C.O. Australian Railway Coys.

Reference your Q/261. Herewith please find particulars of Gas attacks in which the 2nd Aust. L.R.O. Coy. were concerned.

A. R. Price Lieut.

A/O.C. 2nd Aust. L.R.O. Coy.

9-2-19.

2 copies report

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Cloud Gas attacks, in which 2nd Aust L.R.O Coy. took a prominent part, were made as hereunder:-

- (1) On night of June 22/23rd., seven trains, consisting of 49, specially prepared "B" class trucks, ^(6/15/44) each containing 40 cylinders, and hauled by 40 H.P. tractors, left PeDelhoek at 7-30 p.m. for Trois Rois (I.20C.6.3 on sheet 28 N W 4.), where trucks were man handled by Infantry parties to I.26B.2.8, and I.20 D.9.4 - a further distance of about 200 yards or 500 yards ahead of the front line - the tractors which had been detached, meanwhile standing in the Siding at Trois Rois. Each cylinder had a detonator attached, and were joined up with insulated copper wire, and electrically discharged from the trucks by means of a battery. The discharge took place a little after mid-night under favourable weather conditions, and with a wind velocity of about 10 miles per hour. The noise made by the detonators exploding resembled bursts of rifle fire, to which the enemy responded with his Machine Guns. The operation was covered by intermittant Lewis Gun fire from the flanks, from over-head, and also from the Field and Heavy Artillery - the latter harassing the enemy's communication after the discharge. Low flying aeroplanes co-operated to drown the noise of the trucks, and the tractors. The Gas should escape normally, in fifteen minutes, but an hour elapsed before the trucks could be with-drawn, and then all personnel engaged had to resort to the box respirator - train crews had to wear them throughout the whole homeward journey. The Gas was so deadly that forward posts could not be re-occupied until six hours after the cloud had passed over. The German front trenches would be approximately 300 yards in a parallel line from where the trucks were standing, but some out-posts were closer. The whole of the trucks were safely with-drawn without being molested - a sure sign that the enemy had been severely dealt with.

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(2)

This attack was made on the night of July 23/24th. with 2,500 cylinders, conveyed in 63 "B" class wagons, hauled by 9 tractors. The place of discharge was Hellfire Stone Siding (I.10 C.5.3), and route was via the Main Gate, Ypres, and across the Ecole support trenches - the trucks being man handled from Austral Siding (I.9 D.5.2), where tractors were detached. Similar arrangements were made as in the firsty attack, and under the same favourable weather conditions. The trains were exposed to a lot of enfilading enemy machine gun fire from the right flank on reaching Austral Siding, and several men, who were riding on the trucks were wounded - the solid steel armour alone saved the tractor drivers, as many bullets struck the machines. During the process of spotting the trucks, the enemy lodged a brilliant star shell on our side of the train, which lighted up the whole country side, but he evidently did not discern our movements. The last train of empty cylinders did not get away until 3-20 a.m. owing to a de-railment in "No man's Land", and we were subjected to a lot of heavy shelling - probably ~~xxxxxxx~~ retaliation. The enemy's trenches were much nearer in this instance - his machine gun posts being less than 150 yards from where the trucks were standing. The cloud was very dense, and drifted in a northerly direction, in front of the line occupied by the Belgians.

(3)

This attack was made on the night of 26/27th August with 2,500 cylinders in the same place as the first one, and was attended with the usual good result and ~~fortitude~~ ^{fortune} as far as Light Railway personnel was concerned, but the Americans, who were occupying this part of the front, and who supplied the pushing parties sustained numerous casualties, principally from the effects of our own gas, through their not taking the necessary precaution. One man was found dead alongside the last train when it was being drawn out, and several

succumbed subsequently. The night was very clear and bright, and not at all suitable for the operation, but a friendly bank of clouds drifted over, and enabled the work to be carried out without detection. This gas cloud was a particularly good one, and drifted in a dense formation towards the Spoil Bank, where the enemy was ~~xxxxsidered~~ considered to be in strength. The attack should have taken place on the night of 7/8th August when everything was in readiness, but the wind dropped to a dead calm, and trucks had to be withdrawn after standing in "No man's Land" for three hours. The leading tractor of the convoy on this occasion, had a flat wheel, and an upward exhaust, and the noise evidently attracted the attention of the "Hun", as ~~xxxx~~ red, green, and white rockets immediately ascended from his line, followed by a heavy bombardment, which lasted for 20 minutes. The noisy tractor was detached, and ~~side~~ side tracked, in Castle Siding (at the Front Line), and the trucks were man handled to the intended point of discharge. The following 8 trains were promptly taken out of the shell ~~darea~~ area to avoid possible mishap. On the return home, the last train of seven trucks of loaded cylinders met with a mishap, through the abovementioned tractor refusing to negotiate the curve, as a result, it overbalanced, dragging two trucks with it, these were quickly re-railed by a brake down gang which accompanied the trains on each occasion.

In addition to carrying the gas, pushing parties were also carried on the Light Railways to within a reasonable distance of the line. The method of handling the loaded trucks by the pushing parties, was for each train to be dealt with separately, and not broken - five men being allotted to each truck, or 35 to the whole train. After the gas had been released the trains of empty cylinders were hauled out with ropes, as there was still a large quantity of gas in the cylinders and trucks. The success of the operation was no

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doubt due to the novel, and expeditious means of transport,
and the secrecy of movements.

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APP VI

SKETCH of STANDARD GERMAN L.R. SWITCH.

The Sketch herewith shows a Standard German L.R. Switch. These are much superior to the Standard British 20 lb. L.R. Switch. On the latter derailments were very frequent, switch tongues were constantly damaged, and a reduction of speed was always necessary when passing over them. The German Switches required little attention, and a speed of 10 to 12 miles an hour could be run over them without danger.

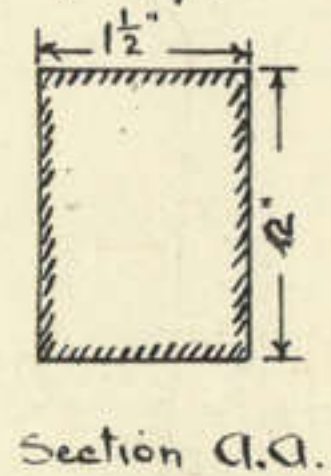
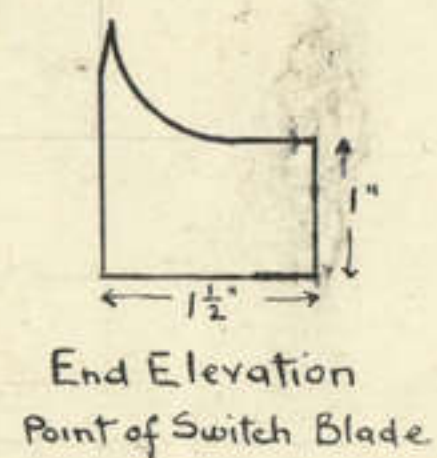
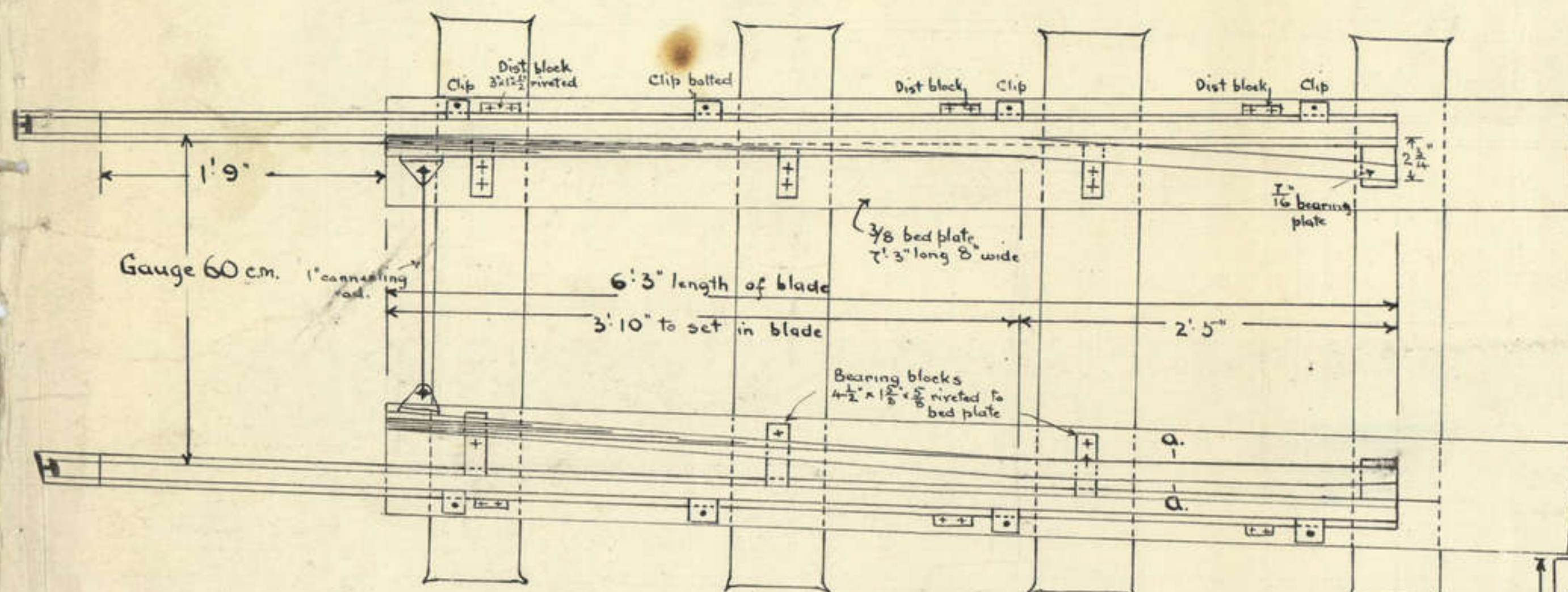
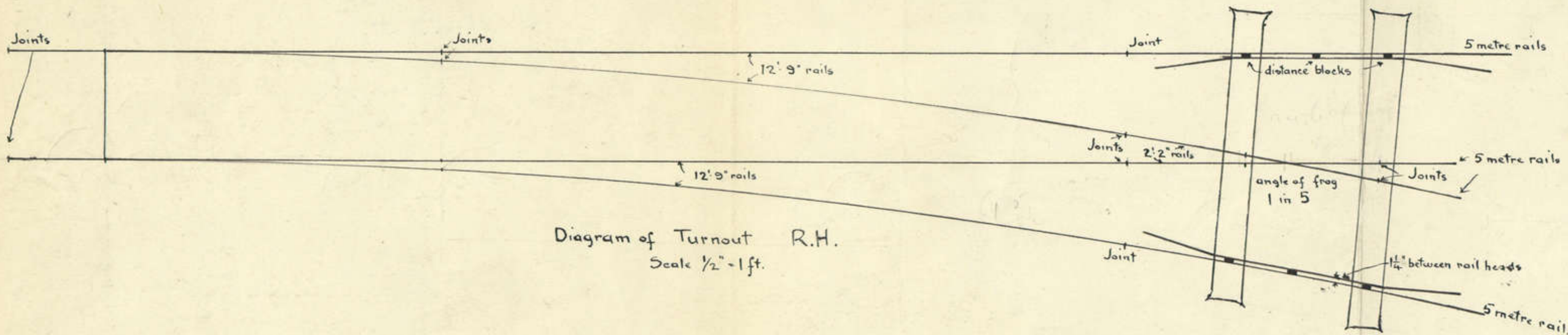
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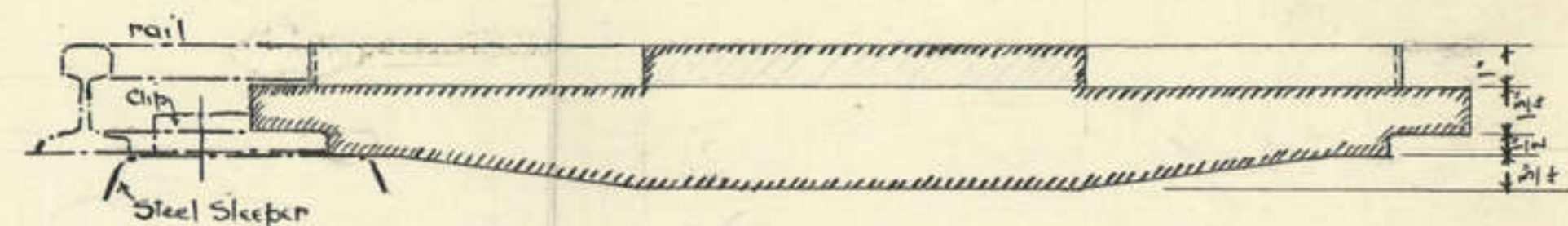
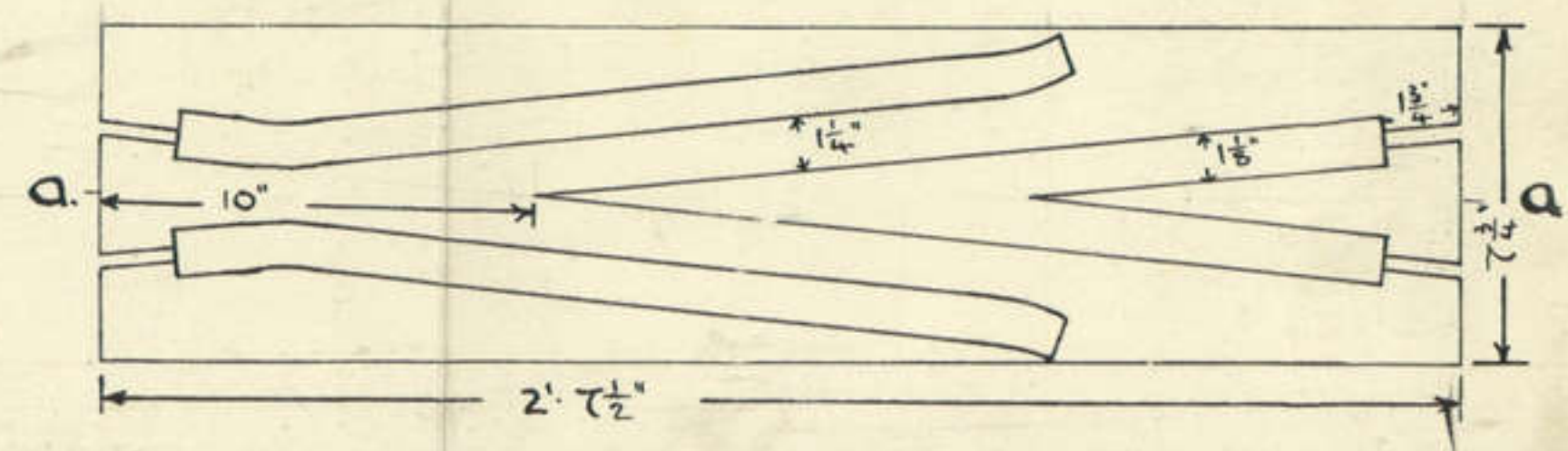
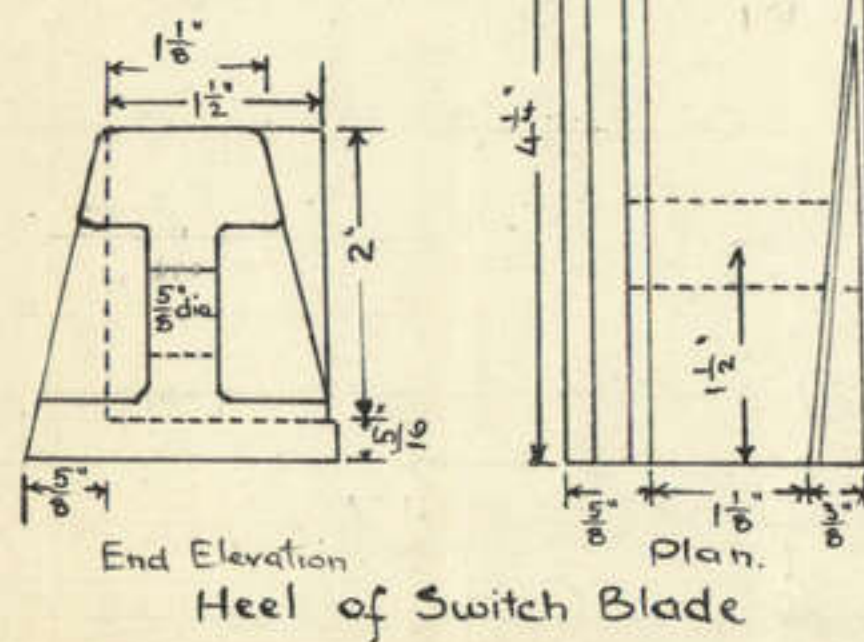
Standard German Switches
and Crossing.
60 c.m. gauge.

APP VI

War Diary HQ Aust Rly Corp
February 1919



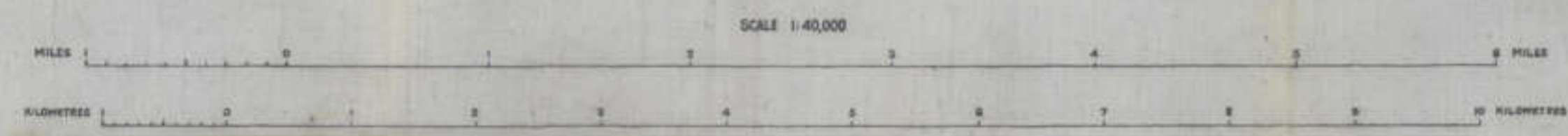
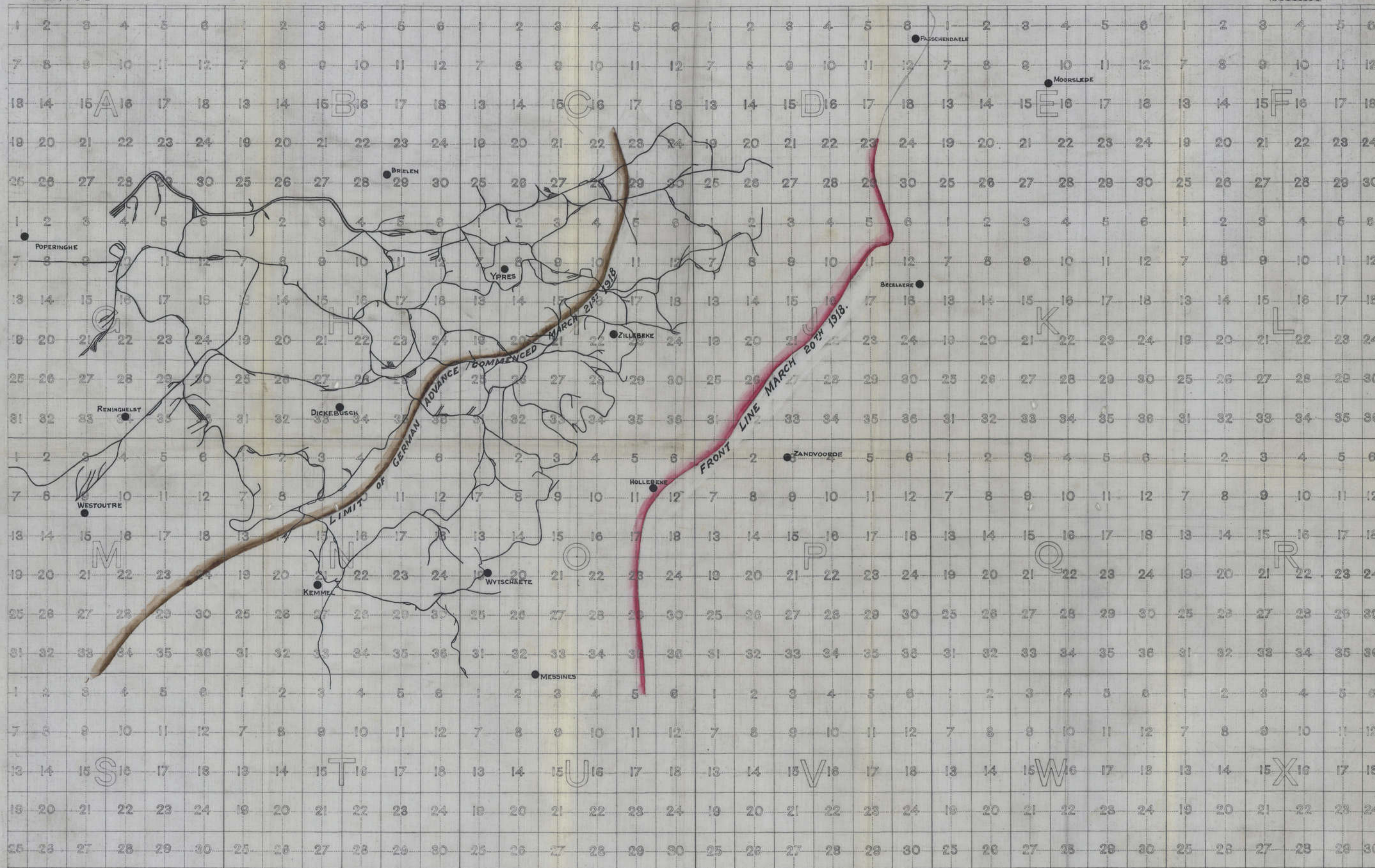
Scale 6" = 1 ft.



60/1m. LINES EXISTING ON MARCH 20TH 1918.

1:40,000

SHEET



CHIEF RAILWAY
CONSTRUCTION
ENGINEER
Plan No. 184-1
Date: 31. 7. 18.

O.C.
R.O.D. Detachment,

A

RDD/30/218.

COURTRAI.

British Railway loaned engines.

It has been decided to send the British loaned engines in France back to England in the following order :-

1.	L. & N.W.	0-6-0
2.	Midland	"
3.	G.N.	"
4.	L.B. & S.C.	0-6-2 tank
5.	G.W.	0-6-0
6.	Caledonian	"
7.	G.E.	"
8.	N.B.	"
9.	L. & Y.	"
10.	G.C.	"
11.	L. & N.W.	0-8-0
12.	G.C.	"
13.	G.W.	2-6-0
14.	N.E.	0-8-0
15.	S.E. & C.	0-6-0 tank

Will you please let me have a list of any of these engines which you have at your depot which can be spared so that I can make arrangements with Major Lynde for forwarding them to Roumesnil, at which point they are going to be assembled for shipping to England.

Hqrs. R.O.D.
27th February, 1919.

G.C.

W. J. P.
Lt. Col. R.E.
R.O.D.

