

AWM4

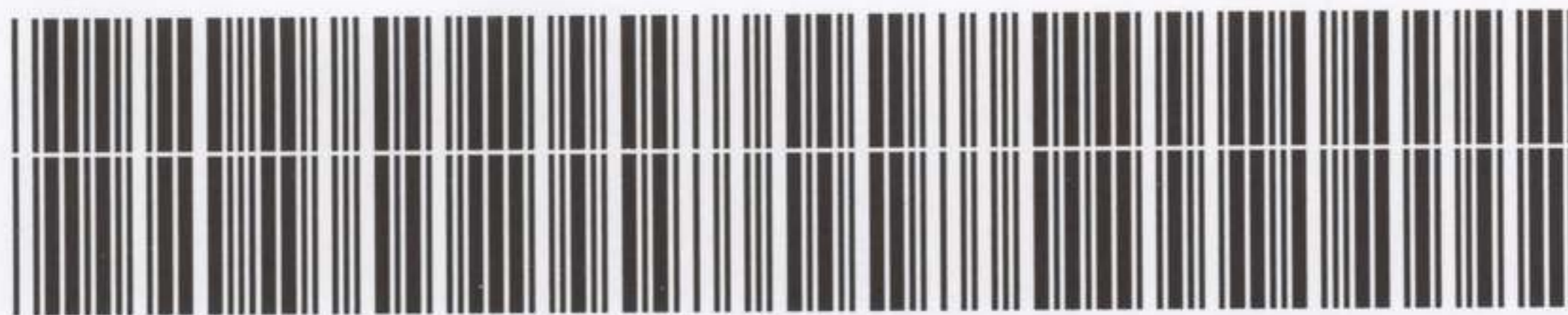
**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,
1914-18 War**

Engineers

Item number: 14/40/4 Part 1

Title: D Field Troop and Bridging Train,
Australian Engineers

November 1917 - February 1918



AWM4-14/40/4PART1

CONFIDENTIAL.

ORIGINAL.
DUPLICATE.
TRIPLICATE.

Australian Imperial Force.

WAR DIARY

OF

"D" FIELD TROOP & BRIDGING TRAIN. AUST ENGINEERS.

FOR

4TH PERIOD — NOV. 1917 TO FEB. 1918

Signature of Officer compiling

A. J. H. ... Capt

Signature of Officer Commanding

A. J. H. ... Capt

WAR DIARY

or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

SHEET NO 33.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
<u>4TH PERIOD. NOV. 1917 TO FEB. 1918.</u>				
BEERSHEBA	12/11/17		Moving off at 0930 the column had to wait at BEERSHEBA Station for the Yeomanry Divisional Train to get clear, when unit proceeded by good hard sandy road, the main BEERSHEBA - GAZA road. Halt for midday after about 5 miles at 1115, and the men had lunch in the shade of captured Greek 75mm. guns, which were lying at the roadside. Moving off again at 1315, watering from well was made at IRGEIG. Progress was slow and there were many halts in rear of long column. Halt for the night was made at 1645 and rations & feeds issued by lamp light.	
IRGEIG	12/11/17			
	13/11/17		Reveille at 0430, moving off at 0610 and so passing the Yeo. Div. Train. Difficult crossing down into NADI EL SHARIA where surface watering was effected and the elaborate enemy trench system of HAREIRA was traversed. In vicinity of Tank Redoubt, gruesome relics of the earlier GAZA battles were met in the shape of many withered & bootless corpses, now being attended to by burial parties. Halt for midday	
HAREIRA				

No.

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WAR DIARY

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INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

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SHEET NO 34

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
HAREIRA	13/11/17		<p>was made near enemy artillery command post N.E. of GAZA, when the men viewed the well constructed underground shelters, and horses enjoyed plentiful green feed of growing grass. A few miles north, the bivouac of rear H.Q. Desert Mtd. Corps was met and a long wait and much argument resulted in rations being drawn at the adjacent dump. This unit, being theoretically a troop of 1st Field Squadron, which was with Anzac Mtd. Division, its rations had been included in the allotment to that division. A camp site at BEIT HANUN, sheltered by cactus hedges, was reached just at dark and good watering was had at an adjacent well with pumping plant being operated by a detachment of R.E.</p>	
BEIT HANUN	14/11/17		<p>Moving off from very vermin-infested camping ground at 0615</p>	
JERUSA	"		<p>halt was made to water at JERUSA, a dirty village with well again being operated by R.E.. A few miles further on the first of the SAFFA oranges, which were to form so welcome a variant to rations for so long, were bought and enjoyed. Rear H.Q. Desert Mtd. Corps</p>	
JULISS.	"		<p>were caught up with again at JULISS, where halt was made</p>	9

or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

SHEET NO 35.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
JULIS	14/11/17		for a meal, about midday. Advanced H.Q. Desert Mtd. Corps was met at point 154 about 3 miles N. of JULIS, and camp was made on the northern side of this elevation with a beautiful aspect over many miles of plain and many villages, some of which were said to contain Jewish population of clean & decent Europeans, including charming women. interesting & unaccustomed news, which was partly verified in visiting one of them in vicinity of BEIT DURAS, for purpose of watering later in the afternoon.	
	15/11/17		More argument following efforts to draw rations at JULIS dump. Party was taken out to improve communications Northwards towards YEBNA. it being required to make a route possible for motor lorries. A track crossing was graded down and a level crossing over the railway N.W. of KUSTINEH made by removing one or two lengths of rail & sleepers.	
	17/11/17		Orders to move & rejoin Corps H.Q. at new DEIRAN received at 0635. Moving off at 0840, delay is occasioned by drawing rations, and at.	4

Date _____
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WAR DIARY

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SHEET NO 36.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
KUSTINEH	17/11/17		<p>KUSTINEH a G.S. Wagon and party of four men with a Lister engine was detached and sent to TINEH, to install engine to drive pump at the Railway station well. Roads had to be redistributed because of this, + watering was made at well on north side of village, the water being raised by hand with a rope to which was attached a number of canvas buckets, the operation taking 1 1/2 hours for the 36 animals. Unit arrived + bedded down at KATRAH at 1730.</p>	
KATRAH.	18/11/17		<p>Daylight showed KATRAH to be a well-built and pretty village, lying in hilly orchard country, and our camp to be under a grove of shot riddled blue gums. Close handy was a mill with a well containing a geared three throw deep-well pump of a type which the unit was to become well acquainted with, and made by GEBRÜDER WAGNER, of JAFFA. It was driven by a Crossley gas engine, with suction gas plant. The whole being in a state of shocking disrepair and being spasmodically worked by the combined efforts of the Jewish mill proprietor, his Arab assistants, + some sappers of R.E. The Arab mechanic</p>	<p>5</p>

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WAR DIARY

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SHEET NO 37

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
KATRAH.	18/11/17		<p>seems to use a sort of sixth sense in handling a mass of broken down mechanisms which is loose in every joint & wonderfully tied up with string & wire, and to achieve success by banging a sparking plug or a magneto with a heavy hammer, when all the methods of Western science result only in failure. A store of tibbin was broached in the village and the march northwards resumed via BESHSHIT and YEBNA. At KUBEISEH, halt was made for midday and the men were able to buy vegetables in an adjacent garden, watered by shallow wells and shadufs in the manner of Egypt.</p> <p>DEIRAN was seen from the intervening hills of NEBI KUNDA and delighted the eye with white walled & red roofed houses in their setting of greenery.</p>	
DEIRAN	18/11/17		<p>By sundown the unit had camped at the WINE PRESS, which was to be its nominal home for the next three & a half months.</p>	
	19/11/17 to 7/3/18		<p>During this period the unit was mainly engaged on work made necessary by the stationary occupation of the coastal area by Desert Mtd. Corps, & was kept fully & constantly employed. Indeed</p>	

or
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(Erase heading not required.)

SHEET NO 38.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN.	10/11/17		The lack of men for the work required was a constant trouble.	
	to 7/3/18		Officers & men were employed in small detachments over an area extending from N. of LAFFA, LUDD & LATRON on the north, to MEJDEL in the south, & the rationing & transport of these parties gave no little trouble, particularly in view of the small amount of transport, (1 GS wagon & 12 Camels), & small number of riding horses (12) with which the unit was, at that time, provided. The bulk of the work consisted in the repair & operation of pumping machinery, this being the purpose for which the unit was supposed to be chiefly qualified, and a great many wells & their broken down plants were handled as required by the movement of troops within the area named. The wells & pumps were of fairly uniform type and as previously described at KATRAH, and were situated, for the most part in orange grooves, the property of Jewish & Arab proprietors. Many of them had not been used for years & the poverty of their owners & difficulty of obtaining materials had resulted in the plants having been allowed to fall into a bad	

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SHEET NO 39

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN.	19/11/17		<p>state of disrepair. Many of the parts were missing, having been taken by Turkish depredators, or hidden for fear of being seized, & these had to be replaced by various & wild improvisations. The engines were steam, gas & oil and of many different makes, both German and English, and some of these were running on suction gas, supplied from gas plants wonderfully made of oil drums, cement castes & stuck together with mud & other curious jointing. The making of new parts required, was for the first month or two a serious difficulty & called for much ingenuity and healthy rivalry amongst the better qualified members of the unit. Later however the engineering workshops of the GEBRÜDER WAGNER of JAFFA, were available for the making of parts which were more suitable for their purpose than the rough-and-ready make shifts had been, & a simple carburetter was designed which could be made at these shops & was capable of being fitted to any internal combustion engine met with. This conversion to petrol running made for easier operation and greater certainty in</p>	<p>APPENDIX No 17</p> <p style="text-align: right;">D</p>

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SHEET NO 40.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN.	12/11/17 To 7/3/18		<p>fuel supply and several plants were so converted. The number of these plants handled during this time was upwards of thirty.</p> <p>A large amount of road work in the vicinity of DEIRAN fell to the unit by virtue of its position as the Corps engineer unit, and because of the occupation of the village, during the whole of this time, by Corps H.Q. Motor roads had to be sited & formed between the village & RAMLEH, so connecting with the main lateral communication LAFFA - JERUSALEM, to G.H.Q. at BIR SALEM, and towards the sources of supply to the southward in the direction of YEIBNAH JUNCTION, & later to the new railway. Also the streets of the village required a lot of attention during the heavy rains of December & January, when some of them became rivers, and large washaways of the sandy soil had to be restored by construction of drains & culverts. Portions of the motor roads (were laid) were laid with wire netting, in the, by this time, well known manner. The labours of a detachment of 200 E.L.C. was available from the end of December, and was of a kind well applicable to the work of road</p>	<p>APPENDIX No 18.</p>

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SHEET NO 41.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN	19/11/17 to 7/3/18		<p>construction, where the earth work was in the sandy soil which obtained to the North + East of DEIRAN and in its immediate vicinity, but its value was much less apparent in the muddy soil of the plain, + the Egyptians were much depressed by the wet + cold which mostly prevailed and their output was then very small, unless they were constantly driven.</p> <p>Two timber bridges were constructed in the plain at this time, one just W. of KUBEIBEH and the second immediately N.E. of YEBNA.</p> <p>Their design is sufficiently described by the appendix sketches. A large amount (about 4,000 cubic yds.) of earthwork was put into the long south approach to the KUBEIBEH bridge, most of the spoil being obtained from the sandy ground to the North of the bridge, and carried across, by about 300 yards of Decauville railway. Most of the work was done in very wet weather, + the transport of the timber from the railway, which had by this time reached YEBNA, gave much trouble, horse wagons and camels being found impracticable in the mud of the plain. Finally the 200 natives of the E.L.C. before mentioned, were employed and</p>	<p>APPENDIX No. 19 APPENDIX No. 20</p> <p>10</p>

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SHEET NO 42

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN	19/11/17		<p>carried sticks of timber over an area, which was, for some hundreds of yards up to their knees in mud & water. The work of placing the trestles in the actual building of the bridge was correspondingly trying. Both bridges were designed for the ordinary service loads, up to & including 4.5" howitzers, but it is worthy of note that the small bridge at YEBNA is known to have successfully carried a caterpillar tractor, which crossed it in defiance to the traffic requirements.</p> <p>The existing stone bridges near YEBNA received attention in the repair of their arches & in restoring their road surfaces, these having been worn into hollows so that our supply traffic churned them into masses of liquid mud, many inches in depth, which had to be cleaned out and replaced with new spoil & metal selected from it.</p> <p>Maintenance of watering areas was required at various places, particularly at the Wine Press, DEIRAN. The service canvas troughs were supported in casings, roughly made of captured timber, which</p>	
	to 7/3/18			
				APPENDIX No. 21

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SHEET NO 43.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN	19/11/17		decreased their wear & facilitated their maintenance considerably.	
	to		A great number of notice boards, totalling probably some hundreds, were made, painted & erected, these being required for the regulation of traffic and as direction boards on roads as well as for identifying various branches of Corps H. Q. &c.	
	2/3/18		Shower baths were installed in the stone wine vats, which formed part of the arrangements of the wine cellars, perforated petrol tins being supplied by the overhead tank & well, which were utilized for general watering. These were not much availed of by the troops, until the weather in March, became warmer.	
			One of the earliest and most pleasant jobs was that on which a small party proceeded to JAFFA 23/11/17. It was required to make a survey of the engineering workshops there, with a view of making available their plants & stocks of pumping and other machinery.	
			The party was made comfortable by MR. WAGNER, the German proprietor of one of the establishments, and enjoyed the rare luxury of civilized	

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SHEET NO 44.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN.	10/11/17		bedding and limited, but useful shopping facilities.	
	to		As the various branches of Corps H.Q. gradually arrived and made themselves comfortable in the substantial buildings of the prosperous village, a fair amount of what might be called peace-time work fell to the unit in providing office facilities, erecting partitions, water service arrangements etc. The incinerator illustrated was found very efficient in dealing with the latrine and other refuse of the troops and civil inhabitants of the village. Small jobs were provided in making fixtures in the Town Hall and large wine cellars, for concerts, church services etc., & less pleasant work was occasioned in providing crosses and enclosures for graves of men buried in the area reached by the unit.	APPENDIX NO. 22
	7/3/18.		A fair amount of engineer staff work fell to the officers (LIEUT. R.A. CAMPBELL joined 4/1/18) in reconnoitering roads and watering areas likely to be used by the corps, and later in connection with the proposals to provide mobile bridging equipment for future operations.	13

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~~INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY~~

(Erase heading not required.)

SHEET NO 45.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
DEIRAN	19/11/17 to 7/3/18		<p>Tactical considerations, apart from some bombing and machine gunning in the earlier moonlight nights, did not worry the unit during this period, the main active service hardships being those due to the very wet and cold conditions, & difficulty of obtaining supplies during the first month or two. These conditions were much improved as the railway was pushed northwards, until finally railhead was within two miles of the unit headquarters. The supply of detachments, removed from DEIRAN, still took some arranging, but on the whole the men were well fed. Issues of winter clothing were made, not before it was urgently required, about the middle of December, being brought from Ordnance stores at DIER SENEID by light car, and a special issue of dungaree overalls later was most useful to men whose work was amongst dirty machinery. The most genuine cause for complaint was in the tardy delivery of mail, this being due to the unit being, on paper, a troop of the 1st Field Squadron, which was usually some miles away with its division.</p>	

WAR DIARY

OF

"D" FIELD TROOP & BRIDGING TRAIN. AUST. ENGRS.

FOR

4TH PERIOD NOV TO FEB. 1918.
_{'17}

LIST OF APPENDICES.

No.

Subject.

17. CARBURETTER.

18. ROAD SPECIFICATION.

19. TIMBER TRESTLE BRIDGE, KUBEIBEH.

20. 14 FT TIMBER BRIDGE. YEBNA.

21. TIMBER FRAMING FOR CANVAS TROUGHS.

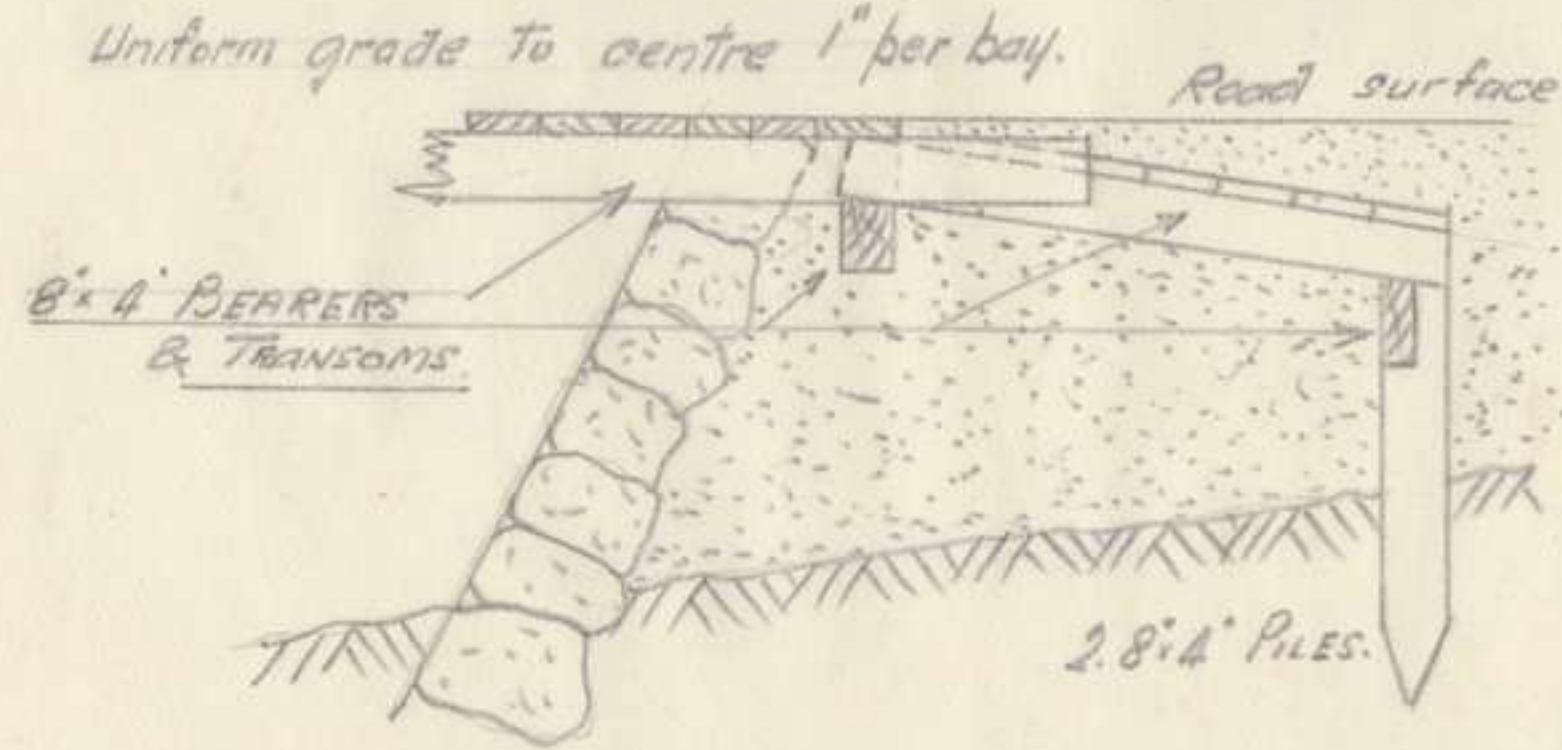
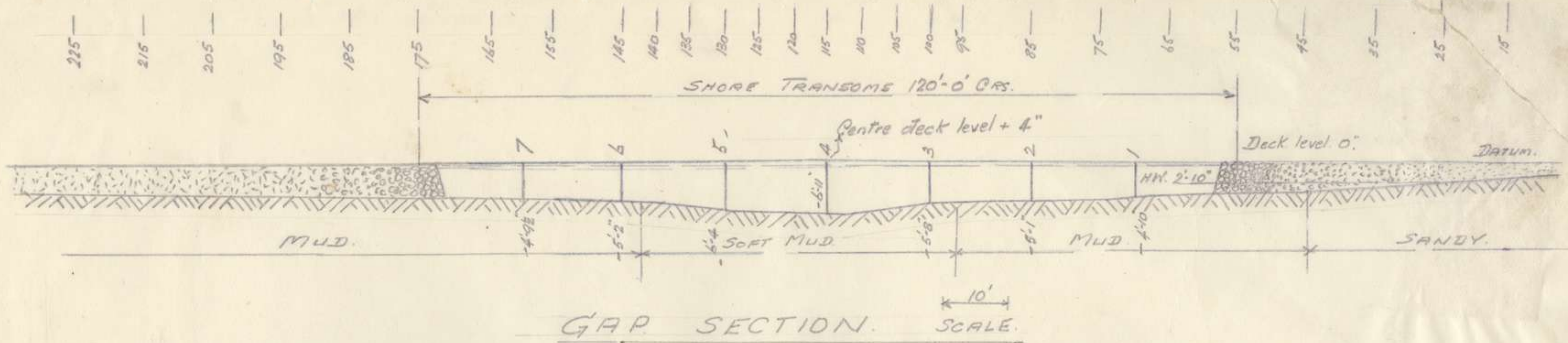
22. INCINERATOR. (DEIRAN.).

APPENDIX No. 19.

TIMBER TRESTLE BRIDGE.

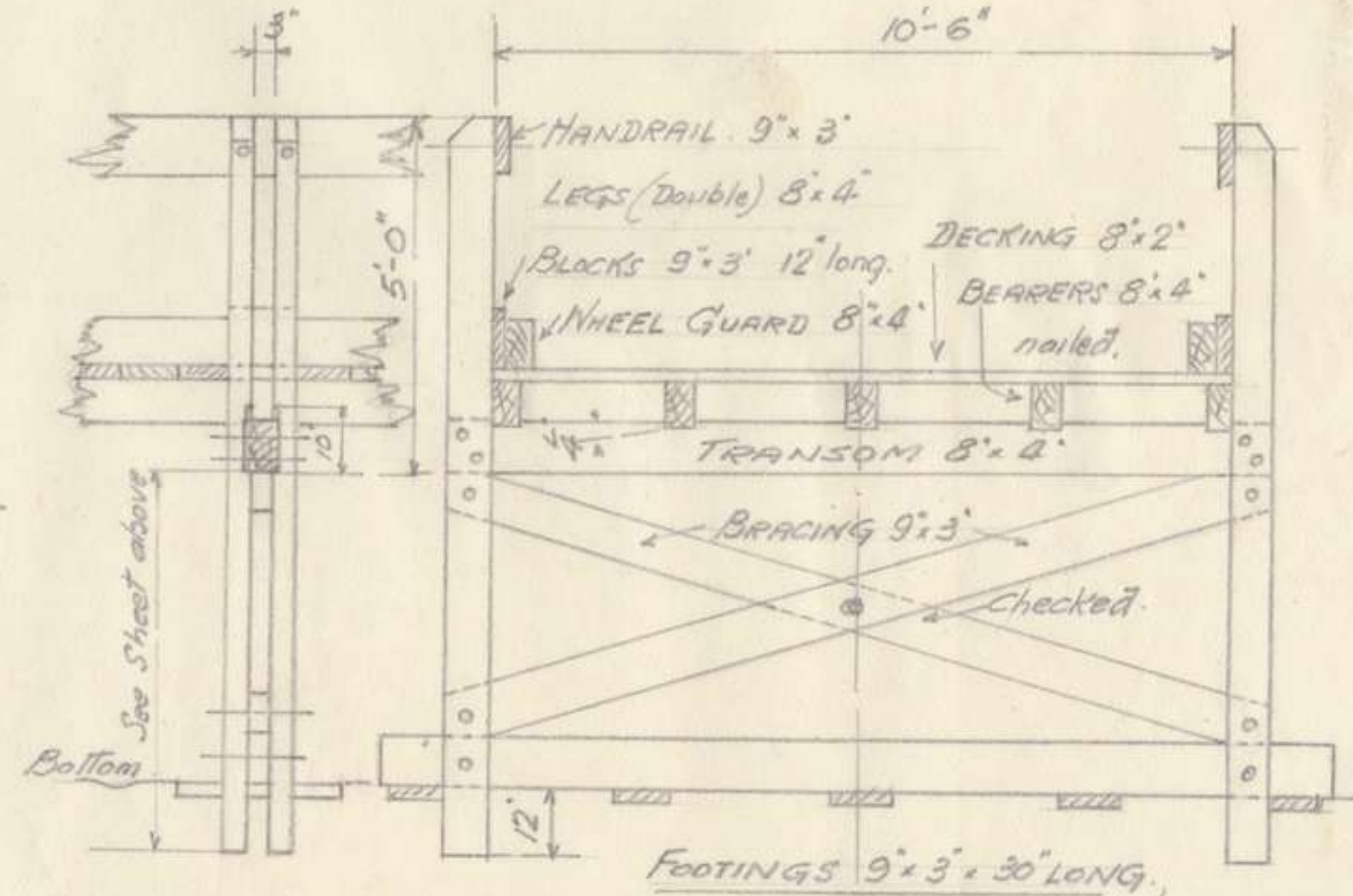
MUBEIBEH.

"D" FIELD TROOP AND
 BRIDGING TRAIN. A. E.
 No.
 Date



DETAIL OF ABUTMENT.

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"



END VIEW.

ELEVATION.

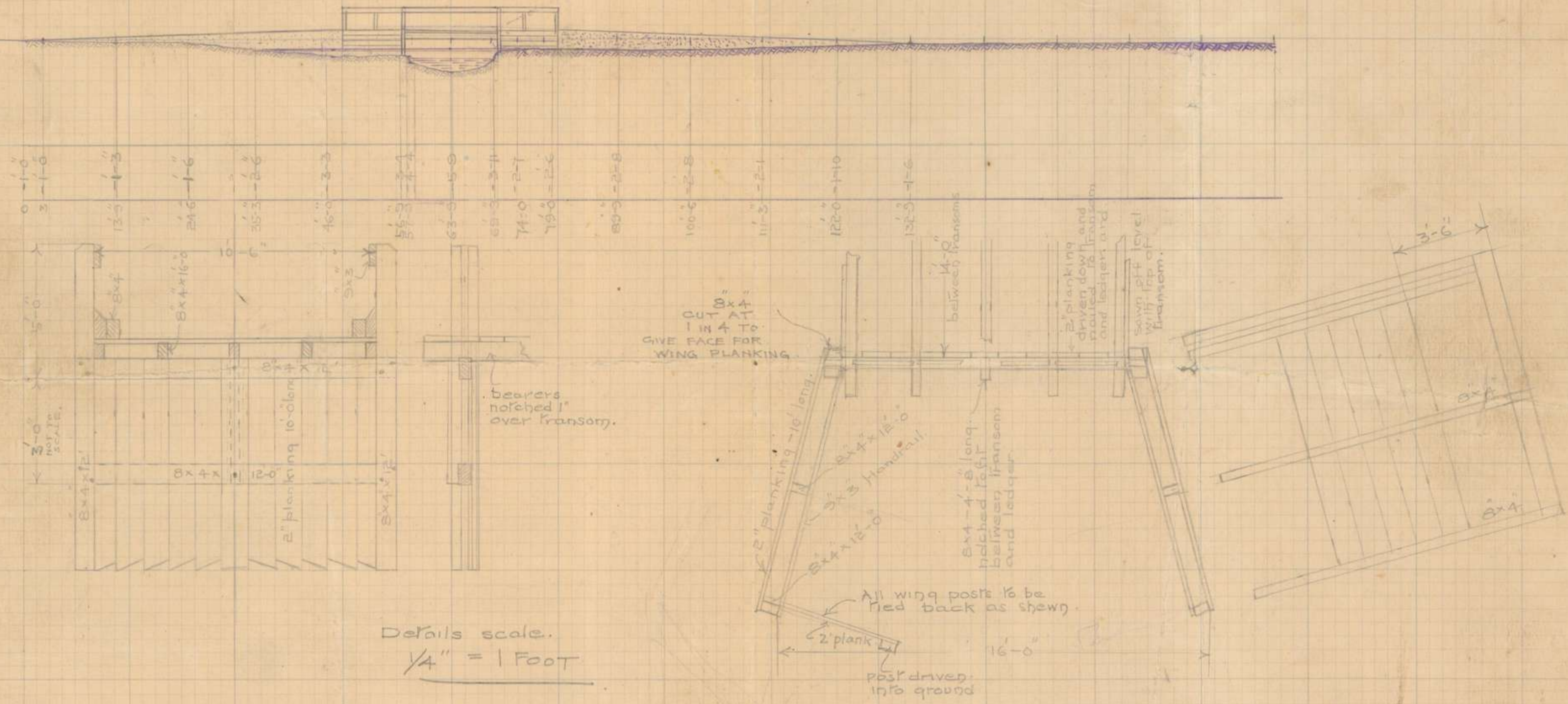
DETAIL OF TRESTLE.

"D" FIELD TROOP AND BRIDGING TRAIN. A. E.

No. _____
Date _____

APPENDIX NO. 20.

Scale
10' X



Details scale.
1/4" = 1 FOOT

4 FOOT TIMBER BRIDGE
NEAR 3 SPAN STONE ARCH
YERBNAH.

"D" FIELD TROOP AND
BRIDGING TRAIN. A. E.
No.
Date

Appendix No 20

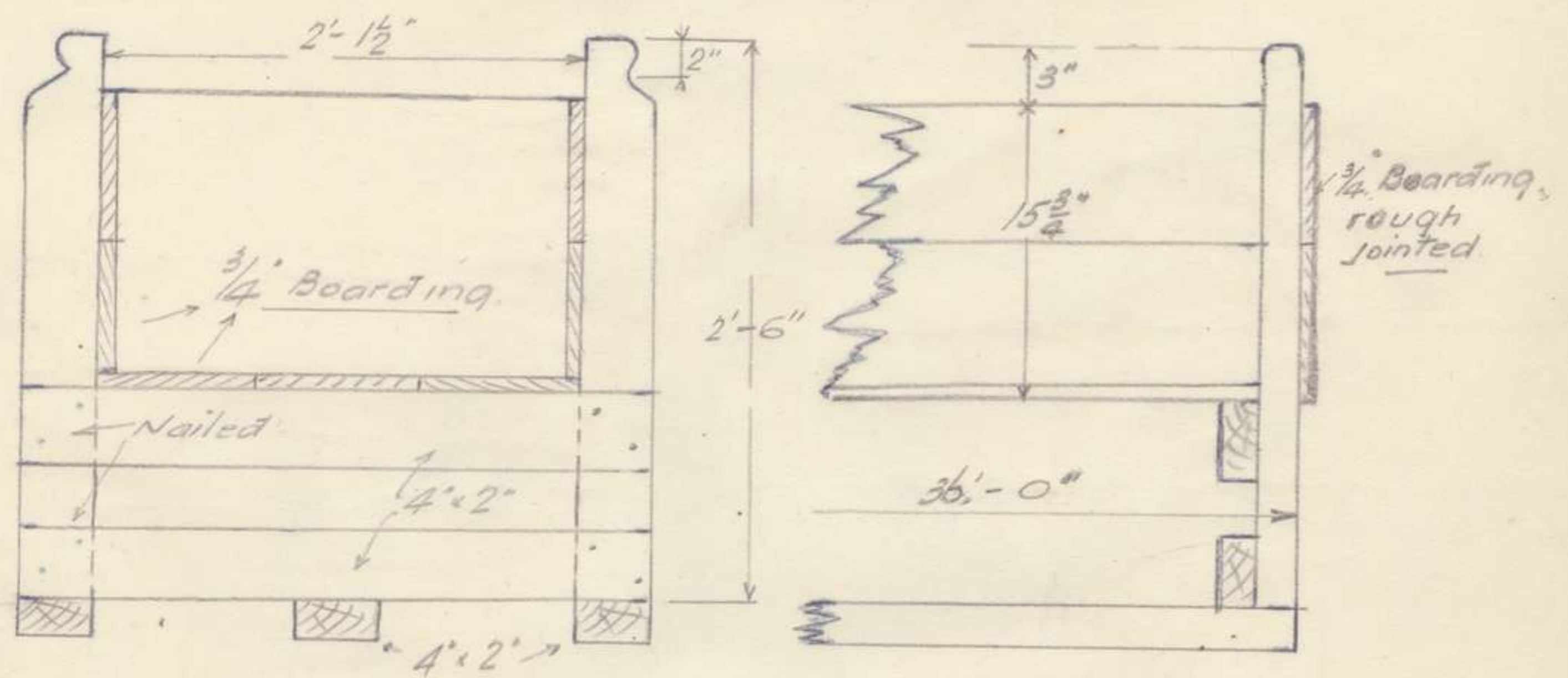


"D" FIELD TROOP AND
 ENGINEERING TRAIN. A. E.
 No
 Date

APPENDIX NO. 21. 19

TIMBER FRAMING FOR
600 GALL. CANVAS TROUGH.

SCALE 1 IN = 1 FT.



END SECTION

ELEVATION



"D" FIELD TROOP AND BRIDGING TRAIN A.E.
DEIRAN INCINERATOR.

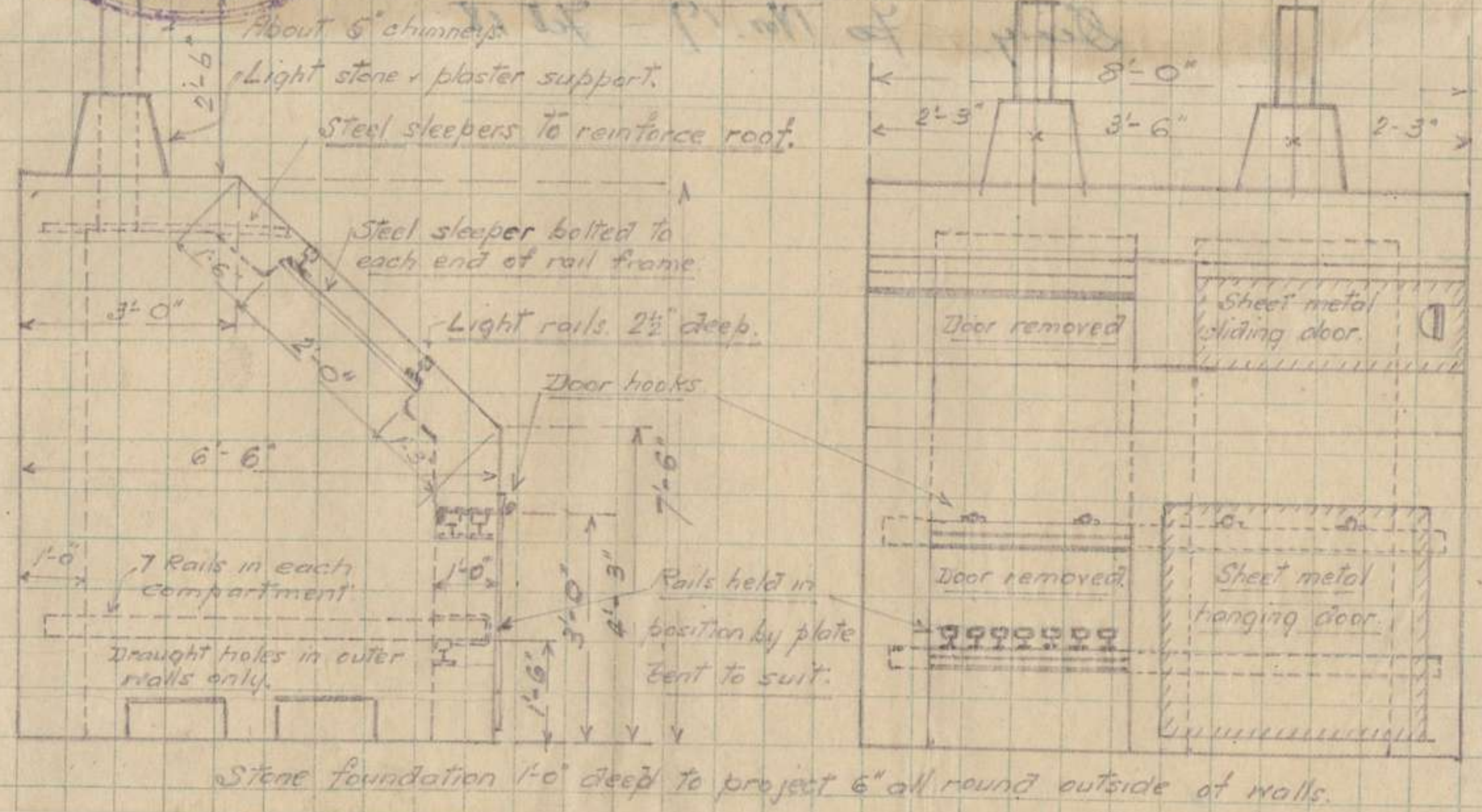
23-4-18.

Grade $1\frac{1}{2}$ Sgs = 1'-0"

All railway material Decauville

All walls 1'-0" thick.

Note. Slating face to be protected by sheet metal cover.



APPENDIX No. 22



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