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Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries, 1914-18 War

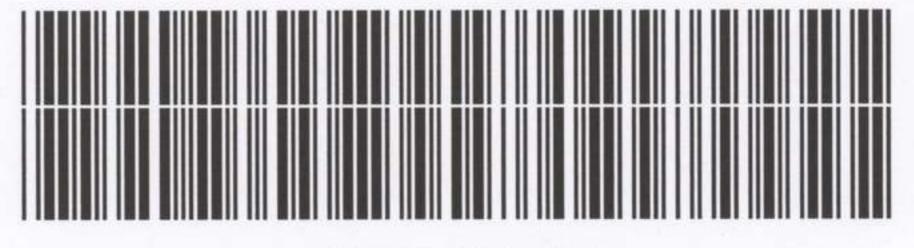
Engineers

Item number: 14/28/17

Title: 9th Field Company, Australian

Engineers

November 1918



AWM4-14/28/17

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CONFIDENTIAL

ORIGINAL. DUPLICATE.

Australian Imperial Force.

WAR DIARY

OF

NINTH AUSTRALIAN FIELD COMPANY ENGINEERS.

FOR

NOVEMBER

191 a.

Signature of Officer compiling Problems AUST ENGRS. A.L.F.

Signature of Officer Commanding

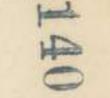
AUST. ENGRS., A.LF.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL RCDIG1010062

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Army Form C. 2118.



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. Remarks and references to Summary of Events and Information Appendices Hour Date Place Training as per syllabus attached. AUST, ENGRS., A.I.F. D. D. & L., London, E.C. (A8004) Wt. W1771/M2031 750,000 5/17 Sch. 52 Forms/C2118/14

Summary of events during the month of November 1 9 1 8.

The Company has been stationed at WIRY-au-Mont during the whole of November. From the 1st. of the month until the signing of the Armistice (11th. Nov.) the Company was training fairly strenuously, as an early return to the line seemed very probable. In addition to the 4th hours Military Training daily, a large amount of Recreational Training was carried out, such as Inter-Section, and Inter-Unit Football Matches.

On November Sth., Major-General BUCKLAND, Chief Engineer, Fourth Army, B.E.F., inspected the 3rd. Australian Divisional Engineers, the 9th., 10th., and 11th. Field Companies being on parade.

The actual training carried out is shown on Syllabus attached. This of course was, as usual, interrupted a great deal on account of the various works of a Sapper nature we were instructed to carry out in the Divisional Area.

Directly after the signing of the Armistice, a certain amount of Educational and Civil Training Classes were commenced, but towards the end of the month Military Training was eased off, and much more attention was paid to Education and Sport. Just as the month was drawing to a close, we were instructed to give Education precedence over Military Training, and now we have classes going in Surveying, Mechanical Drawing, Architectural Drawing, Book-keeping, Trade Mathematics, Shorthand, and Arithmetic. A Divisional Agricultural School. was formed at ALLERY to give men practical Farming experience. One Sapper from 9th. Field Coy. is attending this School.

Leave. - Under Divisional arrangements a Motor Lorry was made available to the Company every 10 days, for the purpose of sending 30 men to ABBEVILLE for a day. This has been appreciated very much, as the village the Company is billeted in is very small and quiet. The ordinary allotment of English and French leave has remained in force.

Sports. - A Divisional Engineers Football Competition was arranged. Each of the 3 Field Companies entered a team for Rugby, Australian Rules, and Soccer, each Company playing the other. The 9th. Field Company won the Cup outright, winning all games except one, which was drawn.

Australian Rules, Rugby, and Soccer Teams were selected from the 3 Field Companies to represent the Divisional Engineers in the Divisional Football Competition. The Teams, however, only did moderately well, as no combined practice was possible, owing to the distance separating the Companies.

9th. Aust. Infantry Brigade Sports Meeting was heldon the 11th. November, and the Divisional Sports Meeting was held a couple of days later.

Recreation. - A barn in the village was hired as a Recreation Hut, and a Stage was erected from Pontoon equipment. A Company Concert Party was formed (The "Wiry-au-Montebanks") and concerts were given once, and lometimes twice, weekky. These, as well as affording much amusement to the men, seemed to delight the villagers.

Equipment. - Four Lewis Gund were returned to Ordnance on the 27th. Nov. leaving one on the establishment of the Company.

Salvage. - An Officer from this Unit visited the Salvage Depot at Le HAVRE with a party from this Division. A narrative of his visit is attached.

Mounted Section .- Have been working constantly with the usual routine. There has not been a great deal of transport work, it mostly being rations, wood & coal, etc.

The animals have been under cover the whole period, and their condition is good. Clipping was commenced, and about 40% of the animals have been done. One riding horse was evacuated on 26th., otherwise Establishment is complete.

Changes and Appointments .- Captain S. B. Cox was promoted Temporary Major and posted to Command 12th. Field Coy. A.E.

Lieut. L. Grant was promoted Temporary Captain and transferred from 14th. Field Coy. to 9th. Field Company A.E.

Lieut. F. M. Mason, M.C. proceeded to Aust. Engineers Training Depot, Brightlingsea, England, on 28/11/18.

Sickness .- Was only slight, and there were no serious cases. See graph in appendices.

Major.

Commanding, 9th. Field Company,

MuleBenkera

Australian Engineers.

RVD.

WAR DIARY

OF

NINTH AUSTRALIAN FIELD COMPANY ENGINEERS.

FOR

NOVEMBER 1918.

LIST OF APPENDICES.

No.	Subject.
1.	Syllabus of Training for November 1918.
3.	R.E. Work carried out in HALLENCOURT Area up t 2/11/18.
3.	A visit to the Salvage Depot at Le HAVRE.
4.	Chart of Sick Parades and Hospital admissions.
5.	Chart showing Company Strength.

SYLLABUS OF TRAINING FOR NOVEMBER 1 9 1 8.

FRIDAY - 1/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & rifle exercises. 1000-1100 - Physical exercises, gas drill & lecture. 1100-1300 - Use of Compass and Field geometry. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Football and recreation.

SATURDAY - 8/11/18.

0900-1800 - Route march with Transport.

NDAY - 4/11/18. 900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1100 - Section drill. 1100-1200 - Musketry Instruction. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation and Sports.

TUESDAY - 5/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1200 - Musketry, practical and instruction. 1330-1430 - Instruction on tackle, knots, lashings, etc. 1430-1630 - Recreation & sports.

WEDNESDAY - 6/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1100 - Map reading & Section drill. 1100-1200 - Musketry instruction. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation and Sports.

THURSDAY - 7/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1100 - Musketry instruction. 1100-1800 - Extended order drill. 1330-1430 - Instruction in German traps and mines. 1430-1630 - Recreation & sports.

FRIDAY - 8/11/18.

Inspection of Company by Chief Engineer, Fourth Army, B.E.F.

SATURDAY - 9/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1300 - Route march along road WIRY to OISEMONT.

MONDAY - 11/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1100 - Section drill, extended order. 1100-1200 - Musketry instruction. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation & Sports.

TUESDAY - 19/11/18. 0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1200 - Musketry (instruction & practical). 1330-1430 - Map reading & road traversing. 1430-1630 - Recreation & Sports.

WEDNESDAY - 13/11/18. 0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1100 - Section drill. 1100-1200 - Gas drill & lecture. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation & Sports.

THURSDAY - 14/11/18.

0900-1650 - Route march to HALLENCOURT for Baths.

FRIDAY - 15/11/18. 0900-1000 - Coy. parade & physical exercises. 1000-1200 - Musketry. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation & Sports.

SATURDAY - 18/11/18. 0900-1300 - Route march along road WIRY to OISEMONT.

MONDAY - 18/11/18. 0900-1000 - Coy. parade & inspection. 1000-1100 - Section drill. 1100-1300 - Musketry instruction. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation and Sports.

OVER.

TUESDAY - 19/11/18.

1330-1630 - Educational classes.

WEDNESDAY - 20/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & Coy. drill. 1000-1100 - Section drill. 1100-1900 - Extended order drill. 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation & Sports.

THURSDAY - 21/11/18.

2900-1200 - Route march to HALLENCOURT for Baths. 1330-1630 - Education-

MIDAY - 92/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade. 1000-1200 - Musketry (practical). 1330-1430 - Route march to Sports Ground. 1430-1630 - Recreation & Sports.

SATURDAY - 23/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade. 1000-1430 - Route march along WIRY - OISEMONT Road.

MONDAY - 25/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade & inspection. 1000-1200 - Section drill. 1330-1630 - Route march, Sports and Educational classes.

JUESDAY - 96/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade. 1000-1900 - Musketry. 1330-1630 - Route march, Sports, and Educational Classes.

WEDNESDAY - 27/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade. 1000-1200 - Reconnaissance of villages for water supply. 1330-1630 - Route march, Sports, and Educational classes.

THURSDAY - 28/11/18.

0900-1630 - Route march to HALLENCOURT for Baths.

FRIDAY - 29/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade. 1000-1900 - Musketry (practical). 1330-1630 - Route march, Sports, and Educational Classes.

SATURDAY - 30/11/18.

0900-1000 - Coy. parade. 1000-1300 - Route march along WIRY-OISEMONT Road.

R. E. WORK CARRIED OUT IN HALLENCOURT AREA UP TO and. NOV. 18 Th.

668/25-

Location.	Description of work done.	Amount of R.E. stores used.
GITERNE.	Delouser.	5 sheets C.I., 50'- 3 % 3., 30'- 4 x 1., 1 Stove, 10' Stove piping.
do.	Cooking Stoves. Latrines.	18 sheets C.I. 8 - 5 seater. 3-9 seater. 30 yds. hessian.
do.	Horse troughing.	40'- 4 x 8., 70'- 3 x 8.
do. do.	Aiming rests. Figures. Sports Ground.	100'- 3 x 8. 89'- 6 x 1. 800'- 4 x 8., 45'- 6"x1.
54th. Bn. FRUCOURT.	Delouser.	5 sheets C.I., 50'- 3 x 3. 30'- 4 x 1., 1 stove. 10' stove piping.
do. do.	Cooking stoves. Latrines. Revetting hurdles for) bombing.	18 sheets C.I. 2 - 8 seater. troll hessian. 30.
do. do.	Stabling. Sports Ground.	100'- 3 x 8. 180'- 4 x 8.
35th. Bn. MERELESSART.	Rifle Range. (A.14.c.) Latrines. Cooking stoves. Stabling.	300' - 3 x 8., 4 sheets C.I. 1 - 5 seater. 2 roll hessian. 18 sheets C.I. 1900' - 5 x 8., 150' - 4 x 8., 1900' - 3 x 8., 180' - 4 x 1., 5 sheets C.I.
do.	Sports Ground.	350'- 4 x 3., 80'- 5 x 1.,
do.	Delouser.	5 sheets C.I., 50'- 3 x 8., 30'- 4 x 1., 1 stove.
Div. Engineers. F.14.b.cent.	Sports Ground.	500' - 4 x 3., 50' - 6 x 1.
FORGEVILLE.	Cookhouse.	75'- 3 x 8., 45'- 4 x 1., 14 sheets C.I., 30 yds. hessian.
YONVILLE.	Latrines. Sports Ground.	go'- 4 x 3., 50'- 5 x 8., 80'- 6 x 1., 80-1metre Pickets.
oth. Fld. Amb. NEUVILLE au BOIS		4 tent floor sections.
School. LIMEUX.	Tables and forms.	4 tent floor sections. 180'- 3 x 9., 840'- 6 x 1., 80'- 4 x 1.

C. R. E., 3rd. Aust. Division.

The above is forwarded with reference to your 68/18/90 of 95th. ult.

and. November 1918. RVD.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL RCDIG1010062

A visit to the Salvage Depot at LE HAVRE, by Lieutenant COOK.

On the 11th. November 1918, I, with 4 other Officers and 15 N.C.Os, of the 3rd. Australian Division, visited Le Havre for the purpose of seeing the work done by the Salvage Corps. We were first shown the big Depot Stores of new material. The first Depot was an Ordnance Issue Store. There were several large sheds like those usually built on wharves. Here, to economise space, galleries were built all round the inside of the shed, thus increasing the floor space by about 50%. In this Depot were large supplies of all kinds of war material. That which is unaffected by the weather is stored outside. Oils, rifles, stretchers, brooms, and steel helmets were conspicuous by the large quantities of each. The rifles in this Store are all salvaged, mostly from the wounded.

Spare parts of gund, wagons, and cycles are kept in stock; right to the most insignificant screw. Saddlery and harness are stocked in separate parts, also in sets packed in bags ready to send up the line. Packsaddlery takes up a separate portion of the Store, likewise Stable accessories. Another important stock consisted of Boche machine guns, which have been converted so as to we be used for our own ammunition.

In each shed is an issue bay, with a rack for each unit in the Corps. All packages ready to go out are placed here for collection.

Nearly all the clerical work is done by W.A.A.C.S. under trained men of the Ordnance Corps.

on an average, 93,000 indents are dealt with daily. On the wharf was a large number of German guns for shipment to England.

Another cheerful sight was a barge full of S.R.Ds (rum jars) on their way to be re-filled.

We next went to the Ration Store (by the way, we had a Motor Bus at our disposal).

This Ration Store is a huge building; a long shed 880 yards long, and 110 yards wide. It is a steel structure erected before the war by a German firm, and was used for a Cotton Market. At about every hundred feet there is a glass skylight, and on the roof for 18 inches each side of the skylight there is sand for the purpose of localising an outbreak of fire.

cargo Steamers are moored right alongside the shed, and the cargo is transported on rollers to the Railway, which runs up the centre of the shed. These rollers are in 30 foot lengths, one of which has a small motor. The lengths are connected by a cog chain, and the only manual labor is in putting the sacks and boxes on one end, and stacking them at the other end in the Railway wagons.

A cargo of oats was being unloaded while we were there. It had been loaded in bulk, and was being bagged at the wharf.

All the labour here was Chinese, their wages being one franc per day, with rations - of course. They appeared to be quite contented with their lot, for their wages in China amounted to about \$\frac{1}{2}d\$. per day without rations.

All loose hay here is re-baled in a baling machine. When the Supply Train comes in, all wagons are thoroughly cleaned, hosed, and dried. The Supply Trains have the preference for wagons, even the ammunition having to wait if necessary. During the retreat in March, many Supply Trains never reached their destination, but came back to the Base and started out again.

The next visit was to the Base Bakeries. Here there are 194 ovens going, three to each fire. Each oven holds 75 loaves, and the daily output is about 90,000 loaves. There are many such bakeries at the various Depots, and they have never let us down, the supply being kept up with great regularity. The fuel runs out at about 1-1b. per 19-1bs. of bread. The bread is stacked on shelves 3 loaves high. In the early days they were stacked 3 and 4 high, but this resulted in compressing the bottom loaves, which arrived at the units broken and stodgy. They are sent up to the line in bags of 95.

The next visit was to the Salvage Receiving Depot. Before proceeding I will explain what Salvage is. It is the organisation for the recovery of the bye-products of War. All unserviceable, surplus and derelict material is collected. In the early days of the War very little was saved and very much was wasted, but now, nothing goes to waste; everything except dud shells and bombs being cleaned up from the battlefield. Having collected it, the object is to use it again to the best advantage and with the least possible delay. Salvage is of two kinds, Ordinary and Special. Ordinary salvage is the collecting of that which is lost, discarded and wasted from day to day in the area occupied by the troops. Special salvage is the dismantling of dugouts, mine galleries, huts, water supply plant and signal cable in the area left behind in the advance, and which is not likely to be required again. There is an endless variety of material in dugouts alone. Barbed wire entanglements are left alone, because "one never knows, does one"? They might be required again.

At the Receiving Depot the material is sorted into .-(1) Fit for immediate use; sent to Ordnance for re-issue.

(2) Fit for issue after repair.

(3) Fit for conversion into new material.

(4) Of no further use; destroyed.

Repairs and disposal -(1) For economy, all repairs possible are done in France, thereby saving freight, and using cheaper labour.

(9) Things that cannot be repaired in France are sent to the United

Kingdom. (3) Of those articles which are beyond repair, the undamaged parts are recovered, and the rest is scrapped. Most of these small parts are now worth more than double their pre-war price.

The labour in the Receiving Depot at the Base is mixed, and includes Chinese, German Prisoners, and Frenchwomen. The supervision is done by the Ordnance Corps. Piecework is introduced wherever possible, and with satisfactory results.

The first big shed was half full of German packs. For some reason these were not being made use of. They are not available for re-issue, and perhaps it was not considered possible to convert them to any other Only the straps and buckles are of any use.

Horsha-shoes are sorted by Frenchwomen on piecework. The new ones are paired and sent to Ordnance for re-issue. Part worn shoes are paired, and used on Lines of Communication. Worn out shoes are sent to U.K. as scrap iron.

Wheels .- New ones sent to Ordnance for re-issue, others are repaired, and those beyond repair are broken up, the tyres and hubs being sent to U.K. as scrap iron, and the spokes made into tent pegs.

Guns are repaired in France or England, or disposed of as scrap steel.

Bayonets are usually only rusty & are easily cleaned up & re-issued. Machine Guns, Lewis Guns, Rifles and Revolvers are cleaned, repaired, and re-issued. There are many small parts to be recovered from those beyond repair. A large percentage of them arrive loaded, and the first job is to go through them and extract the cartridge.

German Rifles .- Eight to ten thousand of these are passed through

per week, the bulk of them being sent to the Woolwich Arsenal.

Twenty-five to thirty thousand of our own rifles are received every week. Most of them are in good condition when they arrive, and 50% of them are sent back to the Ordnance Issue Stores without delay.

APPENDIX

There is a considerable amount of technical equipment salvaged. Such articles as Field Glasses, having registered numbers on them, can be traced back to the Officer to whom they were originally issued.

Salwaged German boots are issued to the German Prisoners of war, who do the necessary repairs themselves, as there always are some

tradesmen amongst them.

There is some difficulty in the sorting, and especially the pairing of boots, because of so many odd ones being picked up, but this work is quickly done. After sorting, the boots fit for repair are washed and stripped of all worn parts, the new shles, heels etc. required for repair are placed in the boots, and then they are passed on to the different tradesmen until they arrive at the other end of the Factory to be classified. The best boots are sent to the Ordnance Stores for re-issue to the line troops, and the 2nd. grade boots are issued to the coloured troops and prisoners of war.

The uppers of the boots which are beyond repair are converted into bootlaces, and the rest is scrap leather, being used for fuel.

Salvaged clothing is sorted and disinfected. That which is in good condition is sent to Paris and washed, after which it is sent up to the line for issue as part-worm. The remainder is sorted into woollen and cotton rags and sent to England. The price obtained for rags is - 70/- per cwt. for woollens, and 30/- per cwt. for cottons.

Harness is sorted and cleaned, and sent back for re-issue. One

hundred and fifty prisoners are employed on this work.

Metals of all kinds are sorted by experts, and sent to the U.K.

Tents are invariably wet when received. A large shed is set apart

for drying them. They are hauled up with a rope over a pulley, and a
heater is placed inside; this dries a tent in an hour or so. They are
then folded and sent to the Repair Shop. Here Frenchwomen mark the
places with blue crayons where repairs are required. Belgian women
do the repairs, which are inspected by the Frenchwomen. Two to five
francs is the price paid for repairs.

Ammunition is sorted, cleaned, and sent back to the line. German .

ammunition is used by the Americansa.

Web Equipment. - In the receiving shed, the equipment is separated into the various parts, and sent in bags to the shop where it is cleaned and repaired by pieceworkers. Frenchwomen are employed on this work.

Leather equipment is treated in the same manner. The cleaning is done by motor driven rotary brushed. The unrepairable web and leather equipment is sent to the U.K. as rags and old leather respectively.

Mess time are boiled in caustic soda, which removes the rust.

After drying they are put through a bath of hydrochloric acid and then re-tinned. Many of them require new lids.

Water bottles are boiled in caustic soda, re-enamelled, and new

covers and corks sewn on.

Spurs have new rowels inserted.

Knives, forks, and spoons are polished up and re-issued.

Pull-through weights, after the old cord is burnt out, are fitted

on the new pull-throughs.

Horseshoe nails are cleaned in a rumbler and sized. A rumbler is an octagonal box containing a quantity of chips of oiled leather. The box is turned like a churn, and the nails, being tossed about in the leather, soon become polished.

Box Respirators. - The container cannot be used again, owing to the uncertainty of length of time it has been used in gas, but the rubber tube and other parts are sent to the U.K. to be used in the

manufacture of other respirators.

Ground sheets are cleaned and repaired - the old pattern sheets

being used in converting to the new pattern cape.

A large area of ground is covered with captured heavy and light minenwerfer, most of them captured by the Australians in August.

On the second day we visited the Fat Factory, another Ordnance

Dump, and the Workshops.

The Fat Factory is quite a small place, but quite a lot of money is earned there. For the first year of war there was plenty of glycerine available for the manufacture of explosives, but the supply soon dwindled and we were soon importing it from America. The price rose to £350 per ton.

APPENDIX

The first boiling down plant in France was erected by a chemist at Etaples. It soon proved it's utility, and more were erected. The fat and dripping treated produced 10% of glycerine, and the price was very quickly brought down to 250 per ton. This Factory pays 41d. per o. for fat and dripping, and three francs (3/3d.) per cwt. for bones, which are sent to the U.K. for manure after the fat has been boiled out of them. Three years ago the bones were worth £3 per ton, now they are being sold for about 290 per ton.

Process. - Three tanks, each about 4'x 3' x 4' deep are built in with brick. The boiling is done by superheated steam at about 4000 arenheit. The fat is only drawn off once a week, and by the use of little patent float it is possible to draw off the water, which is iderneath the fat. The fat is sent to England in barrels, which Originally brought oil to France. They are bought by the Salvage Corps and sold again with the fat. This Factory, in two years, has sent away no tons each of fat and bones and 19 tons of greaves (residue meat). le latter is used in making dog biscuits. All condemned meat is boiled own here, mostly bully-beef; the tins also paying their way. After xtracting the solder, the time are sold for £15 per ton to the French povernment. Biscuit tins bring bouble that price.

Nearly two years ago the Steamer "Westmeath", 8000 tons, with a cargo of frozen meat, was torpedoed just outside the port, but managed to get in. The cargo was salved, but was unfit for consumption. factory boiled the lot down in 5 weeks, despite the smell, and the profits

were sufficient to pay for the plant and all expenses.

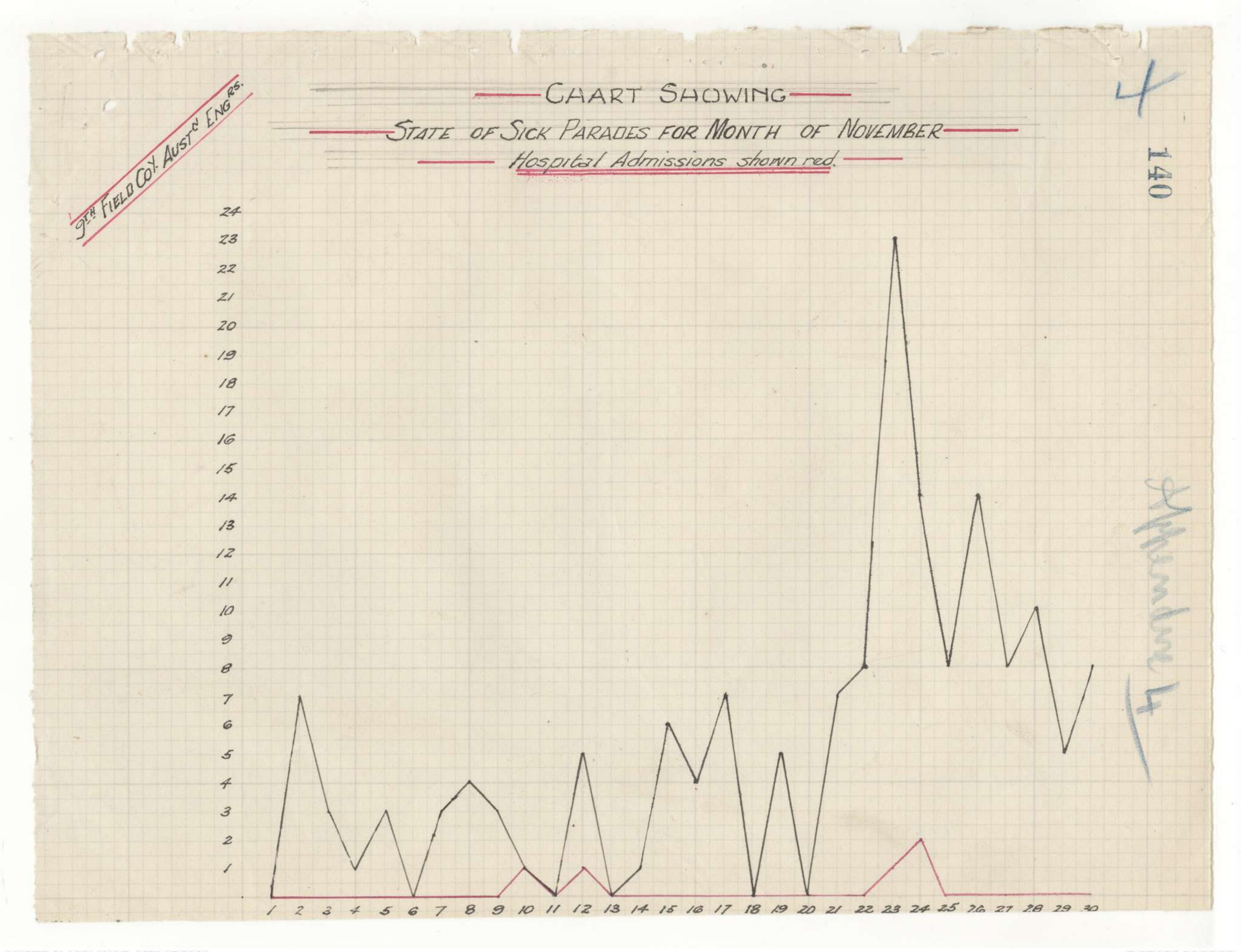
From every 100 bully beef tins, 12 lbs. of solder at 1/3d. per 1b. is obtained. It is found more convenient to use a blow lamp to extract solder from biscuit tins.

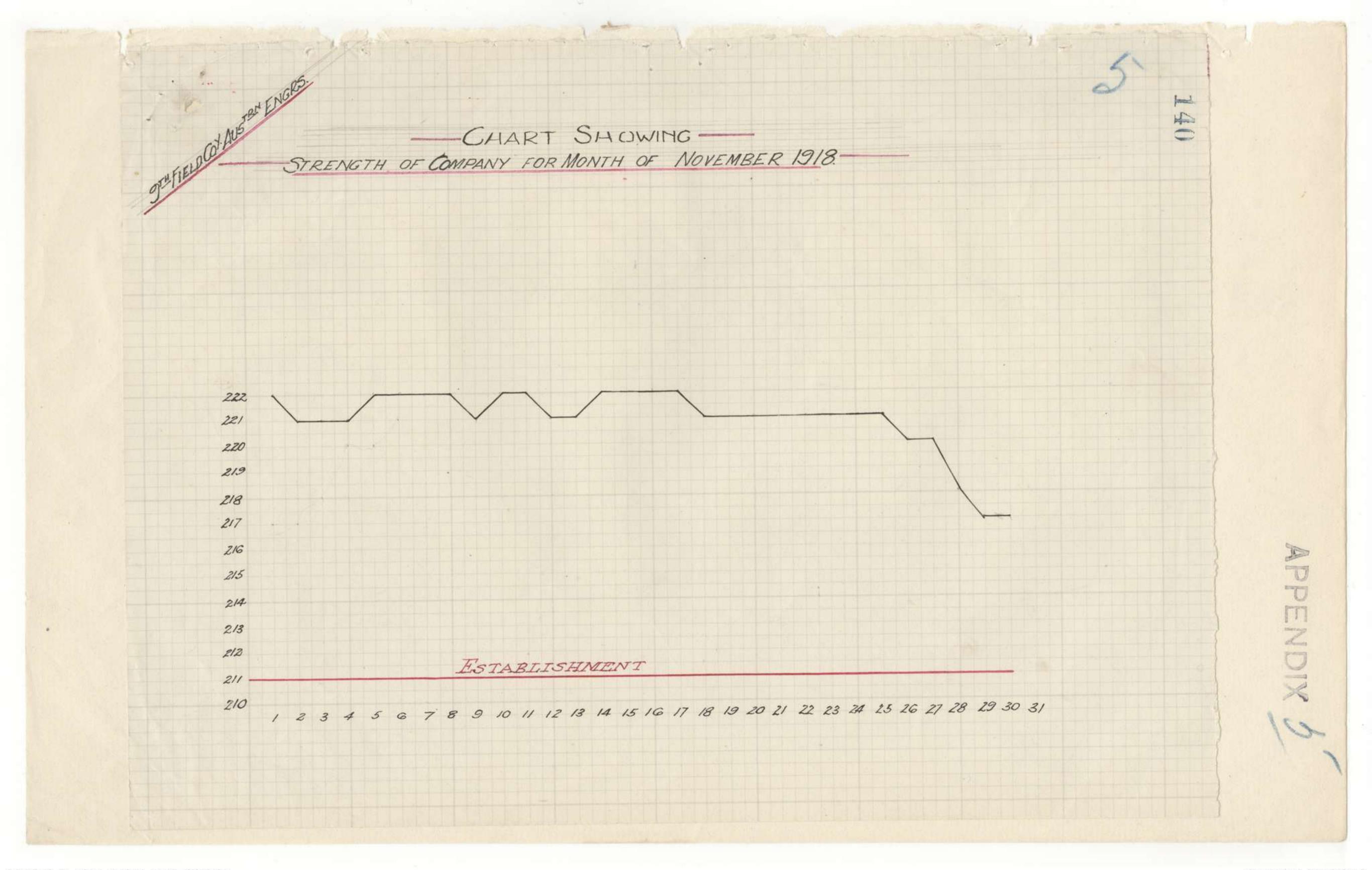
A large quantity of the best fat is used in making margarine.

This class of fat is worth about \$150 per ton.

The whole of the profits from this work are set aside as a fund for disabled soldiers after the war. At the present time it totals somewhere near 2300,000.

The following is in a conspicuous position :-Salvage work is never without result. All things, however light, have their value. Leave no salvage behind which you could have brought away. Valuable by-products are recovered from apparent waste. As a last resort, anything can be sold as scrap. Germany is trying to destroy our supplies. Everyone can help by salvaging all you can.





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