

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

Bases & Depots

Item number: 33/16/7

Title: No 1 Australian Command Depot

September 1917



AWM4-33/16/7

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Diary from 1st September to 5th September, 1917.

In General

This Diary opens for the current month under much more pleasant weather conditions than existed during the month of August. Weather conditions are of the greatest importance in a Convalescent Depot such as this, and our sickness varies in direct ratio to the weather.

Officers on Staff.

The opening of the month sees new changes in regard to the Officer personnel of the Depot. The following are those on Headquarters :-

Commandant	Lt-Col.G.H.Knox, 23rd Bn.
Adjutant	Lieut.R. Dooley, 8th M.G.C.
Second-in-Command	Capt.J.Gettingby 28th Bn.
Asst. Adjutant.	Lt. L. Keysor VC. 42nd Bn.
Quartermaster	Lieut.J.R.Gunn 28th Bn.
Asst. Q'master	Lieut.R.L.Andrewes
& Officer i/c Messing	26th Bn.
Officer i/c	Lieut.P.W.Pearce MC,
Physical Training	23rd Bn.

Production

The production of men for the past month was as follows :-

"A" class	1315
Lower classes.	<u>1010</u>
Total	2325

It will be seen that, although the functions of the Depot are chiefly to produce A class men, yet a great number of men have been evacuated of lower categories. This is caused by the fact that, on the primary classification on leaving Hospital, a number of these men do not fulfil expectations while on furlough, and go back in the medical category, or on admittance to this Depot are not able to stand even the mildest form of physical training, and are therefore sent to other Depots, which deal with these classes of men, or to Weymouth for eventual transmission to Australia.

Report of Officer i/c Messing.

The report of the Officer i/c Messing is herewith attached. Economy in messing combined with satisfaction to the men is the underlying feature and secret of good messing

Monthly Meetings of Staff & Adjutants.

An excellent idea has been started, whereby once a month the Staff in charge of all Departments of the A.I.F. Depots in the United Kingdom, also the Staff Captains of Formations and Adjutants of Depots etc. meet together, where all questions in doubt or presenting difficulties, or where there new ideas, are brought forward. One meeting has already been held at Bhurtpore Barracks and good results have been the consequence. Another meeting is to be held on Friday next. It gives Commanding Officers a chance of fully ventilating any difficulties and suggesting improvements. It also gives the Staff an opportunity of seeing things from the man's point of view.

Visit of Commander-in-Chief, Southern Command.

The General Officer Commanding in Chief, Southern Command, Lieut-General Sir Henry Sclater, G.C.B., visited this Depot on Monday, 3rd instant. He was accompanied by Major-General, the Honourable J.W.McCay, Commanding, A.I.F. Depots in the United Kingdom, also

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Brigadier-General Gellibrand, G.O.C. in Command of Training, A.I.F. Depots in U.K.. A very close inspection of the Depot was made, including cookhouses, regimental institutes and men's living quarters. The Commander in Chief took some notes on his observations and expressed himself as pleased with what he had seen.

Visit by Brig-General Foott, D.A. & Q.M.G. This Officer visited the Depot on the 4th instant and discussed with the Commandant the following matters:-

Rations : In regard to their suitability for the men.

Barrack : As regard the paying of cost for Damages with the British Authorities.

Promotions, Honours and Rewards to Officers who had rendered good service while serving at home.

In General

pleasing A very/feature of the present Administration of the A.I.F. Forces in the United Kingdom is the number of visits paid by the General Officer Commanding, the Brigadier-Generals of his Staff, also his more junior Staff Officers.

These visits save an enormous amount of correspondence, and opportunities are afforded to Officers Commanding Depots and Units to ventilate their ideas or difficulties.

Perham Down Camp,
Andover, Hants,
5th September, 1917.

Lieutenant-Colonel,
Commandant, No. 1 Command Depot, A.I.F.

Diary from 7th September to 20th September, 1917.

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Parade States

The numbers at present in Camp are 60 Officers, 2371 Other Ranks, which shows a marked decrease on previous states and is caused by :-

- (a) More efficient evacuation of the men on account of experienced dental treatment, and ships leaving for Australia so that greater numbers can be evacuated to Weymouth.
- (b) The fact that, no infantry action taking place in France, the number of casualties are slight and far more cases of sickness than wounds are entering the Depot.

A system of graphs has been opened showing each week, the total number of evacuations, the "A" class evacuations and lower categories evacuations. The output of this Depot naturally depends on the health of the troops and the efficiency of getting them fit medically, and the intake into the Depot directly depends on evacuations from Hospital and from other Depots, also men sent back from France as unfitted for active service in the line.

Health.

The health of all ranks is at the present time good. On account of the bad weather experienced, colds however and slight influenza are prevalent. Venereal disease shows a marked decrease; this is caused by the men being better educated on this subject, and in consequence taking better preventative measures, and abstaining from illicit intercourse, also on account of the early treatment facilities offered when men return from furlough and leave. Scabies show a marked decrease and no reinfection has occurred in patients. This is directly caused by the far more efficient system of baths and fumigation of clothes and isolation of the individuals, introduced by the present Senior Medical Officer, Major McIntyre.

Tentage.

All men, including isolation, have now been withdrawn from tents. Hut accommodation is available for all ranks at the present time, and the weather conditions are not suitable to allow men to remain under canvas.

Band Competition

Great disappointment has been caused to the Depot in general and to the Band particularly, that the Competition which they have been working for for some months past, is not to take place on account of a number of the competing Bands falling out at the last moment. The Band at this Depot is considered to be an absolute necessary adjunct for not only the amusement of the men, but as a great factor in their welfare and discipline.

Dental Department

Dental treatment is given to about 72% of all ranks passing through this Depot. The treatment varies from one or two simple stoppings to extensive extractions, and the fitting of complete dentures on the upper and lower jaws. The Staff employed consists of one Senior Dental Officer and nine qualified Officers and Non-Commissioned Officers, with a staff of about 30 mechanics and assistants. Splendid surgeries have been fitted up at a fairly large cost in No. 3 Camp, and the mechanical portion keeps at least 15 men busy. No man can leave the Depot until dentally fit, and the standard laid down is one of perfectness.

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Complaints

In a Depot of this nature, where all classes of men pass through and are made fit to return to the Front, I have seen advisable to give more than ordinary facilities for men who wish to make complaints, suggestions or requests, in front of me personally. To effect this, from time to time I call in various Companies and ask men to step out who wish to speak to me on any subject whatsoever, also publish from time to time in orders, the fact that I will see men at certain times during each week. Many take advantage of these facilities, but the complaints are not in any way numerous, being easily adjusted. A great deal of them are personal or family troubles, requests for leave on urgent business, a few little wrongs to be righted or paybook cases.

Pay Department.

A very genuine grievance which a number of the members of the A. I. F. are suffering from, is the delay in the Pay Department at the London Headquarters. It is a very risky thing indeed for a man to part with his paybook, and have it sent to London for any purpose whatsoever. The time taken to make entries, alterations, adjust allotments, or in fixing any matter concerning the men's pay, is in many cases absurd, and a great amount of inconvenience and annoyance has been caused unnecessarily to individuals.

Staff Visits

As has already been referred to in the course of this diary before, a gratifying feature of the Administration of the A. I. F. Depots in United Kingdom, is the fact that the Staff very frequently visit the Depot, and discuss any subjects which I may like to bring up. This saves an enormous amount of correspondence and delay, and is the means of a quick adjustment of the matters under question.

Messing

The messing continues to give satisfaction to the men, also ~~xxx~~ to the Staff Officers appointed to supervise. There continues to be a very large saving of all forms of by-products, and an order has now been issued, whereby the money gained for such by-products can be spent on the men's messing, as well as the up-keep and utensils etc. It is found that, in a Depot of this nature, the quantity of food consumed varies directly with the men's health and the state of the weather. I do not consider that the ration as issued at the present time, is enough for a strong man regaining his health, taking plenty of exercise in cold weather, and it is only on account of the fact that some men eat less than others, that satisfaction can be given on the present issue.

Red Cross.

Many thanks are due to the Officers of the Australian Red Cross Society for not only fitting up splendid billiard and reading rooms for the men at this Depot, but for their continual visits to find out if anything more can be done, and the readiness with which they comply with all reasonable requests. The reading and billiard rooms are greatly appreciated by the troops and are, to say the very ~~xxx~~ least, to-day a God-send to many who through wounds and sickness are unable to get about much for themselves.

Breakup of new Division

With the demobilisation of the 16th & 17th Brigades, it is expected that many additional men will arrive at ~~xxx~~ this Depot, and will have to be transferred back to their original Battalions. This will entail a considerable amount of extra clerical labour.

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Barrack Damages

The question of barrack damages has come up repeatedly and will be an ever recurring one. The huts occupied by the Troops in this Depot are badly constructed and cheaply and quickly run up. The inside linings are matchboard and three-ply veneer, and in many cases purely cardboard, and naturally the barrack damages are always fairly large even in the best disciplined Camps. It is contended that the British Authorities are taking an unfair advantage of the Overseas Troops by charging anything for barrack damages in such rottenly constructed huts, except such reasonable damage as would be caused from wilfulness or gross carelessness. So badly are these huts and sheds constructed, that the iron in many cases has rotted through within three years; the chimney stoves burnt through in one season, and the uprights supporting large sheds are both inadequate and constructed of soft timber.

Sergeants' Mess.

The Sergeants' Mess of this Depot, ~~which~~ as has been already stated, continues to put through about 800 Sergeants per month, and has an income of about £1,200 monthly. The management of this alone entails a Staff of experts, and it is one of the most difficult Departments of this Depot to efficiently manage.

Financial Responsibility

The financial responsibility involved in *on* a Commanding Officer in a Depot of this nature is very considerable, and steps have now been taken in compliance with orders, to make the Second in Command responsible directly for all Stores and Accounts.

Move.

Although no definite orders have yet been received, it is generally understood that the Depot will very shortly be moved to a new site. No difficulty is anticipated in moving the soldier personnel, but the materiel which is to be moved will at least weigh 300 tons.

George H. Munro

Perham Down,
20th September, 1917.

Lieutenant-Colonel,
Commandant, No. 1 Command Depot, A.I.F.

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DIARY FROM 21ST SEPTEMBER TO 30TH SEPTEMBER 1917.

Parade States.

The Parade States at even dates show 59 Officers, 2663 Other Ranks actually on strength of Depot, and 56 Officers, 2225 Other Ranks in Depot.

Health.

The health of the Depot continues to be good. Scabies have been on the increase during the last period under review, but this is caused by the marching in of men from the late 17th Brigade, who were not only infected themselves, but infected some of the men here.

Move.

Orders have now been received that the Depot is to move to Nos. 7, 8, 9, & 10 Camps, Sutton Veney. The site of the new Camp is far better for invalid troops. It is hoped that the winter will be far less severe than it was at this Camp, and it is certain that the surroundings present far more attractions to men in a state of convalescence. Permission has been received from the C.R.E. to allow the removal and re-erection of Dental fittings from this Depot to the new site. I personally have made two trips to the new Camp. The English Troops who are there at present have not the same standard of efficiency in regard to barrack damages, general cleanliness and tidiness of the lines, as we have been accustomed to in this Depot. The move in and out is to take place on one day, i.e. the same day as we take over the new Camp, so Troops take over this site. There will probably be some disputes after-wards regarding conditions of takeover, etc.

Regimental Funds.

Regimental Funds of this Depot show that, when we march out, there will be a probable balance of about £580. Considering that we are only getting a net 50% of what we are really entitled to, this is considered good, and it will come in very useful for various comforts for the men during the forthcoming winter.

Production of "A" class men

The production of "A" class men during the past week was the highest on record and was 473; total production 560.

Cinematograph Views.

A feature during the last week has been a series of pictures, taken under the auspices of the Y.M.C.A., of the Australian Troops on Salisbury Plain. These are to be shown first to the Troops on the Plain, and then to be sent to Australia as a permanent record of what the men are doing in this country. In regard to the Depot, a film was taken of the Guard Mounting, the Physical Exercises and Dental Department, and then a march past of the whole Troops.

In conclusion

The month ends showing increased production of fit men. The Dental and Medical Departments have done satisfactory work, and I consider that the Depot has passed through an efficient month.



Perham Down Camp,
1st October, 1917.

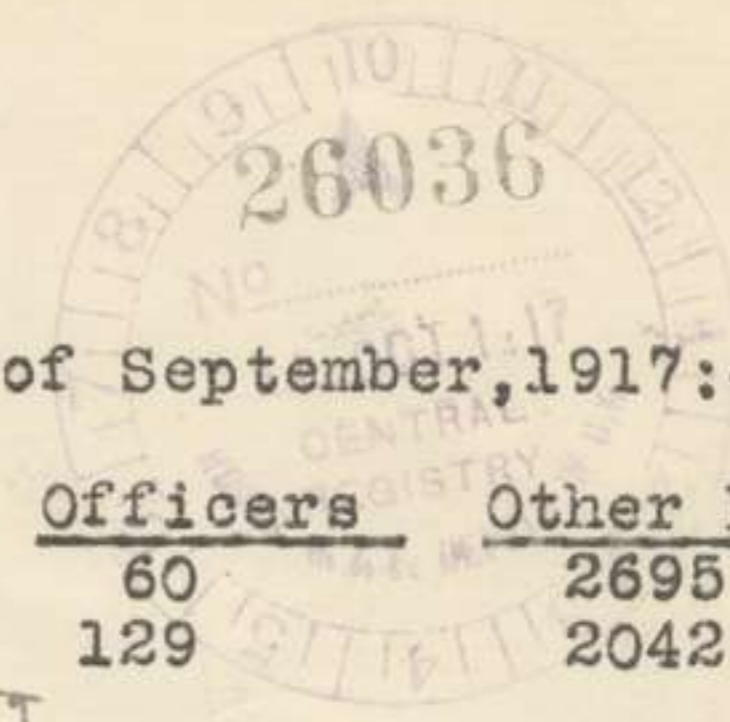
Lieutenant-Colonel,
Commandant, No. 1 Command Depot, A.I.F.

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Perham Down,
9th. October, 1917.

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To;- Headquarters,
A.I.F. Depots in U.K.,
T I D W O R T H. -



Herewith report for month of September, 1917:-

	<u>Officers</u>	<u>Other Ranks.</u>
Total strength of Depot, 30th. Sept.	60	2695
Total arrivals at Depot.....	129	2042
<u>Departures.</u>		
Overseas.....	-	-
Other Depots.....	142	1875
London for duty.....	-	26

DEATHS:- There were no deaths to report.

ACCIDENTS:- No accidents were reported for the month.

MARCH PAST:- A march past was held on the 26th. ultimo for the purpose of obtaining Films for publication in Australia under direction of the Y.M.C.A.

INSPECTION:- The G.D.C. in Chief, Southern Command inspected the Depot on the 3rd. instant in company with the G.O.C., A.I.F. Depots in United Kingdom.

DISCIPLINE:- The internal discipline was again very good for the month. A detailed list from the Provost Officer is attached showing the number and description of cases dealt with. The majority of the offences for the month were again committed away from the Depot. There were no cases of falsified passes reported 45 cases were remanded for District Courts Martial for the month; the majority of which were illegal absentees, and absentees over 14 days. This shows an increase on last month's report, but the increase is owing to men being remanded for D.C's.M. who have been absent 14 days and over.

The discipline of the soldiers under arrest in the Detention Compound has been very good.

ADMINISTRATION: The administration has been carried on with as small a staff as possible, the majority of which are of lower category. When a man employed on the staff becomes "A" Class, he is marched out, immediately he can be suitably replaced, which in the majority of cases only takes a few days.

Over/

469 DISTINGUISHING ARM BANDS:- The policy adopted in the wearing of distinguishing Arm Bands by all N.C.O's and men, to denote the various Medical Classifications, as set out in last month's report, has proved very satisfactory.

TRAINING:- The training was carried out under the supervision of Lieut.P.W.Pearce,M.C., assisted by a staff of certificated instructors. The men have been kept in constant training. The following syllabus of training was carried out for the month:-

No.2 Platoon - B.1a2 men:- Tables 1 and 2, work varied with constant quickening exercises and frequent rests. Marching at correct pace and time, and no march to exceed a distance of 50 yards at one time.

No.3 Platoon - B.1a3 men:- Any table up to table 4. Work varied with quickening exercises and frequent rests. Marching carried out at correct pace and time, but no march to exceed 100 yards at a time.

No.3 Company - B.1a4 men:- (Awaiting Dental treatment) Any table up to table 6, as laid down. Marching carried out at correct pace and time, but no march to exceed 5 minutes duration at one time.

Every attention has been given to the training of suitable N.C.O's for the position of Instructors. N.C.O's who are likely to become good instructors are sent to a preliminary Course of Physical and Bayonet Training, and then on the recommendation of the Inspector of Gymnasium, they are sent to Aldershot to complete their course as vacancies are allotted.

SANITATION & HUTMENTS: The routine of cleansing and fumigating the living huts is always carried on. Blankets and equipment are always aired on suitable days. All troops under canvas were removed to hutments on the 17th instant. 5 huts have been set aside for the purpose of accommodating men who are isolated.

VENEREAL DISEASE:- Everything possible is always done to reduce the number of venereal cases. Lectures have been given by Archdeacon Ward, and Captain Hagan. All N.C.O's and men are - Medically inspected before proceeding on leave and immediately on their return to Camp. Every N.C.O. and man proceeding on leave are provided with "Nargol Outfits", and are given every opportunity to purchase preventatives which can always be obtained at a very small cost. All ranks are urged to undergo the "Early Treatment" and a very strict observation is kept on everyone -

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Returning from leave and marching in to the Depot in order to enforce the "Early Treatment" which has proved most successful. There has been a decided decrease in the number of venereal cases for the past two months.

ABSENTEES:- The Absentee Company as set out in previous reports has done excellent work. By use of A.F.W.3111 a considerable number of absentees were again apprehended by the Civil Police, and a number of men previously posted as A.W.L. found to be in hospitals.

MESSING:- The messing of the troops has received every attention. Very few complaints were made regarding the food supplied. Everything possible is done to supply good food to the men and prevent waste as much as possible. A detailed report from the O.C. Messing is attached.

AMUSEMENTS:- Concerts were held one night in each week for the month. Artists were engaged from London on several occasions. Boxing Tournaments were also arranged on different nights each week, and as usual attracted a large audience. Everything possible is done to provide amusements for all ranks, and thus keep the discipline of the Depot good, also to prevent men from absenting themselves and roaming around the neighbouring villages

BAND:- The band still continues to do good work in the Depot by attending Guard mounting, route marches, and playing programmes on the nights on which other amusements are not provided. This also has a tendency to keep the men in the Depot.

DRAFTS:- Approximately 1336 "A" class men were drafted to the Overseas Training Brigade and various Training Units.


241 Permanently and Temporarily unfit to No.2 Command Depot.

145 Temporarily unfit to No.3 Command Depot.

179 Various other classes to other Headquarters and Depots.

POSTAL SERVICE.- The work carried out by this Department was again very satisfactory. The re-direction of mail matter receiving very close attention. approximately 60,000 letters, packets, and papers, and 1,691 parcels were handled for the month.

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Lieut-Colonel,
Commandant, NO.1 COMMAND DEPOT. A.I.F.

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RETURN OF OFFENCES FOR THE MONTH OF SEPTEMBER, 1917.

A.W.L. accompanied with:

Drunkenness	2
Losing passes	19
Losing arm-band	2
Trespassing	4
No identity	<u>-2</u>

A.W.L.	268
Breaking camp	4
Irregular conduct	5
Absent from parades	42
Para Bounds	59
Neglecting to obey Orders	18
Losing Government property	2
False statement	6
Irregular conduct	14
Neglect of duty	1
Escaping arrest	2
Evading draft	1
Trespassing	4
Breaking hospital	2
No identity	4
Failing to salute	1
	<u>433</u>
D.C.Ms.	45
	<u>478</u>
Total	

J. M. Baul
 Lieut. & O.C., Provost,
 No. 1 Command Depot.

Perham Down,
 1st. October, 1917.

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MONTHLY REPORT OF OFFICER I/C MESSING.

FOR PERIOD 1ST. SEPTEMBER TO 28TH. SEPTEMBER, 1917.



MESSING: There were 196125 meals provided for 65375 men from Rations drawn and 5¹/₂d. claimed as per A.B.48. The men have appreciated the meals and comparatively no waste has occurred, except through peelings, waste cabbage and vegetable leaves. The losses through evaporation in weight of Bread this period have been 236 Rations only which is a big improvement on the two preceeding ones. A careful check of weights was made at times by Captain Cleeve of Supply Department and myself, and a shrinkage in weight was found to exist in nearly all bread weighed. 4500 Rations of flour were drawn in lieu of Bread and used for cakes etc.

SUPPLIES: The Canteen bulk supplies have been good and regular and the new arrangements inaugurated by Lieut. C.C. BURTON, Canteens Officer is working excellently.

STAFF: My Staff has worked hard and given satisfaction in all Departments.

MEAT: The meat supply consisted of 34160 lbs Beef, 22558 lbs Mutton and 9453 lbs Bacon in all 66171 lbs in the proportion of Beef 53.p.c. Mutton 33.p.c. and Bacon 14.p.c. Percentage of bone to weight of meat including Bacon is deceptive because most of the Bacon received this period was boned prior to importation. It is 9.6% Percentage of fat received is 10.9%, this includes fat used for cooking, in lieu of Margarine and sold.

BY-PRODUCTS: Dripping recovered was 7234 lbs, of this 4008 lbs was sold to "ARMY WASTE PRODUCTS LTD", 427 lbs used in cooking and 2289 lbs used in lieu of margarine. Recovery of Dripping per man per day was 1.77.oz, a slight improvement on last period which was 1.7.oz. Used on tables in lieu of Margarine 42.7.lbs.per 1000 men, in cooking 6.7.lbs.per 1000 men. Margarine used on tables was 37.3.per 1000 men. I have not as yet received values for By Products sold to "ARMY WASTE PRODUCT LTD" and am therefore unable to compare with last period. A small quantity of SOAP viz 76 lbs only was made this period.

GENERAL: Very excellent results have been obtained from the "Wiles Australian Field Cooker" and a very great saving in Fuel might be effected, besides maintaining efficiency in cooking, were these cookers introduced into kitchens such as those in use in this Camp. I would venture to say that at least 60% of fuel might be saved in each kitchen if 2 cookers were installed there, and a reduction in the kitchen staff might be made. This matter will receive greater attention when we have settled down in SUTTON VENNEY Camp and a report made. It is very satisfactory to know that when necessary the surplus of BY PRODUCT money, not required for kitchen or messing conveniences may be used in purchase of food for the menu.

Andrews

Officer i/c Messing,
NO.1 COMMAND DEPOT. Perham Down,
A N D O V E R.