

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

Artillery

Item number: 13/79/1

Title: Imperial Mounted Divisional
Ammunition Column

March 1917



AWM4-13/79/1

Confidential

War Diary of

Divisional Ammunition Column, Imperial Mounted Division

From March 6th 1917

To March 31st 1917

CAPT. *Manford Smith*
CMDR. DIVISIONAL AMM. COLUMN
IMPERIAL MOUNTED DIVISION



MAR 1917

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(Volume 1.)

WAR DIARY
or
INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY

(Erase heading not required.)

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Hour, Date, Place	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
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EL BURU
~~North Hill~~
 50
 March
 1917

Received intimation from Colonel The Marquis of Exeter (C.R.A. of the new IMPERIAL MOUNTED DIVISION) that he wished me to take over the command of the Divisional Ammunition Column, & I was given a certain basis of Establishment in order to enable me to form the D.A.C. and to create my Headquarters.

(Handwritten initials)

March 12th/17

Received order to proceed to SHEIKH ZAWAID & camp by the C.R.A. H.Q. on the beach - took my headquarters only.

(Handwritten initials)

March 14th/17

Brigade Ammunition Column arrived, marching on the south side of the sand dunes - & as we had to camp at SHEIKH ZAWAID - I suggested to C.R.A. that I moved my H.Q. camp S. of dunes in order to have the 4 Pde. Amm. Cols. under my control - The C.R.A. acquiesced in this suggestion.

(Handwritten initials)

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WAR DIARY

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Hour, Date, Place	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
<p>SHEIKH ZAWAID Fort H 36 E III March 15th to 20th /17</p>	<p>These 6 days were spent in collecting the DAC together - appropriating camels to the different SAA & gun subsections - drawing ammunition to complete deficiencies - & in making return to the C.R.A.</p>	<p><i>[Handwritten initials]</i></p>
<p>March 21st</p>	<p>Left SHEIKH ZAWAID at 0900 & arrived at RAFA at 1400 - Camped W of the I.M. Div Batteries. Used & drew ammunition - Formed a small ammunition dump for regiments & batteries to draw on - in order to keep my DAC complete.</p>	<p><i>[Handwritten initials]</i></p>
<p>March 23rd</p>	<p>Left RAFA at 0630 & arrived KHAN YUNUS at 0930. I had received order to stop on W side of the village - Fed the camels in gardens & fields. Received order to return to RAFA at 1530. Arrived RAFA at 1800 - & re-camped on our old ground -</p>	<p><i>[Handwritten initials]</i></p>

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<p>RAFA - Africa North H 36 E III</p>	<p>Received telegram from CRA. (Colonel the Marquis of ...) instructing me to be ready to move at 1600. Received telegram at 1530 saying I would probably move tomorrow (25th). As telegram was not definite I remained with the ammunition loaded & ready to move off. Endeavored to get into radio communication with CRA to ask if I was to move. Succeeded at 1645 I received definite instructions to march on the 25th to ABASAN EL KEBIR, behind the Imperial Camel Corps, the head of which would form Desert Column H.Q. at 1545 on the 25th - Unloaded camels.</p>	<p>* Ammunition, store 9 3 days emergency forage for horse & camels - were loaded on 620 camels -</p>
<p>March 24th 1917 1545</p>	<p>Moved off to rendezvous - arrived Desert Column H.Q. at 1500. Imperial Camel Corps arrived @ 1545 one mile south. Staff Capt. I.C.C. came over & instructed me to march on their left flank. I not wait until the whole body had passed. Moved off in this formation & arrived ABASAN EL KEBIR at 1800.</p>	<p>(Handwritten marks)</p>
<p>March 25th 1917 1800 2300</p>	<p>Telegraphed immediately to CRA for further orders. Received an answer to march behind I.C.C. via TEL EL JEMMI to EL MENDUR.</p>	<p>(Handwritten marks)</p>

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Hour, Date, Place	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
<p>EL MENDUR March 26th 1917. Time 1130</p>	<p>Barracked all camels at a point a little E.N.E. of EL MENDUR - I waited for further orders - having heard of approximate position of C.R.A.</p> <p>Sent out the Bedouins to the 4 Batteries & the 3 Brigade Headquarters (Division marched out less one Bde. but with its full Artillery)</p> <p>1215 Received order to halt the D.A.C. at SHEIKH ABBAS. - Marched to that point & barracked camels in a scattered formation. No rations had been issued so I bought sheep from the Bedouins for the men in order to conserve the 3 days emergency they were carrying - Paid from 7/- to 10/- for 25 to 45 lbs sheep</p> <p>Remained at SHEIKH ABBAS all day (26th) & sent an orderly to C.R.A. at 1700 to ask for orders. This orderly lost his way & did not return.</p> <p>1745 A passing D.R.L.S. rider volunteered the information that the Enemy was advancing in force from the direction of BEERSHEBA (BIR EL SABA)</p>	<p>(Circular stamp)</p> <p>1917</p> <p>985/6</p>

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<p>SHEIKH ABBAS March 26th E. III 1917 Zone 1845</p>	<p>No orderly having returned from C.R.A. & a second D.R.L.S. rider having confirmed the news of the enemy advance I decided to retire the D.A.C. to the north crossing of the WADI EL GHUZZE - as I knew this crossing to be wider than the TEL EL JEMMI road - Sent 7 Officers with the D.A.C. (4 Bde. Col. commanders & 3 Camel Officers) with orders to take the whole <u>Dir</u> <u>Comm</u> <u>Column</u> to the West bank of the WADI EL GHUZZE & wait for me there. I remained behind at SHEIKH ABBAS with a few men to intercept any message that might come through from the C.R.A. - Waited about 1 1/2 hours no message was received (orderly being lost) & troops passed me in one continuous column retiring - The information I had gathered from the D.R.L.S. men. Taken in conjunction with the troops retiring past me, - justified my decision I consider, to retire the D.A.C. still further - without order. I rode to the spot I had</p>	<p><i>(Handwritten initials)</i></p> <p>MAR 1917</p> <p>1845</p>

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<p>SHEIKH ABBAS. North H. 36 E. III 1917 June 2030</p>	<p>told the Column to halt - I immediately moved them off in a westerly direction -</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">JAN</p>
<p>March 27th 0545</p>	<p>Reached a spot about 1 1/2 to 2 miles East of DEIR EL BELAH - Camels very exhausted - having had full load on for 28 hours - Decided to bivouac for a couple of hours - Unloaded camels - feed horses. I went to sleep</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">JAN</p>
<p>0615</p>	<p>Waked up with sounds of gun fire - Found High Explosive shells bursting on both sides of my camp - gave order immediately to release camels - harness up & move off - Egyptian native camel driver (E.L.C.) acted splendidly - There was no sign of panic among them - Everything was loaded up - even to the forward</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">X A H.A.C. B H.A.C. Berke R.H.A. North R.H.A. COR 1517</p>
<p>0650 (atent)</p>	<p>Moved to a point about 1/2 mile SE of DEIR EL BELAH & there found the C.R.A. & the 4 Imperial Mounted Div. Batteries X</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">E 16</p>

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Hour, Date, Place	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
<p>DEIR EL BELAH North H 36 E. III March 27th 1917 Jinn P 745</p>	<p>Replenished the 4 Batteries ammunition. Under order from C.R.A. dumped 200,000 Rounds S.A.A. at a convenient point for Brigadier to draw from. Took up a position just in front of DEIR EL BELAH village - about 3/4 mile behind the line - Watered camels & horses -</p> <p>1530 Received order to move off to BENI SELA (just E of KHAN YUNUS) Moved at 1600</p> <p>1700 Orderly caught me up at head of Column saying C.R.A. wishes to see me at the rear of Column. Received instruction from the C.R.A. to change the whole Divisional Ammunition Column, consisting of 620 Camels - 1,064,000 rounds of S.A.A. - 1824 rounds of 18 Pdr gun Amm. to be wheeled transport by 0500 the next morning - Barracked camels at once & found Major King. & found where horse, vehicles & men were to come from - Had all ammunition brought down to a spot near where the wagons were to be delivered to me -</p>	

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<p>DEIR EL BELAH W 36 March 27/1917 midnight to 28.0630</p>	<p>Loaded up wagon - 9 put in indent to S.S.O for Emergency Ration & forage for the extra man & horse - 14 G.S. wagon which I had to take over did not arrive back at DEIR EL BELAH until about 0800 - so it was impossible to report ready at 0500 - March 28th - All wagons were in my possession & loaded & I sent report that I could move off at 1700 March 28th - 24 hours after receiving that order to change to a wheeled train - I reported however at the same time that the horse transferred to me were for the most part unfit to travel as some had been in harness for 48 hours - Emergency rations also were not forthcoming.</p>	<p>Wagons issued to me 15 G.S. M4I for Gun Amm 15 G.S. M4I for SAA Amm 14 Lend Lease for SAA Amm To carry - 2 tons 20 Brown Gun Amm } 1216 for G.S. M4I } Pounds 144 extra Amm } 30 Brown SAA for G.S. 450000 16 " " for Lend Lease 224000 674000</p>															
<p>March 29th</p>	<p>Moved camp to a point N.E. of the R in RUINS S.E. of DEIR EL BELAH - Taking opportunity to form the collection of wagons into 4 distinct Brigade Ammunition Columns (see remarks) (4th Brigade not up here)</p>	<p>Wagons divided as follows MAR 1917 <table border="1"> <tr> <td>G.S. Gun</td> <td>4</td> <td>4</td> <td>3</td> <td>4</td> </tr> <tr> <td>G.S. SAA</td> <td>5</td> <td>-</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Lend Lease SAA</td> <td>5</td> <td>-</td> <td>5</td> <td>5</td> </tr> </table> 10</p>	G.S. Gun	4	4	3	4	G.S. SAA	5	-	5	5	Lend Lease SAA	5	-	5	5
G.S. Gun	4	4	3	4													
G.S. SAA	5	-	5	5													
Lend Lease SAA	5	-	5	5													

