

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

Artillery

Item number: 13/55/6

Title: B Battery, Honourable Artillery
Company

July 1917



AWM4-13/55/6

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

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.

B Battery H.A.C.

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices	
TEL EL FARA	1.7.17	-	Nil	Read	
"	2.7.17	-	Nil	Read	
"	3.7.17	-	Battery attached to 1 st A.L.H. Bde. on reconnaissance in force by Aust. Intd. Div. towards BIR SABA started at 2400 + marched to point 790, 1 mile N. of FARA-SABA road + 2 miles E. of KM. KHASSIF. Did not come into action. Bty. shelled by Turkish guns for a short time, but no casualties. ^{started at 1800} O.C. on separate mission with 5 th Intd. Bde. to KHALASSA and thence on reconnaissance of ground between ASLUS-SABA and KHALASSA-SABA roads, as far N. at HAYATHIYA - GOZ SHEHILI. Considerable patrol fighting with Turkish cavalry + armed Bedouins. No casualties on our side. One Turk killed. Returned to camp at 1930 on 4.7.17	Read	
"	4.7.17	-			Bty. returned to camp at 2300 on 4.7.17
ABASAM EL KEGIR	6.7.17	-			Bty. marched to support line + bivouacked in New area at C.2.C (SHELLAL-GAZA 1:40,000)
"	8.7.17	-	BAC less 14 horses + 14 men rejoined the Battery.	Read	
"	9.7.17	-	B.G.R.A. Desert Column inspected horses of battery.	Read	
"	14.7.17	-	Bty. carried out gun practice with Aeroplane observation, in company with other 2 Btys. of 19 th Div. R.A. at GHABI. Commenced 1000 - finished 1300 - 64 rounds fired. Firing satisfactory, (one gun getting off 22 rounds in 1 min. 15 sec. at 1/2 sqal) but plane observation faulty at times. Observer missed target altogether in one series.	Read	
"	15.7.17	-	D.G.O. inspected all pro helmets. One pro man was returned to advance on 13.7.17	Read	
"	16.7.17	-	Lt. Hawkins left to take up post as acting W.A.G. R.A. Desert Column, while W.A.G. is on leave in England. 1577 Wt. W10791/1773 500,000 1/15 D. D. & L. A.D.S.S./Forms/C. 2118. sent in report by O.C. + one by D.O. on health of men in unit.	Read (Appendix A)	

WAR DIARY

Army Form C. 2118. 667

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.

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

B Bty HAC

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices												
ABRAN EL KEIR	17.7.17	-	Capt. Lansbury rejoined bty. from 1st Bty RHA.	Remd												
" "	18.7.17	-	Lt. Phillips to KANTARA to sort papers & stores, on move of detail camp wards. Base Germany Depot.	Remd												
" "	19.7.17	-	ADMS AND inspected men of battery with reference to my report on health of men. (appendix A)	Remd												
" "	20.7.17	-	Bty. rec'd news which horses were at water at 1100 to move out for active operations as soon as possible. Marched at 1300 to EL MELEK. Arrived there bty. was attached to 22 nd htd. Coy. 400 htd. Coy., and marched with it to 902 HARBUK, arriving there at 1900. Marched again at 2000 to EL GATHI, where bivouacked for night. Watered horses at 0300 on 20.7.17 & marched back to 902 HARBUK. Marched again at 1100 back to bivouac at ABRAN.	Remd												
" "	22.7.17	-	Bty. & 10000 marched to Div ¹ camp on leasane S. of TEL EL HARAKES, leaving guns & vehicles parked at BENI SELA under Capt. Lansbury & with detachments of two guns. Lt. Phillips returned.	Remd												
HARAKES	26.7.17	-	Lt. Phillips on short leave to Cairo.	Remd												
" "	27.7.17	-	O.C. took up duties of O.C. 19 th Bde. RHA. on leave to the U.K.	Remd												
" "	30.7.17	-	8 timbered G.S. wagons fetched from RAPA and parked at BENI SELA, for BAC	Remd												
" "	31.7.17	-	Strength of unit today. Present with units efficient													
			<table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="2" style="text-align: center;">OFFICERS</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">2</td> <td style="text-align: center;">210</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">3</td> <td style="text-align: center;">20</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">1</td> <td style="text-align: center;">52</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">#</td> <td style="text-align: center;">119</td> </tr> <tr> <td style="text-align: center;">8</td> <td style="text-align: center;">291</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>	OFFICERS		2	210	3	20	1	52	#	119	8	291	
OFFICERS																
2	210															
3	20															
1	52															
#	119															
8	291															
			<p>On command, 3 on furlough to U.K.</p> <p>In hospital</p> <p>Sick off duty in camp</p> <p>Total.</p>													
				<p>Rushmore Major O.C. B Bty HAC</p>												

667 OC.

19th Bde. I.S.A.

Aus. Mid Div.

Sir,

I have the honour to make the following report upon the condition of the men in this battery.

1. The battery left the Canal zone in October 1916, and has been in the area of operations ever since that date. Since December 1st 1916 the men have been without tents or adequate shelter of any sort, and frequently with inadequate facilities for washing. The battery has taken part in all actions, except that of Magdhaba, and in nearly every reconnaissance in force, the latter not only with the 13th Brigade, to which it has been attached, but with other brigades, even in another division. It has, in short, both been in the field much longer, and has had more and harder work to do, than any other battery of the A.M.D.
2. Owing to the large number of men (nearly 400) that have left the battery for the purpose of receiving commissions, since the commencement of the war, the present lot of men are, comparatively speaking, new soldiers and all very young. The average age of the W.O.s, Staff Sergeants, and Sergeants is only about 24, and that of the men considerably less. At the present moment the total strength of the battery is 217. Of these 56 are in Hospital, or just over 25% of total strength. Of the 161 remaining in camp, the average number reporting sick each day is 56, or just 34% of strength. The great majority of these are suffering from septic sores. The average daily number employed on fatigue duties, such as carting forage & water etc, is 50, and the number of employed men is 45. The
3. From the above it will be seen that the men have little or no rest. Every effort has been made, and a minimum, with very great reluctance, ordered of the harness, and all parades and fatigues not absolutely necessary to the maintenance of the fighting efficiency of the unit have been cut out. Men still remain however, more work than men in such condition as these are, can do and keep fit.

(contd)

4. The result of all this appears in the abnormal sick rate. And this rate is going up, in spite of all the efforts of the medical officer, who works unceasingly to try and arrest it. A further result is seen in the general work of the battery. It is not possible to keep it up to standard, and it is likely to go down seriously, if the men cannot be taken right away and given a proper rest.
5. It should be mentioned that the T.A.B. inoculation of the men is overdue, but, as this necessitates taking off work for a period of 48 hours those men who have been inoculated, it is not possible to do it at present.
6. In view of the facts set out above I would ask that the battery may be sent away at once to a seaside camp, and given at least 1 month's complete rest there. I believe that unless this is done now, the battery will very soon be unfit to take the field at all. The medical officer of the unit concurs in this opinion.
7. I attach copy of a formal report on the health of the unit sent today by the medical officer to the A.D.M.S., A.M.D.

I have the honour to be,
Sir,

Your obedient servant

(signed) R. M. Preston, Major.
Cmdg B. Battery, H.A.C.

15th July 1917

667

Dear Mr. D.W.

Sir, I have the honour to bring before you the following report on the health of this battery.

The total strength of the unit is 217. Of this number 56, or just over 25%, are in hospital. Of the remaining 161 an average of 56, or 34%, (of the remainder) report sick each morning. The majority of these suffer from Multiple Septic Sores, and a great many of these would in the ordinary case be hospital cases, were it not that the work of the unit had to be carried out. It must be pointed out that although these men are placed on duty the maximum amount of work that could be carried out by men in perfect health cannot be obtained from them. It frequently happens too that when the unit is called out for special work men have to go for 24 or 36 hours without a change of dressings and this, no doubt, tends to prolong the trouble. In the last 14 days 13 men have been sent to hospital, none of these have been septic sores, and all have been cases that have been treated here first before the absolute necessity of sending them away has arisen. I think that this is rather a large hospital rate for so small a unit. I am told by the Commanding Officer that the battery has been in the fighting line ever since October 1916, that it has taken part in all actions except one, & that since December 6th 1916 the men have lived under particularly hard & trying conditions. I am also told that the number of men in hospital at the end of October 1916 was seven, and that both hospital and sick rates have very rapidly and enormously increased during the last 3 months. I think one can deduce from this, and from the figures I have given above, that the present condition of the health of the men is due to their prolonged and continuous activity in the field without any break. I would therefore strongly urge that this unit be given a thorough rest of at least one month so as to enable it to become once again an efficient fighting force.

I have the honour to be

15th July 1917

Yours obedient servant
(Signed) W. J. Judah, Capt.
R.A.M.C.