

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

Postal

Item number: 17/3/7

Title: Australian Base Post Office,
Egyptian Expeditionary Force

December 1918



AWM4-17/3/7

Australian Base Post Office
S.E. 2 KANTARA
January 26th 1919

The D.A.P.S.,
A.I.F Headquarters
London,

Herewith my monthly report on the working of the Australian Army Postal Services for the month of December 1918.

The figures on the attached working statement would make it appear that December was comparatively an easy month, but it was far from that because the heavy mails received at the end of November were not cleared until early in December and on top of that two medium sized mails from Australia were received on the 4th and 11th in addition to several despatches from England including the Xmas despatch. The Xmas mails from Australia this year came in five despatches - three (3) together on the 22nd, 23rd and 24th November, one on the 4th and one on the 11th December, and consisted approximately of 600,000 letters 80,000 newspapers and packets, 45,976 parcels and 2,953 registered items.

This volume of mail matter taxed the staff to their utmost, but I am pleased to be able to say that the whole was despatched by the 15th and the returns from the Field and elsewhere put against the cards, and where possible forwarded to a new location. So by Xmas the only items on hand were a few letters and parcels for men xxx in hospital on their way down from Tripoli and parcels for men on sick leave in Egypt which are held at this Office until the addressee has settled down at a definite address.

I cannot speak too highly of the way everyone worked and considering that half the staff were inexperienced in postal work and only temporarily attached, I think you will agree with me that they put up a very creditable performance in handling approximately 750,000 items in three (3) weeks.

The returns from the Australian Mounted Division were fairly heavy but this is accounted for by the fact that records take from four to five days to reach this Office from that Division and further, mails after despatch from the Base are often held up at Port Said for several days awaiting the sailing of a boat. This means that by the time the mail reaches the Field, items for at least 7 days' casualties have been forwarded to the unit address. In spite of this, approximately 63% of the parcel mail for the Australian Mounted Division was delivered as forwarded from the Base.

The Statistical Return from the Anzac Division speaks very well for the Re-direction Records for 90% of the parcels were delivered. A large number of the returns were for 1914 men - the majority of the 1914 men came from the Anzac Division, and during December several drafts of these left this Division for return to Australia.

The N.C.O Staff was considerably depleted by the return of the 1914 men for we lost 1 C.S.M out of 2; 3 Staff-Sergeants out of 4; 2 Sergeants out of 3; and 1 Corporal. The vacancies caused by this have been filled and the Corps kept up to strength by the retention of the best of the temporary men employed on the Xmas mails. The new N.C.O's are carrying out their duties very satisfactorily and all have a thorough knowledge gained by many months experience of the duties they have to carry out.

As soon as the Xmas mails were despatched, 20 temporary hands were marched out to Details, Messara.

REDIRECTION SECTION -

This section had a very busy month, particularly in the early part on account of the receipt of the two mails on the

4th /

Recd
28.1.19

4th and 11th; the returns from the mails despatched at the end of November; the large number of parcel and registration lists to be put against the cards, and the Xmas mails from United Kingdom.

The number of entries made on the cards amounted to 17,105, and the number of references without entry 14,279. The personal advices of change of address numbered 2,046. This is considerably below the previous month, but is well above the average.

DEAD LETTER OFFICE -

It will be noticed that the number of parcels opened and contents handed to the Australian Comforts Fund was far above any previous month. This is accounted for by the number of men returned to Australia.

The small alphabetical card index is proving a great success and out of 6,468 letters passed to D.L.O with incorrect Regimental Numbers, &c, only 420 had to be referred to A.I.F., Records, Cairo.

PARCEL SECTION -

This was by far the busiest section of the Base because the majority of the November parcels were dealt with during December. This accounts for the "again referred to cards" being apparently so high. Really, the 6036 parcels returned to the Base for re-direction is against the whole Xmas parcel mail - 45,976 parcels - and not the 14,086 received.

REGISTRATION SECTION -

The number of registered items received was again high, but as in the other Sections, the office was practically clear by Xmas except for clean postings to Australia.

It will be noticed that there has been a further increase in the number of items received from London and despatched to Australia. The former is, no doubt, due to the Xmas items.

FIELD -

The work in the Field has been going on steadily. The Divisions have been practically stationary which has simplified matters, not only for the Field Post Office, but also for the Base.

The Anzac Mounted Division with the exception of two (2) Regiments is camped at Raffa, and the Australian Mounted Division is still at Tripoli.

COMMAND

I was placed temporarily in control of the Services here on the 21st December 1918 when Captain A.W. Ross went on 14 days' Furlough in Egypt. Unfortunately, whilst away, he was admitted to Hospital with throat trouble.

The delay in forwarding this report is attributed to the fact that I have been daily expecting his return to duty.

Finkead

Lieutenant
for Captain
D.D.A.P.S., A.I.F in Egypt.

AUSTRALIAN BASE POST OFFICE, S. Z. 3

STATEMENT OF MAILES HANDLED DURING MONTH ENDED 31st DECEMBER 1918.

NUMBER OF BAGS RECEIVED FROM AUSTRALIA -	Letters	99	
	Papers & packets	268	
	Parcels	<u>356</u>	723
NUMBER OF BAGS DESPATCHED TO AUSTRALIA -	Letters	70	
	Papers & packets	44	
	Parcels	<u>52</u>	166
Number of local bags received			670
Number of local bags despatched			4260
Number of bags received from A.B.P.O. London -	Letters &c ..	46	
	Parcels	<u>85</u>	131
Number of bags despatched to A.B.P.O. London -	Letters &c ..	25	
	Parcels	<u>52</u>	77

STATISTICS -

Letter Mails received from Australia		2
Number of letters received and run against Card Index		295,000
Number of letters circulated as addressed		160,000
Number of letters re-directed (including those to D.L.O)		135,000
Local clean postings received and despatched to Australia -		
	Letters	100,000
	Newspapers & packets .	4,400
	Parcels	512

DEAD LETTER OFFICE -

Number of items on hand - 1/12/1918		3,750
Number of items received from all sources		13,204
Number of items put into circulation		12,893
Number of items returned to sender and Australia		5,446
Number of items submitted to 3rd Echelon		420
Number of items on hand - 31/12/1918		460
Number of parcels opened & forwarded to Aust. Comforts Fund ...		914
Number of packets opened & forwarded to Austn. Comforts Fund ..		56
Number of personal changes of address received		1,964
Number of changes of address received at Enquiry Window		82
Number of letters put to Alphabetical Card Index,.....		6,468

REGISTRATION -

Items on hand 1/12/1918		580
Items received locally		46
Items received from Australia		578
Items received from A.B.P.O., London		439
Items received from F.P.O's in Egypt		2,231
Items despatched locally		66
Items despatched to A.B.P.O London		80
Items despatched to Australia		1,611
Items despatched to F.P.O's in Egypt		2,022
Items on hand - 31/12/1918		95
Total number of items received (exclusive of balance on hand)..		3,294
Total number of items despatched		3,779

Articles /

Articles received from Australia were disposed of as under :-

Number of Items received.....	578	
Correctly addressed and forwarded	308	
Re-directed	232	
Returned to Sender	38	
Submitted to Echelon	<u> </u>	578.

PARCELS -

Number of parcels received from Australia	13,591
Number of parcels circulated as addressed	8,100
Number of parcels re-directed	5,491
Number of parcels again referred to cards	6,036
Number of parcels referred to 3rd Echelon	198
Number of parcels received from A.B.P.O London	495
Number of parcels despatched to A.B.P.O London	589
Number of parcels despatched to A.B.P.O (No trace E.E.F)..	109
Number of parcels despatched to Australia	512

NEWSPAPERS -

Number of newspapers received	25,000
Number of newspapers forwarded as addressed	22,000
Number of newspapers re-directed	2,500
Number of newspapers unable to trace (damaged &c)	500

PACKETS -

Number of packets received	5,160
Number of packets forwarded as addressed	2,160
Number of packets re-directed (including to D.L.O)	3,000
Number of packets submitted to 3rd Echelon	-

The aggregate number of days occupied in disposal of Inward Australian Mails was 11 days.

Hours worked per day -

During sorting of letter mail	11 hours
Remainder	9 hours

STATEMENT OF MAIL HANDLED AT A.B.P.O. S.Z.3 ex "MAHIA".

Time and date of arrival at Port Taufiq	1500	3/12/1918
Ship boarded by Staff from A.B.P.O. S.Z.3	1400	3/12/1918
Portion of mail (250 bags) unloaded	1800	3/12/1918
Ship entered Canal en route for Port Said	1930	4/12/1918
First portion of letter mail (24 bags) arrived at A.B.P.O. S.Z.3	12 p.m.	4/12/1918
First portion of newspapers and parcels arrived at A.B.P.O. S.Z.3	1500	4/12/1918
Ship arrived at Port Said Owing to heavy cargo on top of mails, unloading was impossible at once.	1100	4/12/1918
Second portion of mail (303 bags + Newspapers and parcels) unloaded at	1800	6/12/1918
Arriving at A.B.P.O. S.Z.3 at	1100	7/12/1918
Remainder of mail unloaded at	1500	7/12/1918
7 bags of letters arriving at A.B.P.O. S.Z.3 at	2100	7/12/1918
and 60 bags of newspapers and parcels at	1000	8/12/1918

Number of bags received - 620

Letters	31	Sorting completed -		
		1st portion	1700	5/12/1918
		2nd portion	1700	8/12/1918
Newspapers	122	Sorting completed	1730	8/12/1918
Parcels	467	" "	1100	11/12/1918

Particulars of despatch -

Office of origin -	Desp.	Date	No. of bags			Total
			Ltrs.	News.	Parcels	
Brisbane				15	61	76
Sydney	25	24/10/18	24	47	170	241
Melbourne				23	125	148
Adelaide	41	14/10/18				
	42	17/10/18				
	43	21/10/18	4	35	111	150
Perth	26	1/11/18				
	27	2/11/18	2			2
Hobart	29	19/10/18		1		1
Launceston	25	18/10/18	1	1		2
			<u>31</u>	<u>122</u>	<u>467</u>	<u>620</u>

Registered mail

Brisbane	-
Sydney	133
Melbourne	-
Adelaide	24
Perth	14
Hobart	-
Launceston	2
	<u>173</u>

Remarks -

The delay in unloading the mail was caused through 400,000 cases of jam being stacked on a portion of them. The unloading party was "standing by" the whole time and completed the offloading as soon as the cargo had been removed.

Despatches 24 to 28 and 30 to 36 are now outstanding from Hobart. No Letter mail was received from Brisbane or Melbourne.

Perth advises 45 bags of parcels on their letter bill and forward parcel /

STATEMENT OF MAIL HANDLED AT A.B.P.O. (2) ex "MAHIA"

Parcel bills have been received, but parcels have not yet arrived. Evidently they failed connection and will arrive in the next mail, ex "Wiltshire". Failing this, Perth will be advised by cable.

Portion of mail (250 pages) unloaded
 1800
 1930
 12 p.m. 1918
 1900
 1100
 1800
 1100
 1900
 2100
 1000

*Handed to Blackwell's
 11/12/18*

Number of pages received - 620

Particulars of dispatch	Date	No. of pages
Letters	11/12/18	1700
Newspapers	11/12/18	1700
Parcels	11/12/18	1700

Office of origin	Date	No. of pages
Perth	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Hobart	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Lanuseston	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Adelaide	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Melbourne	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Sydney	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Brisbane	11/10/18 to 18/10/18	1
Total		620

Registered mail

Lanuseston	2
Hobart	1
Perth	1
Adelaide	2
Melbourne	1
Sydney	1
Brisbane	1
Total	9

Remarks - The delay in unloading the mail was caused through 400,000 cases of jam being stacked on a portion of them. The unloading party was standing by the whole time and completed the offloading as soon as the cargo had been removed. Despatches 24 to 28 and 30 to 35 are now outstanding from Hobart. No letter mail was received from Brisbane or Melbourne. Perth advise 45 pages of parcels on their letter bill and forward parcel

STATEMENT OF MAIL HANDLED AT A.B.P.O. S.Z.3

ex H.M.A.T. "Wiltshire"

Time and date of arrival at Port Taufiq 2000 10/12/1918
 Ship boarded by staff from A.B.P.O. S.Z.3 0700 11/12/1918
 Unloading completed at..... 0900 11/12/1918
 Letters (68 bags) forwarded by 5 o'clock train
 arriving at A.B.P.O. S.Z.3 at 2300 11/12/1918
 Parcels and newspapers hence perishable goods train
 arriving at A.B.P.O. S.Z.3 at 1200 12/12/1918

Number of bags received - 570

Letters 68 Sorting completed 2100 12/12/1918
 Newspapers 146 do 1700 15/12/1918
 Parcels 356 do 1700 15/12/1918

Particulars of despatch -

Office of origin	Desp.	Date	Approximate dates of posting	No. of bags			Total
				Litre	News	Pels	
Brisbane	22	24/10/18	14/10/18 to 24/10/18	17	24	88	129
Sydney	26	8/11/18	24/10/18 to 8/11/18	23	72	150	245
Melbourne	24	24/10/18	14/10/18 to 24/10/18	21	44	118	183
	25	6/11/18	24/10/18 to 6/11/18				
Adelaide	44	4/11/18	21/10/18 to 4/11/18	4	1	-	5
	45	5/11/18	4/11/18 to 5/11/18				
Perth	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Launceston	26	23/10/18	18/10/18 to 23/10/18	2	3	-	5
	27	5/11/18	23/10/18 to 5/11/18				
Hobart	30	22/10/18	19/10/18 to 22/10/18	1	2	-	3
				68	146	356	570

Registered mail

Brisbane 40
 Sydney 121
 Melbourne 218
 Adelaide 24
 Perth -
 Hobart -
 Launceston 2
 405

Remarks -

Despatches 24 to 28 and 31 to 36 are outstanding from Hobart.

Perth Parcel despatches containing 45 bags advised ex "Mahia" have not arrived ex "Wiltshire".
 Adelaide advise 91 bags of parcels hence Despatch 44 ex "Wiltshire", these did not arrive.

16
12
18

Frank Blackwell
Hobart

MONTHLY POSTAL STATISTICAL REPORT - AUSTRALIAN MOUNTED DIVISION - NOVEMBER 1918

Item	A.P.O. S.Z. 42	D.M. 2	L.H. 3	L.H. 4	Total
1. Total No., of bags received at Div. Stat. A.P.O.'s	1148				1148
L.N & P) Parcels)	989	-	-	-	989
1a. Total No., of bags received at Field Post Offices		47	36	30	113
Letters)		42	173	42	257
H. & P.)		93	200	305	598
Parcels)					
2. Total number of inward despatches	165	26	27	25	243
3. Total number of bags despatched					
Letters.....)					
News & packets.)	2056	103	163	175	2497
Parcels.....)					
4. Total number of outward despatches	167	67	64	49	347
5. Cash transactions -					
Postal Orders issued	2-10-0	56-11-0	52-19-0	27-11-0	139-11-0
Postal Orders paid	9-10-0	13-17-0	68-0-0	7-10-0	98-17-0
Stamps sold	1-4-6½	2-6-10	7-17-6	4-2-3	15-11-1½
War Savings certificates sold	-	-	-	-	-
Remittances	-	40-0-0	30-0-0	-	70-0-0
6. Registered letters received over counter	7	115	212	117	451
7. Registered letters received from other Offices	802	184	475	109	1570
8. Registered letters despatched	684	53	373	248	1358
x 9. Number of forward registered bags received	51	-	-	-	51
10. Number of parcels received over counter	-	5	5	4	14
11. Number of parcels received for re-direction in the R.E.F.	-	-	-	-	-
12. Number of parcels received for return to A.B.P.O.	19	217	570	759	1565
13. Number of parcels received for delivery	172	96	1645	2253	4166
x 14. Number of forward parcel bags received	983	-	-	-	983
15. Number of cables or telegrams delivered	122	21	23	31	197

MONTHLY POSTAL STATISTICAL REPORT - AUSTRALIAN MOUNTED DIVISION - DECEMBER 1918.

I t e m	A.P.O.	D.M.	L.H.	L.H.	L.H.	Total
	5 2 4	2	3	4	5	
1. Total No., of bags received at Div. Stat. A.P.O.'s L.N & P) Parcels)	1940					1940
1a. Total No., of bags received at Field Post Offices Letters) N. & P.) Parcels)	-	244	102	40	375	3603
2. Total number of inward despatches	166	31	31	31	48	307
3. Total number of bags despatched - Letters) News & packets.)) Parcels)	1910	123	160	140	172	2505
4. Total number of outward despatches	185	87	80	77	62	491
5. Cash transactions - Postal Orders issued	-	281-10-0	51-10-0	47-15-0	26-11-0	217-6-0
Postal Orders paid	-	6-11-0	17-9-0	20-0-0	32-10-0	76-10-0
Stamps sold	-	3-12-1	6-10-6½	2-16-9	2-14-3	22-13-7½
War Savings Certificates sold	-	-	-	-	-	-
Remittances	-	70-0-0	40-0-0	60-0-0	-	170-0-0
6. Registered letters received over counter	19	171	226	210	172	798
7. Registered letters received from other Offices	633	172	265	359	345	1774
8. Registered letters despatched	535	209	269	273	496	1777
x 9. Number of forward registered bags received	58	-	-	-	-	58
10. Number of parcels received over counter	9	21	19	12	12	73
11. Number of parcels received for re-direction in the E.E.F. ...	-	-	107	116	-	223
12. Number of parcels received for return to A.B.P.O.	41	134	343	424	296	1238
13. Number of parcels received for delivery	132	1360	3354	4700	1341	10887
x 14. Number of forward parcel bags received	963	-	-	-	-	963
15. Number of cables or telegrams delivered	135	20	51	57	32	295

x Refers to Divisional Stationary Offices only.

MONTHLY POSTAL STATISTICAL REPORT - ANZAC MOUNTED DIVISION - DECEMBER 1918

I t e m	A.P.O.	D.N.	L.H.	L.H.	Total
	S.E.41.	1	1	2	
1. Total No., of bags received at Div. Stat. A.P.O.'s	566				566
	819	-	-	-	819
1a. Total No., of bags received at Field Post Offices		38	35	30	103
		61	36	61	158
		150	452	266	868
2. Total number of inward despatches	130	32	30	30	222
3. Total number of bags despatched -					
Letters	187	80	62	76	405
News & packets	11	1	-	-	12
Parcels	85	38	41	-	164
4. Total number of outward despatches	175	80	62	62	379
5. Cash transactions -					
Postal Orders issued	1-11-0	16-10-0	44-9-0	28-7-0	91-16-0
Postal Orders paid	4-17-6	4-7-0	3-8-6	3-4-4	15-17-4
Stamps sold	1-15-4	3-14-0	4-4-8	4-5-9	13-17-9
War Savings Certificates sold	-	-	-	-	-
Remittances	-	-	60-0-0	20-0-0	80-0-0
6. Registered letters received over counter	36	100	173	155	464
7. Registered letters received from other offices	384	130	170	131	815
8. Registered letters despatched	419	112	194	175	900
9. Number of forward registered bags received	12	-	-	-	12
10. Number of parcels received over counter	4	20	36	6	66
11. Number of parcels received for re-direction in the E.S.F.	110	225	-	71	406
12. Number of parcels received for return to A.B.P.O.	56	177	387	159	779
13. Number of parcels received for delivery	1063	977	3127	2524	7691
14. Number of forward parcel bags received	771	-	-	-	771
15. Number of cables or telegrams delivered	No record	16	45	38	99