

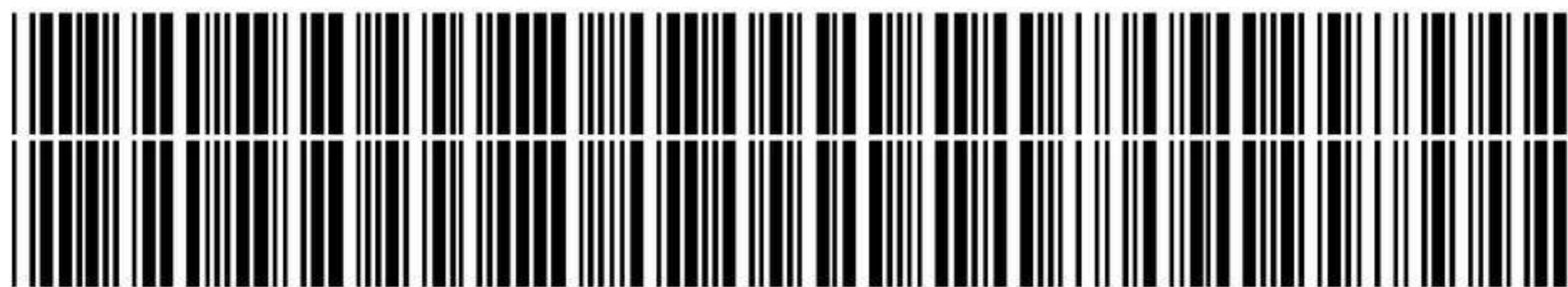
AWM38
Official History,
1914-18 War: Records of C E W Bean,
Official Historian.

Diaries and Notebooks

Item number: 3DRL606/268/1

Title: Folder, 1917 - 1936

Relates largely to the military postal service and includes cuttings, letters to Bean from Maj Gen V C M Sellheim and two copies of Maj C S Cunningham's history of the AIF postal service.



AWM38-3DRL606/268/1

A.I.F. POSTAL SERVICE

No. 268

DIARIES AND NOTES OF C. E. W. BEAN
CONCERNING THE WAR OF 1914-1918

THE use of these diaries and notes is subject to conditions laid down in the terms of gift to the Australian War Memorial. But, apart from those terms, I wish the following circumstances and considerations to be brought to the notice of every reader and writer who may use them.

These writings represent only what at the moment of making them I believed to be true. The diaries were jotted down almost daily with the object of recording what was then in the writer's mind. Often he wrote them when very tired and half asleep; also, not infrequently, what he believed to be true was not so—but it does not follow that he always discovered this, or remembered to correct the mistakes when discovered. Indeed, he could not always remember that he had written them.

These records should, therefore, be used with great caution, as relating only what their author, at the time of writing, believed. Further, he cannot, of course, vouch for the accuracy of statements made to him by others and here recorded. But he did try to ensure such accuracy by consulting, as far as possible, those who had seen or otherwise taken part in the events. The constant falsity of second-hand evidence (on which a large proportion of war stories are founded) was impressed upon him by the second or third day of the Gallipoli campaign, notwithstanding that those who passed on such stories usually themselves believed them to be true. All second-hand evidence herein should be read with this in mind.

16 Sept., 1946.

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL C. E. W. BEAN.

ACCESS STATUS

OPEN

A.I.F. POSTAL SERVICE

++ Mammoth Tasks

(By A. J. Strutt, 44th
Bn., A.I.F.)



One of the least known, most abused, and probably most efficient units of the A.I.F., and one which bore a great responsibility, was the Australian Postal Corps.

In the mind of the average Digger, the members of this corps existed merely for the purpose of "ratting" the more enticing of the contents of his parcels, or for sending his mail on long and futile journeys throughout the length and breadth of France and Belgium. But, despite this opinion, the Australian Postal Corps did a big job, and did it well.

Recruited in Australia early in 1915 from members of the Commonwealth Postal Service, the corps proceeded to Egypt and established its headquarters there. The original staff was totally inadequate to deal with the volume of work awaiting it, so men who had been invalided from Gallipoli were pressed into the postal service, and gradually an augmented and efficient staff was built up.

Although the majority of the newcomers had had no experience of postal conditions in civilian life, like the average Australian, they soon adapted themselves, and many attained N.C.O. rank with their new unit.

With the shifting of the major activities of the A.I.F. to the Western Front, the Postal Corps transferred its headquarters to London, being housed in the old Bass Brewery in Farringdon Road, next to the Mt. Pleasant Post Office. It was here that I first made contact with the corps, through being temporarily unfit for service with my own unit.

The main sections of the corps headquarters were—Record, re-direction, sorting and transport. Record cards of each member of the A.I.F., from the time of his arrival in England or Egypt, were kept in cabinets in alphabetical order, viz., AA to ZZ. Marching in and out statements were received each day from units, training brigades, embarkation camps and hospitals, through A.I.F. H.Q.

A female staff transferred the particulars to the record cards, viz., No. 678 Pte. A. B. Jones, 1st Bn., rejoined unit; R.T.A. (returned to Australia); admitted 3 L.G.H., Wandsworth, or, in many instances, the brief intimation, K.I.A. (killed in action). Another female staff faced up in alphabetical order all letters received from Australia and other sources. As the time of which I write was November, 1916—February, 1917, the magnitude of the task may be imagined.

At midnight a re-direction staff of about 50 men, under two staff sergeants and two corporals, commenced duty. Each man was allocated a section of the faced-up letters and the corresponding record cabinet, and set to work. The whole of the letters for one man would be checked, particulars as shown on record card noted, then the whole placed in a covering envelope, and addressed according either to unit, hospital or camp.

Great care was essential owing to the similarity of names. Writer once got a rap over the knuckles for enclosing in one cover letters for two Diggers with identical regimental numbers, initials and names, but different units.

The poor unfortunates allotted to the task of dealing with Smiths, Jones, and Brown had our sympathies, as their chance of error was greater. Throughout the night the work went on. Occasionally a comment as a familiar name was sighted and his fate learned from the record.

Shortly before 8 a.m. the work was collected, and each man's tally recorded, as we were expected to do a reasonable amount each night. The whole of the work was then placed in baskets and transferred to the sorting-room, there to be dealt with by the day staff.

With this phase of the work I was not so familiar, but imagine it varied little from that of any large mail branch (minus, of course, the electrical equipment) of our capital cities, except, of course, that units replaced towns and sectors districts.

The work of the transport staff was a revelation. Only about a dozen, under two or three N.C.O.'s, were engaged on this work, but I have seen upwards of 2000 bags of mail from Australia transported from one of the London stations, checked, the bags of papers overlabelled for re-despatch to units in France, and the letter portion passed on to the mail staff, the whole within 48 hours.

The inward flow of mail from units and training brigades commenced in the morning and continued throughout the day; the outward flow at about 4 p.m., from which time onward transport to Marylebone, Victoria and Waterloo Stations continued till about 8 p.m., these being the despatching points for France and Salisbury Plain.

Mails for specialist training camps and schools, such as the Machine Gun Training Depot, Grantham; Signal School, Dunstable; Shoeing School, Romsey, etc., were prepared and handed over to the civilian postal authorities at Mount Pleasant for transport by their services. A somewhat similar programme was carried out at Regent's Park, where the parcels post was situated.

This system, in miniature, was also in use in the various training brigades and embarkation camps. Following the armistice, writer spent a few months in the Field Post Office at Warminster and Longbridge Deverill, but as many Diggers were overstaying leave, chasing good jobs in vocational training schools, etc., much and varied was the abuse to which we were subject when the Digger and his correspondence failed to make contact in what he considered reasonable time.

The organising and administrative brains behind this big task were Capt. A. G. Tyler, at Mt. Pleasant, and Lieut. G. S. Gerrans, Regent's Park. Capt. Tyler has recently retired from the position of Superintendent Mails, Adelaide, while Mr. Gerrans occupies a similar post in Perth.

Recalled
Aug 1936

Deposited

"Bismarck Archipelago", and, subject to the maintenance of the political institutions agreed upon as well as the payment of the expenses of administration, rights of sovereignty corresponding thereto. On 13th December 1886 this charter was extended so as to include the German possessions in the Solomon Islands.

7/11 VALUE
MEN'S GOLF SHIRTS
 with
2 Non-Wilt Collars



Men's Golf Shirts with two non-wilt collars. These collars will not wilt, crush, curl or wrinkle. They don't shrink. They're reversible! They're amazing. They require no starch, yet they give starched collar smartness with soft collar comfort. The Shirts themselves are worthy of the collars. High quality fabrics in exceptionally neat stripe, check, or fancy designs. Blue, Fawn, or Grey. 13 1/2 to 17 1/2. Usually 7/11
HUB **4/11**

THE HUB LIMITED
 303-7 PITT STREET, SYDNEY.

*There's a happy little mother
 Who is dearer than all other
 And a joyful son now singing
 As he sits upon her knee;
 And she dreams of future pleasure
 For her little human treasure
 When the years will bring him to maturity.*

*So he grew and there was gladness
 In the home that knew no sadness,
 For the world was gay and smiling
 And the fair lands lived in peace;
 While his eager hands were willing
 In the fields he was tilling
 Till set of sun would cause the task to cease.*

*Then he heard the muskets rattle,
 And he journeyed forth to battle
 With a thousand gallant Anzacs
 Garnered from Australia's plains.
 There is little fame or glory
 When men meet in battle gore,
 And costly victories show bitter pains.*

*Then he died in action bravely,
 And they told his mother gravely
 That he was a noble hero,
 And his death was consecrate;
 But she thinks of nations lawless
 And she dreams of a world warless,
 When every land on earth is federate.*

*There's a lonely mother weeping,
 For a soldier son now sleeping
 In a grave with flowers blooming
 On a field beyond the sea;
 There's a river flowing sadly
 That once splashed so gay and gladly
 Beside the home that rang with mirth and glee.*

*But Time gives welcome healing
 And gentle lips appealing
 Bring comrades of the bivouac
 Who strive to make war cease,
 For they seek to bind each nation
 In a friendly federation,
 That all mankind for ever will have peace.*

THE A.L.T.M. BY. ASSOCIATION

1st A.L.T.M. By. Association, c/o Union, 21 Rosewood Road, Fitzroy,
 Aug 11, 1914, No. 200, 21 Beckett St, Marrickville.

Telephone,
City 10900.

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

XXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXXX

Victoria Barracks,
Sydney. 2nd May, 1925.

Dear General,

Many thanks for your note regarding the
Army Postal Service which I will bear in mind whenever
I deal with the matter.

Yours sincerely,

(sg) E. W. Bean

Major-General V.C.M. Sellheim, C.B., C.M.G.,
Victoria Barracks,
Melbourne.

TELEPHONE :
CENTRAL 4780.

SOS



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.

MILITARY BOARD
(ADJUTANT-GENERAL.)

Quote in

Reply

ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS,
VICTORIA BARRACKS,

Melbourne, ~~27~~ April, 1925.

Dear Mr. Bean,

I am unaware if you propose mentioning the Postal services, A.I.F. in the 3rd Volume of the A.I.F. History. If so might I suggest that Captain Ross who was A.D.A.P.S. in the field from the first, and Major C.S. Cunningham who was the first D.A.P.S. and who organised the service under my control and commanded and administered it for so long, might be asked to submit any information in their possession for your perusal.

My reason for asking this is that I have just heard that a document exists in the Australian War Memorial Library by a Major Wilson entitled "History of the Australian Army Postal Service 1914-19". Major Wilson joined late in 1915 and occupied a junior position until nearly the end of the War and is, therefore, in my opinion not as well qualified as are some others, to compile a document of this nature. As a matter of fact I am told it is inaccurate in some respects and should not for this reason and for some others, be taken as the last word on the subject.

With kind regards and best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

W. S. Selheim

Mr. C.E.W. Bean,
Official War Historian,
Tuggeranong,
Via Queanbeyan.

TELEPHONE:
CENTRAL 4780.

SOS



DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE.

MILITARY BOARD

(ADJUTANT-GENERAL.)

Quote in

Reply

ARMY HEAD-QUARTERS,
VICTORIA BARRACKS,

Melbourne,

27th
22nd April, 1925.

The Secretary,
Department of Defence.

I have been given to understand that there exists in the Australian War Memorial Library a document entitled "History of the Australian Army Postal Service, 1914-1919", the author of which is a Major Wilson late of the A.I.F. Postal Corps.

Major Wilson joined the A.I.F. at the end of 1915 as a very junior officer, and only succeeded to the office of D.A.P.S. at the end of the War.

He is, therefore, I think, hardly qualified to write the history of the service, the inauguration of which took place some considerable time before he joined and which was carried on by officers far senior to him until almost the end of the campaign.

I think too as the service was originally established and administered as part of my command, any such document purporting to be historical should have been submitted for my perusal.

Surely too much care cannot be bestowed upon a paper which is to go down to the ages as an accurate historical record, and the aid of the officers best qualified to compile such should be sought.

I therefore urge that Captain Ross who was A.D.A.P.S. in the field from the first and Major C.S. Cunningham the first D.A.P.S. who organised the service under my control and commanded and administered it for so long should be given an opportunity to submit their version of the subject.

I understand as the result of inquiry that neither of these two officers even knew until lately this document existed.

Major-General.
late Comdt. A.I.F. Intermediate Base.

Mr Newma

PS see memo

77

27-4-25

Mr Selchins

TELEPHONE:
CENTRAL 4780.

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA.

Sec/c.m.

DEPARTMENT OF DEFENCE,

No.

MELBOURNE. 19th. May, 1925.

Dear Bean,

I am enclosing herewith -

- (1) a memo from the A.G. relating to the History of the A.I.F. Postal Service, and
- (2) a letter, with enclosures which Major C.S. Cunningham addressed recently to Mr Barrett.

Regarding (1). General Sellheim was informed that no Unit History of the Postal Service had been printed and that this office had no knowledge of Major Wilson's History but presumably it was written for the War Records of the War Museum.

I instructed Mr Peacock, Defence Librarian, to call upon the War Museum Librarian in the matter. Mr Peacock, after interviewing the Librarian, reported that some typewritten matter prepared by Major Wilson had recently been passed to Major Cunningham who contemplated writing a History of the Unit. I thereupon suggested to the War Museum authorities that they should advise Major Cunningham to get in touch with Mr Barrett, Literary Adviser, in connection with Unit Histories, who was in the position to afford excellent advice and assistance.

At a later date Mr Barrett handed over the letter and report mentioned in para (2) and suggested that I should send it to you. Mr Barrett said that it was evident that Major Cunningham's production was more in the nature of a reply to complaints as to mal-administration rather than a Unit History.

On Friday last Major Cunningham rang me enquiring as to the question of payment of the sum of £4/10/- typing charge. I told him that I did not know of any fund which could be made available for the purpose. He replied that he thought the information might be useful to the Historian and perhaps the Anzac Book Fund Trust might defray the expenses which he had incurred. I told him that the matter was entirely one for the Committee to deal with but I would bring his request under your notice.

Yours faithfully,

W. Sturman

C.E.W. Bean, Esq.,
Official Historian,
Victoria Barracks,
SYDNEY. (N.S.W.).

(2)

Normanby Chambers
430 Chancery Lane
MELBOURNE

May 4th., 1925

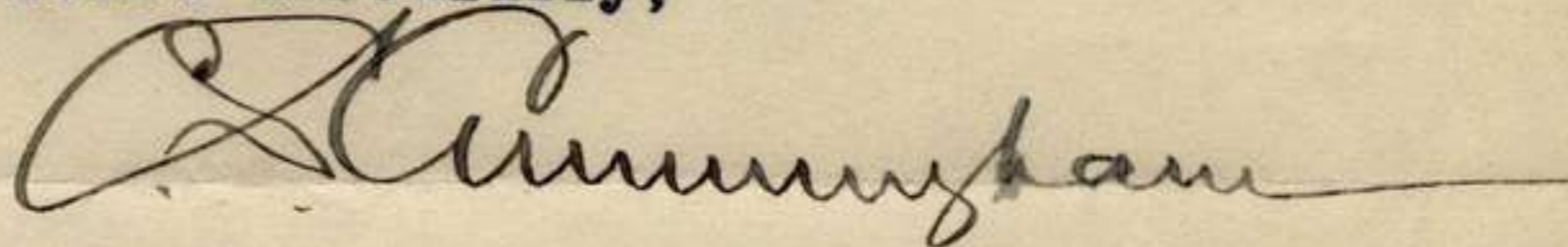
Charles Barrett Esq.,
Literary Organiser
A.I.F. Unit History
Defence Central Administration
St.Kilda Rd.,
MELBOURNE

Dear Sir :

Referring to your communication per telephone
I have to state that I have prepared a history of the Postal
Service of the A.I.F. up to the time of relinquishing my con-
trol as D.A.P.S., A.I.F. in August 1917 which I forward
to you herewith.

The cost of typing will be about £4-10-0 and I
will be glad if this sum could be granted - I will obtain an
account for the work from Messrs Stott and Hoare.

Yours faithfully,



MAJOR
(late D.A.P.S., A.I.F.)

2 Copies enclosed

*Mr. Minna
see me by
15.5.25
see him
was*

A. I. F. POSTAL SERVICE.

HISTORICAL

When the Commonwealth launched the great enterprise which was to prove so successful in every respect in the War the necessity for providing amply for handling letters, parcels, newspapers etc. for the soldiers was evidently over looked. It is true that a postal establishment was provided but it was totally inadequate for even the First Division to which it was attached and was in such a form that it could not be enlarged as the strength of the A.I.F. increased.

The Postal Section comprised only seven men under Staff Sergt. A.W. Ross and was not equipped for the service that lay ahead of it. The result was that the Staff Sergt. (afterwards Captain Ross) had to improvise and shape his course without assistance or anything to guide him. In this respect the Postal Corps was unique among the units of the A.I.F. His altogether too small staff soon found that most of the 24 hours each day were needed to cope with the work and in times of stress were not sufficient. The N.C.O. had none of the machinery or facilities of the Postal Section of the Royal Engineers which carried out the same duty for the British Army. At the outset the leader should have had commissioned rank and his should have been an establishment on the lines of the Royal Engineers and capable of expansion. Furthermore, as was clearly demonstrated later, he should have been in close touch with Headquarters and entrusted with a certain amount of confidential information as to the contemplated changes in constitution and movement of troops. However the little postal section carried on in spite of its severe handicap and with surprising results.

When the A.I.F. embarked for Gallipoli the postal section accompanied it and the disembarkation and transport of its mails were undertaken by the British postal service. This arrangement was carried on until the beginning of June 1915 when after consultation with British Headquarters the Commandant of the Australian Intermediate Base (General Sellheim) decided to establish an Australian Base Post Office at Alexandria with a staff of twenty men under Lieut. C.S. Cunningham who had been recently transferred to the Intermediate Base from Headquarters of the Fourth Infantry Brigade and who had fortunately had a thorough training in all branches of the Civil Postal Service.

Thus after nine months delay a step was taken which should have been one of the first in the formation of the Expeditionary Forces. That nine months' lack of proper organisation brought about a chaotic state of affairs which was intensified when the troops embarked from Egypt and a still more chaotic state of affairs when the wounded began to pour back into the country and were despatched for treatment to all parts as well as to Malta and Cyprus without a proper record being taken of their destination. It must be remembered that all this had occurred before Lieut. Cunningham's command had been thought of and while Staff Sergt. Ross and his little band were doing their utmost on Gallipoli backed only by two N.C.O's and two privates in Cairo. That then was the handicap allotted to the Aust. Postal Corps at its birth and the bitter complaints which naturally arose both in the Field and in Australia damned the Corps before it began to function and gave it so bad a name that thereafter, notwithstanding the contentment of the soldiers themselves, Press and people in Australia never rested from abusing it. The newspapers were mainly to blame for publishing general abuse by correspondents instead of opening its space to specific complaints which could be answered. The publication of these letters had a very serious

effect on the minds of all Australians who had sons or brothers at the front, therefore protests were despatched from A.I.F. Headquarters from time to time. Direct protests were made too directly to the newspapers conspicuous in fault for this calamity. The reply of The Argus was that seeing that Lieut. Cunningham was the head of the postal service it could not possibly refuse to publish whatever groundless abuse was offered to it regarding the work of the Unit. That the complaints were groundless is completely demonstrated in the Despatches sent from the A.I.F. to the Defence Department again and again.

Well the Australian Base Post Office began its career on June 5, 1915. The provision of accommodation was to be made by the D.A.P.S., M.E.F. The only Office accommodation he was able to provide was half a Custom shed on the quay at Alexandria, a long dark building without ventilation, water supply, light or latrine services, and altogether too small for the amount of mail to be handled. Further, the other half of this shed which was not in any way partitioned off was occupied by a portion of the British Postal Section, and when the latter ceased work the building was closed and the Australian business had to be at a standstill.

On taking up duty the Officer Commanding the Australian Base Post Office at once pressed the D.A.P.S., M.E.F., for better accommodation, but in spite of daily representations it was not until July 28th, nearly two months later, that the proper accommodation was obtained by the conversion of an old theatre in Alexandria. On the date that occupation was entered into a mail from Australia arrived which would have filled the old Office completely leaving no room for fittings or staff. The conditions in the old office were such that there was a daily sick parade of six men out of the twenty constituting the staff. It was soon apparent that the authorised strength was altogether insufficient for the work and men were obtained from the Details Camp at Mustapha, until the total number of men

employed was 90. The D.A.P.S., M.E.F., in a report on the work urged that this number should be at once increased to 130 which was accordingly done.

The mails from Australia were landed at Suez and sent by train to Cairo for such Units as were still in that area, but the bulk of the mail which was for the Force in Gallipoli, was sent to Alexandria for despatch. The increased staff was able to deal with this mail, but as a result of operations in Gallipoli the undeliverable mail began to flow in in tremendous bulk. It was dealt with in Units and redirected according to information obtained by lists from the many Hospitals in Egypt and such information as could be got from the 3rd Echelon. The difficulties with which the 3rd Echelon met in locating men evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt, Malta, Cyprus and England are well known, and it will be understood that the Base Post Office was absolutely unable to locate addressees^e. However, the work was carried on and redirected letters were sent to the various places at which wounded and sick Australian soldiers were known to be situated.

In August of 1915 there were 189,000 letters and a great number of parcels on hand, the addressees of which could not be traced by Records. These, however, were gradually redirected and sent on as returns from Hospitals were obtained. It was afterwards found that the Postal Orderlies of Hospitals outside the control of the Australian Base Post Office were not returning letters for Australian soldiers who had been discharged from those institutions but were holding on to them. This was particularly the case at Malta where, as a result of representations by the Officer Commanding Australian Base Post Office, and Officer of the British Administration at the Island made an investigation and found an accumulation of 3,000 letters. These were promptly returned to the Australian Base Post Office and readdressed from the material which had come to hand in the meantime.

It is notorious that at this time wounded men had been sent from Gallipoli to the various countries without system and their location was a matter of most serious difficulty.

The experience gained in the handling of returned undeliverable mail at this time was of the greatest value and though the results obtained would not compare at all favourably with the ^{later} present achievements the heads of the British Administration and the Egyptian Civilian Administration, who inspected the work declared that they could not suggest any improvement in the office or work. They were surprised at the bulk of the mails handled. From day to day as the conditions changed, new methods were adopted to meet them and the work was moving along with fair regularity when in December of 1915 in the midst of the Christmas rush the Australian Force was withdrawn from Gallipoli to Egypt. The re-arrangement rendered necessary by this move was completely under way when the splitting up of Units to create new Divisions was carried out. The effect of this splitting up was to render the letters for half the Australian Force absolutely unaddressed. A conference was held at A.I.F. Headquarters in Cairo at which were present General Sellheim (Commandant) General C.B.B. White, General Carruthers, Colonel Anderson, A.Q.M.G., Captain Fisher, D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Lieutenant Cunningham O.C., A.B.P.O., and Lieutenant McCurdy, O.C. N.Z. Postal Services. An attempt was made to evolve a method of dealing with the letters for the men who had been transferred from the Units to which their letters were addressed and for the reinforcements which were then arriving. The only scheme which was thought at all practicable was to send the mails in the first place to the Unit as addressed so that the mail for the personnel remaining with the parent Unit might be selected and the balance returned to the Base Post Office in order that it could be then submitted to the new Unit partly formed by the half of the parent Unit. At the same time a number of the Postal Staff were detailed to attend the 3rd Echelon to make out Nominal Rolls of all men transferred from original Units which could be used in the Redirection Department of the Base Post Office which had now grown to such an extent that it dealt with practically half the mail coming from Australia, instead of about 10 or 15 per cent which had been the average before the creation of the new units. This task was difficult

enough at the outset but it was intensified when the contingent moved from Egypt to France; then the mails were submitted to the parent or offspring Unit whichever remained in Egypt and the residue was sent across to France. Of this residue there was much mail for men supposed to be on French soil, but who had not actually been transferred. Their mail added to the returns resulting from casualties were sent down to 3rd Echelon at Rouen for redirection but it was found there absolutely impossible to cope with the mass.

Before the transference of the bulk of the A.I.F. from Egypt to France a new establishment was issued and for the first time (1916) Australian soldiers were afforded a service on the lines of the Royal Engineers Postal Section. Lieut. Cunningham was made Director of Army Postal Service with the rank of Captain, later that of Major, and commissioned rank was given to the heads of sections whose responsibilities had long been too great for men of N.C.O. rank.

In June 1916 the Australian Base Post Office was removed to London. It was August before the records which had been made in Egypt were co-ordinated with the addresses which the High Commissioner's staff had been recording in England. A card system was arranged in alphabetical order.

By the time this was completed, 474,000 letters had been received from 3rd Echelon, Rouen, and 239,000 others which were undeliverable as addressed had flowed in from Units. The Re-direction Staff was increased and reorganised to meet this problem and for the first time there was a prospect of starting un-interrupted work. It was possible to obtain returns and nominal rolls with something like thoroughness and with the aid of these not only was a daily inflow of from 15,000 to 20,000 letters matched by the despatch of redirected letters, but the bulk was gradually reduced, until 5. 11. 16 when there was an estimated residue of only 155,000 undelivered letters. That week 181,000 were redirected and despatched.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE SHOWS THE PROGRESS OF WORK IN
REDIRECTION DEPARTMENT FROM 17.8.16 -
WEEKLY from 17.9.16.

Date	Number on hand	Period	Number Received	Number Despatched
17.8.16	662,650			
17.9.16	712,950	17.8.16 to 17.9.16	480,100	429,800
24.9.16	662,800	17.9.16 to 24.9.16	112,000	162,150
1.10.16	566,175	24.9.16 to 1.10.16	115,000	211,625
8.10.16	445,950	1.10.16 to 8.10.16	101,000	221,225
15.10.16	365,450	8.10.16 to 15.10.16	142,000	222,500
22.10.16	298,000	15.10.16 to 22.10.16	154,000	221,450
29.10.16	199,000	22.10.16 to 29.10.16	132,000	231,000
5. 11.16	155,000	29.10.16 to 5.11.16	137,000	181,000

As the Force in France increased and the unfortunate casualties were more numerous the daily return of undeliverable letters from France amounted to an average of 30,000 per day for the seven days of the week, as well as a proportionate number of parcels.

The following is an outline of the procedure formerly carried out in connection with the handling of mails for reinforcements from the time of their arrival in the United Kingdom, and the present system has been instituted to meet new conditions and requirements regarding this particular section. Mails from Australia arriving at Australian Base Post Office were forwarded to the Training Camps. If the addressee was not there they were forwarded to the Divisional Base Depots, thence to Units in the Field, and if undeliverable were returned to the Australian Base Post Office. If no change of address was on record the letter was tried at various places at which the addressee was thought most likely to be located.

This system was giving an enormous amount of work to all concerned, wasting transport, stationery, delaying mail and using up staff who could be more profitably engaged without expediting the delivery of mail or having any good result, as well as increasing the circulation.

A change was made and found to be a vast improvement, resulting in 80% to 85% of mail matter being correctly delivered without delay at first location, where as formerly only 14% was deliverable. A record of all reinforcements arriving in the United Kingdom was kept at the Australian Base Post Office and on arrival of mail it was checked with records and forwarded accordingly. Any mail for an addressee whose name did not appear on record of arrivals was held pending location.

Marching In and Out States were obtained from all Training Areas, Bases, etc., and a list of reinforcements proceeding overseas was kept at sorting tables, and such mail was forwarded direct to Units without delay, the balance being despatched to the respective Training Depots, etc. Should any mail be returned from a Unit marked "not joined....." it was put through Records for location and in most cases an address was obtainable, the article being redirected and delivered.

No efforts were spared to get the soldiers to advise the Australian Base Post Office of their change of address. Circulars were distributed amongst Units, Hospitals, etc., in Egypt; notices were issued in Orders from time to time in the Anzac Bulletin and the British-Australasian and in the booklet of "Information to Australian soldiers in Hospital"; notice boards were exhibited in Headquarters and in Soldiers' Clubs, etc; Red Cross Official Visitors were asked to tell soldiers when they visited them in Hospitals; and finally there were notices inserted in men's paybooks as opportunity offered. The letters redirected from the Australian Base Post Office also bore a slip to that effect. There were approximately 1,800 personal notifications received daily at the Australian Base Post Office in addition to

the information contained in Returns, Nominal Rolls, etc.

The same system, but of course on a smaller scale, was being carried out in Egypt and so far as complaints were concerned with great satisfaction.

Ever since the first A.I.F. contingent landed in Egypt there had been complaints concerning the non-delivery of letters and parcels. The great bulk of these complaints had been from Australia either in the form of letters from private individuals direct or from the Defence Department, while there had been a great many in the Press of Australia. The utmost care had been taken to investigate every individual case and it was found that in nearly 100% of the cases the explanation has been satisfactory from a postal point of view. Letters had been missent but not in any greater proportion than would be found in any Civil postal system. About 3% of the actual receipts from Australia had been returned to the senders as undeliverable and some sent back incorrectly marked "Killed", "Missing" or "Wounded", and had resulted in the receipt of complaints, but it is pointed out that in returning these letters the postal system was justified by the endorsements on the letters made erroneously by an Officer of the addressee's Unit.

As an example the D.A.P.S. was informed by an Officer that an Australian Colonel whom he named had been killed. In the Area it was confidently believed to be true. The Colonel's letters might excusably have been marked "Killed in Action" but a few days later the D.A.P.S. encountered the supposedly deceased officer scathless.

The then system of dealing with undeliverable mail was the best that could be devised at that date, but it was amended from time to time by the light of experience which has been carefully noted from the earliest history of the Base Post Office.

Mr. Keith Murdoch who was specially appointed by the Defence Department to report on the Postal arrangements in Egypt said at the end of August 1915 "complaints seem justified in

Australia but after a few breaths in the war zone one is disinclined to criticise" and that he found the Australian Military Authorities everywhere anxious that the soldier should receive every article posted to him, and the Officers in charge had the postal sense highly developed and were not satisfied until every means of delivering the postal article had been exploited. What he stated concerning affairs at that time, it is claimed is what might well be said of the postal service since that date.

FIELD SERVICE CONDITIONS.

The outstanding effect of Field Service conditions is to show that the methods of the Civil Postal System cannot be slavishly adopted by an Army Postal Corps because the Civil Service was never confronted with the problems presented daily to the D.A.P.S. For instance what Postal Department has ever had to deal with undeliverable letters in such bulk and with such meagre information as to the whereabouts of the addressee? Again in the case of registered mail matter how would the Civil Service safeguard it if like the service in the field it possessed no strong rooms or safes? Taking the G.P.O. Melbourne for example, how would it act if the postal district of Fitzroy were suddenly removed in its entirety and to a location it was not made aware of? These difficulties would cause abuse to fall on the Department for non-delivery of mail but probably in its case its explanation would be accepted. Not so with the pre-damned Army Postal Corps. However that was not the worst experience of the A.I.F. postmen because as already stated on the return from Gallipoli to Egypt the Units were split, half retaining its old designation and being filled to strength by reinforcements while the other half assumed a new number and was also brought up to strength by drawing on reinforcements. The effect of this change from a postal point of view was as though half the residents of Prahran had been transferred to Williamstown and had been replaced by a similar number from Carlton and every suburb of the metropolis was similarly affected.

What would be regarded by the Civil Administration as a flagrant breach of regulations had to be resorted to by the D.A.P.S. Thousands of pounds were being remitted to A.I.F. soldiers through the Commonwealth Bank and sent out to the soldier concerned in Bank of England notes enclosed in envelopes bearing a big seal in wax and with the name of the Bank conspicuously upon it. There had been too many raids on outlying Field post offices and indeed on the Base Post Office itself and these registered letters practically screaming out the value of their contents were the lodestone. The Manager of the Bank was requested by Major Cunningham to notify the A.I.F. Paymaster of amounts due to soldiers and that officer who had means of guarding treasure which the postal service had not would disburse the amounts and draw on the bank. Furthermore the Paymaster could secure the signature of the payee which was not always possible by the postal orderly. For some reason best known to himself the Bank Manager persisted in sending currency through the post. It should be stated that in the event of the loss of a registered letter containing money no matter what the amount the compensation is only up to a certain amount according to the postage paid. In many cases a soldier who thus lost £20 could only receive £2. When the Bank Manager would not fall in with the effort to save the soldiers from risk of loss Major Cunningham took the extraordinary step of returning all registered letters to the Bank notwithstanding they had already been accepted by the British Postal Department and the postage obliterated. No Civil Postal Department would dare fly in the face of the Convention in this way but it was sufficient for the D.A.P.S. and resulted in the passing of the money through the Paymaster. Field Service Regulations Part II Sec. 99 Par. 7 says "All letters and articles sent by post are despatched at sender's risk the postal authorities giving no guarantee of delivery". These conditions could not have been known in Australia when yielding to the clamour of anonymous and groundless complaints already referred to the Defence Department sent out a postal detachment under Captain Fisher to re-organise

and administer the service. That Officer who had no experience in the Army immediately effected changes to bring the service into accord with the Civil System. He took charge on December 3, 1915 and held the position until March 28, 1916, ^{a little over three months} when Captain Cunningham resumed the command gradually reverting to field conditions.

REDIRECTION.

Regulations provide for records by Third Echelon (Records) and there is no provision for a record being kept by the Postal Section. This was emphatically pointed out by several high officers on Headquarters and the D.A.P.S. was instructed to discontinue the records he had inaugurated and rely on Third Echelon. He pointed out that if he desisted that day another would inevitably start next day when some member of the A.I.F. wrote asking for his mail to be re-directed in a certain way. For postal purposes Third Echelon records are useless owing to the method of their compilation. They are not so up-to-date as the Post Office records which result from direct intimation from the soldier of his rapid movements. The truth of the foregoing will be realised when it is remembered that the making of Third Echelon record is made as follows:- The daily state of each unit is passed through each Battalion, Brigade, Division and Corps to Third Echelon which was then at Rouen. The marchings in and out were duly "debited" and "credited" to the units concerned and a return made to Records Section Headquarters London. According to notices received by the Australian Base Post Office as many as 1800 men were moving from unit to unit each day so it is clear that the official records were being worked on day and night and were being used for other sections such as the Pay Corps, Deceased Soldiers' effects etc. In the circumstances they would not have been available to the Base Post Office Re-direction Section which would have required continual reference to them through-out the day and night. It will also be patent that records so compiled could not be so up to date as those made up from direct intimation from the man himself. For instance

a wounded man might pass ~~in a few days~~ through the Casualty, Field and Base Hospitals into a convalescent hospital and finally to Details or back to his unit in a few days. His various movements would be passed to the A.B.P.O. by Records Section one after the other with the delay caused by the routine above referred to and probably by the time the first had arrived the man had settled in his fifth location and notified the Base P.O. to that effect. To prove the advantage of the Base P.O. records a list of 50 names was submitted by the A.B.P.O. to Records at Headquarters for latest addresses on 5.7.17. Fifteen days later the list was returned. Notwithstanding the lapse of time the A.B.P.O. addresses were more recent in 21 cases. In three cases the Records Section had later addresses but these were dated after the despatch of the list from the A.B.P.O. A Lieutenant in the Headquarters Record Section admitted that only 80 names per man could be checked per day and a private in the section declared that it took 2 hours to scrutinise 25 names. Out of a list of 72 names submitted by A.B.P.O. to Records Section 13 were marked "no trace". If vindication of the A.B.P.O. records were required it is found in the fact that before they were established in London undeliverable letters were sent to Third Echelon Rouen ~~where~~ they stagnated accumulating to the extent of 500,000. As an example of the information supplied by the Headquarters Records section the following is instructive,- attention is invited to the occurrence of the dates which are in the order supplied.

3715 Private

11th Battalion.

(1)	O.C. Battn.	Joined Battalion	2. 3.16.
(2)	Embarked to join B.E.F.	Alexandria	29. 3.16
	Disembarked at	Marseilles	5. 4.16
(3)	Wounded in action,	France	25. 7.16
(4)	1st Field Ambulance.	Adm.G.S.W. Back	20. 7.16
	44 C.C.S.	" " " France	23. 7.16
	3rd Sty. Hospital	" " Rouen	20. 7.16.
	To England per H.S.	"St.Andrew"	25. 7.16
	3rd Western Gen.	Adm.Wounded (Sick)	26. 7.16
	No. 1 Command Depot	Marched in Classification	
	B.1a, Perham Down		22. 9.16

No. 1 Aux. Hospital, Amd. G.S.W. Back Harefield	12.8.16
Discharged to Perham Down, Class A.1 Fit	6.9.16
No. 1 Command Depot. Marched in from Hosp. Eng.	13.11.16
No. 1 Marched out to Parkhouse V.D.	1.12.16
Command Depot Marched in from Hosp.	11.12.16
" " To Brigade Hosp. V.D.	29.9.16
" " Sick to Brigade Hosp.	29.12.16
Parkhouse V.D. Adm. Bulford	20.12.16
Military Hosp. Trans. to Parkhouse	20. 1.17

Last report

Another example this time showing the efforts of the A.B.P.O. to deliver an ordinary letter to a soldier.

PRECIS OF PAPERS RELATING TO DELIVERY OF LETTER
TO NO. 558 CORPORAL 13th BATTALION, A.I.F.

1916

1st April Australian Military Office, London, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F. Cairo
Letter enclosed for Corporal who has rejoined M.E.F. from here. Please deliver.

21st April A.I.F. Records, Cairo, show Corporal in Hospital, England, July 1915.

22nd April D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo, to O.C., Australian Records Section, M.E.F., Alexandria.
Please inform me of latest whereabouts of this soldier.

24th April O.C. Aust. Records Section, Alexandria, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo.
Latest report this soldier proceeded from England 24/3/1916 to join M.E.F.

1st May D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo, to O.C., Overseas Base, Tel-el-Kebir
If he is with you, please deliver this letter to Corporal .

5th May O.C., Details Camp, Tel-el-Kabir, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo.
No record of this Corporal.

6th May D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo, to O.C., Australian Section M.E.F. Alexandria.
Please inform me of latest whereabouts of Corporal .

17th May O.C., Australian Records Section, Alexandria, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo
No report later than that of 24/4/1916.

24th May O.C. Australian Base Post Office, Port Taufiq, to O.C., 13th Battalion, A.I.F.
Is Corporal with you, please?

26th May O.C., 13th Battalion, Serapeum, to O.C. Australian Base Post Office, Port Taufiq.
Corporal is not with this Battalion.

29th May O.C., Australian Base Post Office, Port Taufiq, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London.
Delivery cannot be effected in this country.

28th July D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London, to O.C., Australian Base Post Office, London.
Latest address recorded 4th Training Battalion, Tel-el-Kebir.

1916

- 1st August D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London, to O.C., 4th Training Batt'n., Tidworth
If Corporal _____ is with you, please have attached letter delivered.
- 3rd August O.C., 4th Training Battalion to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London.
Corporal _____ joined the 13th Battalion and proceeded Overseas from Egypt.
- 11th August D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London to O.C., 13th Battalion, France
If Corporal _____ is with you, please have attached letter delivered.
- 13th Septr. O.C., 13th Battalion, to O.C., 45th Battalion, A.I.F.,
Passed to you.
- 4th Octoberm O.C., 45th Battalion, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London
Lance-Corporal _____ was evacuated sick to Hospital
17/9/1916/
- 11th October D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London to O.C., Northampton War
Hospital, Northampton.
If this man is in your Hospital, please have attached letter delivered.
- 13th October O.C., Northamptonshire War Hospital, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F.
London.
This man has never been in this Hospital.
- 16th October. D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London, to O.C., Australian Base Post
Office, London.
Have you any address for this man, please. If so, forward letter.
- 20th October O.C. Australian Base Post Office, London, to O.C.
Northamptonshire War Hospital, Northampton.
Our records show Corporal _____ to be at present in
your Hospital. Please deliver letter.
- 21st October O.C., Northamptonshire War Hospital, Northamptonshire
to O.C., Australian Base Post Office, London.
Letter has now been delivered to Corporal _____ .
- 24th October O.C., Australian Base Post Office, London, to D.A.P.S.
A.I.F., London.
Correspondence returned herewith.

The correspondents of 2068 Pte _____ no doubt grew impatient when their letters did not reach him but probably they did not know that he had been detailed to the following duties -

To N.C.O. in Charge Records,
Base Post Office.

3rd Battalion
St. George's Hospital
King Georges Hospital
Kingston Hospital
Orderly Room Staff
" " "
" " "

Signaller
Malta

Abbey Wood
Weymouth
Overseas Base HQ.
Egypt.
(Acting C.S.M.)

Details 1st Training Btn.
45th Battalion
No. 2 Aux. Hospital
14th Training Battn
5th A.D.B.D.
55th Battalion
1st Southern General Hospital
Horburne Hall Hospital
A.I.F.H.Q.

Heliopolis
Sig. Sergeant
Orderly Room Staff

Staff

The D.A.P.S. (Major Cunningham) of his own volition being troubled by the newspaper complaints in Australia asked General Williamson R.E. to have the Australian method of dealing with undeliverable mail reported on by his most expert officers. In his reply General Williamson said "I asked Colonel Wheeler and Mr. Green of the Returned Letter Section London to examine and report on your system and I enclose their reports. I agree with the general conclusion that your present system is too complete and no reasonable objection could be raised if letters were returned as finally undeliverable at an earlier stage, say after a month, as suggested by Colonel Wheeler instead of three months as at present. You will no doubt agree that in the case of correspondence posted in this country (England) for the Australian contingent there is no reason why the general practice in force in the British Expeditionary Force should not be followed and all letters except those for the killed and missing returned at once to the senders".

Mr. Green said "XXX the third search of the cards which I am informed does not result in the redirection of many letters. In view of the time and expense involved it is a question perhaps whether this third search is justified by results and whether there are not reasonable grounds for its discontinuance. There may be some objection to this on account of the strong

desire of the Australian Government that every possible letter should reach the addressee but the point is perhaps worth considering."

The British Postal service has no redirection department and its officers urged Major Cunningham to return an undeliverable letter at once to the sender. He, however, pointed out that it was then taking ten weeks for a letter to pass to or from Australia and while there was the remotest chance of delivery the effort should be made.

The personnel of the A.B.P.O. was entirely composed of A.I.F. soldiers but when reinforcements were not coming forward in sufficient numbers female clerks were employed by Major Cunningham at Mt. Pleasant and Regents Park (Parcels P.O.) releasing more than 50 per cent of his male staff for the fighting force.

COMPLAINTS.

Complaints against the A.I.F. postal service were divisible into several classes

(1) Genuine complaints which arose from irregularities consequent on the lack of organisation for the first nine months, then from lack of information as to the whereabouts of men wounded on Gallipoli, then through the splitting of units resulting in 50 per cent of the Men's mail having to be re-addressed.

(2) Complaints by persons who erroneously assumed that their soldier friends were not receiving their mail because no replies were being received to letters; and

(3) Deliberate misrepresentation.

The first class emanated from soldiers in the Field and became negligible when the A.B.P.O. got fairly to work and it was realised that the best efforts were being made on their behalf.

The second class continued right through until repatriation was complete.

The third class on the other hand did not begin to be made until after the evacuation of Gallipoli. While the first two classes were made to the Postal Staff direct the last were passed back to Australia and came to light in anonymous letters to newspapers. Some were specific but others were so general in character that it was impossible to deal with them.

The favourite charge made by those not daring to make their names known was the burning of letters. This class of complaint needed no answer because it was obvious no letters were delivered to any soldier or the complainants were deliberately picked out for 12 months and were destroyed. The burning charge was like King Charles' head, paraded on every conceivable occasion but while the circumstances alleged in each case were the same the location of the offence was variously stated. A typical case is here stated :-

In February 1916 a Corporal of the 24th Battalion who was at the time in the Base Details Camp, Zeitoun, Egypt, stated to Captain Fisher, the then D.A.P.S., A.I.F., that "A Corporal in the Y.M.C.A. tent, Zeitoun, had told him that an N.C.O. and 3 men had been furnished with a list of names of men in the 6th Brigade who were in Base Details, Zeitoun, and a special leave pass to proceed to Tel-el-Kebir and on arriving there found that the mail had been burnt."

Captain Fisher visited Zeitoun to obtain confirmation of this statement, but nobody could give any definite information, although rumours of the burning of mail matter were current.

Statements were also made at the same time that mail at one of the Divisional Artillery Camps, Tel-el-Kebir, had been burnt.

Both cases were referred to Headquarters, Australian Provisional Formations, for investigations which elicited that a case of alleged burning had occurred in the 1st Australian Divisional Artillery. About 6th January 1916 a report was made by a Gunner of the 1st Field Artillery Brigade that he had seen a bag of mail taken to and emptied into an incinerator. In

consequence of this the Post Orderly of the 1st Divisional Artillery was court-martialled, but was acquitted. Nothing was ascertainable in regard to the 6th Infantry Brigade.

In April 1916 a letter appeared in the "ARGUS" newspaper, written by a Miss _____, Surrey Hills, Victoria stating inter alia, that letters for soldiers were burnt. Miss _____ was written to on the 8th June 1916 by the D.A.P.S., A.I.F., and replying on the 9th August mentioned that "the statement I made about the burning of letters is a fact and we are not the only family that has received the news." It was added that the letters were in a box at Zeitoun marked "Unclaimed letters - To be burnt". Miss _____ letters were based on information she was given by her brother, No. 2191 Private _____ 5th Battalion, A.I.F. He was accordingly communicated with and asked to furnish any information he could to enable the matter to be investigated by Board of Enquiry. To this request he replied that he was receiving his letters regularly and that "the party from whom the statement came was unfortunately killed at Pozieres".

The questions asked in Parliament by Mr. Maloney, M.P. on 7th and 14th December 1916 refer to the rumours in circulation in Egypt which have been dealt with above. Although the investigation previously made did not result in any confirmation of the statements, further enquiry was again made and Headquarters, 2nd Aust. Division, reported that "nothing was known of the burning of these letters" and the General Officer Commanding, 6th Australian Infantry Brigade, stated that "(1) No official enquiry was made in January/February 1916 into the burning of mail letters of the 6th Aust. Infantry Brigade, Tel-el-Kebir or elsewhere; (2) No 6th Brigade letters have been burnt by Order or otherwise within the knowledge of anyone in the Brigade.

Another case of alleged burning of mail matter was referred to with a view to a statement being obtained from No. 4494 Pte. _____ who had returned to Australia. Unless Pte _____ could give something definite, this case also became one of rumour.

It will be seen that while so many people "knew" that letters were burnt, none could give any particulars definite enough to enable a Board of Enquiry to investigate the case. Perhaps Mr. Maloney, M.P., or his correspondent will give us these particulars.

In a letter to a newspaper a soldier's wife complained that her husband got only one letter out of many until she sent them under cover to be reposted in England and then all was well. The essence of her complaint vanishes at once when it is pointed out that the letters reposted in England still had to pass through the Australian Army postal service to the soldier.

Only 3 per cent of the letters received by the A.B.P.O. were finally returned to Australia as undeliverable.

The Secretary of the Australian War Contingent Assn. London sent a strong protest from a soldier that he had been away from home 18 months and had received no letters. The man's record was turned up and it was found that he had enlisted in Queensland only a year before and had landed in England only six months before he wrote his complaint !!!

Another case - Mr. G.H.F. of Legrave England complained that Pte had not received letters or parcels and one parcel specially indicated. A.B.P.O. was able to show the complaint was unfounded and the soldier confessed to the complainant that he had received all that were due - Mr. G.H.F. apologised and said the soldier was to be penalised by having neither letters or parcels sent to him for six months.

On February 24th "The Age" published a letter from L.D. stating that he had posted a letter to his brother in France on the 13th inst. and had it returned six days later marked "Unable to trace received unclaimed from abroad".

Sister complained that she had not received even one letter from her mother since leaving Australia and said they were addressed "care of the Matron in Chief". It was suggested to her that they probably went to the Matron in Chief British

Forces and in that case would be returned at once as she was not known. Sister subsequently wrote saying the surmise was correct and that she was then receiving all her letters.

Here is a case of a complaint self rebutted. The Age of August 14, 1916 said a young man in Egypt had received only three letters out of hundreds sent to him and he wrote to his parents expressing his disappointment, humiliation and suspense which was worse than war. It was said that while certain men in the unit received their letters regularly others never received a letter. Is it not clear that the fault lay outside the postal service? The disappointed soldiers must have received occasional letters at least or the postal service hard pressed with the heavy work must have added to its toil by "running" the letters to pick out and destroy theirs.

Major Cunningham although thoroughly satisfied that such complaints were groundless resolved to ascertain the views of his officers and sent the following communication receiving the appended replies.

Complaints continue to be made in Australia that some members of the A.I.F. abroad do not receive their letters, and that it is not a question of missing an occasional letter but that none, though as many as 50 are sent, reach them.

Assuming that the missing letters are properly addressed, posted and despatched from Australia it is absolutely impossible to believe that every letter miscarries while well over 90 per cent of letters from Australia reach the addressees. It would mean that the letters which are the subject of the complainants are deliberately picked out and destroyed or that to insure that none out of say 20 letters reach a man, hundreds of thousands are lost or destroyed. Such a suggestion would be ridiculous to any one who knows the working of the Australian Postal Corps, but I wish you to give the matter the closest attention and set out any explanation that occurs to you. In doing so state

clearly whether any letters are held at any of the Offices in your sphere, or at the Battalions, and whether you have any knowledge which would justify rumours that letters are burnt. It is incredible that such should occur because I realise that the members of the Australian Postal Corps are not only familiar with the strict Postal Regulations, but also faithfully observe them.

You might remind the members of the Corps of the invitation issued to them in Egypt to submit suggestions which their particular duty leads them to believe would in any way improve the Service.

Director Army Postal Services, A.I. Forces.

October 10, 1916.

16th October 1916

I beg to state that, based on the figures recently taken of the amount of mail matter handled at this Base for the month of August last, it is estimated that, excluding correspondence for the "Killed and Missing" men, barely 7 per cent of the letters, packets and parcels, which are returned from Units for various reasons are returned to Australia as "Undeliverable to addressee".

The major portion of such correspondence returned is owing to the addressee's being transferred to another Unit, and failing to advise this Base of such changes.

Taking the whole mail of the Australian Imperial Force, I am of opinion that quite 97 per cent is delivered to the addressee, and considering the many disadvantages under which Army Postal work has to be conducted, and the indifference shown by so many members of the Australian Imperial Force in failing to notify us of their change of address, I think you will agree that the result is very satisfactory.

C.P. WILSON, Lieutenant.
O.C., Australian Base Post Office.

19th October 1916.

The only instances of the delays complained of I have been able to trace are cases where the addressees have been frequently transferred from Unit to Unit in quick succession, not allowing their

correspondence sufficient time to reach them between transfers, e.g. Private A.O. in my own Office left Australia with the 6th reinforcements to 23rd Battalion, was drafted from Details to the 58th Battalion, then attached to Base P.O., Egypt, thence to Base P.O., Marseilles, A.P.O., and finally to this office. He received no letters during four and a half months, but after remaining some time in this Office letters reached him in large numbers, many of them having been to Base Records Office and his correspondence is now up-to-date.

No letters are knowingly held at a Field Post Office for any length of time, as it is always to the advantage of an F.P.O., to keep the Office as clear as possible owing to the likelihood of a move at any time. The same would apply to a Unit, but I have encountered several instances of mail being held by Units, all of which cases happened some time ago and no recurrences have come to notice lately.

I have no knowledge of mail matter ever having been burnt or destroyed and am of opinion that the rumour is groundless and absurd. All members of the Postal Staff fully realise the gravity of such an offence.

The last para of your memo of 10th instant has been brought to notice and any suggestions received will be forwarded.

A.W. ROSS Lieutenant
D.A.D.P.S., 1st ANZAC.

16th October 1916.

With reference to yours of the 10th instant relative to the non-receipt of letters by some members of the A.I.F., I beg to state that I have given the matter careful consideration and thorough investigation.

If letters are properly addressed, posted and despatched from Australia, I most decidedly state that the addressees would receive same.

The suggestion that letters are deliberately picked out and destroyed is almost too farcical to consider, as when a mail

arrives, all the Post Orderlies are present, and witness the opening of bags and the subsequent sorting of the mail. I also make it a point - when possible - of visiting the Field Post Offices under my control at the time when a mail arrives and make a personal check of mails.

No letters are ever held at any of my offices . They are either delivered to the Postal Orderly, re-addressed or returned to the Base as "undeliverable", or for the purpose of tracing addressee. Again the Travelling Warrant Officer visits the various Field Post Offices at least twice and generally three times a week and reports to me.

The members of the Corps under my control have been reminded of the particulars contained in your last para.

A.J. Wilson Lieut
D.A.D.P.S. 2nd Anzac
10th October 1916.

For such a case as stated to occur it would mean a deliberate breach of regulations by one of the delivering Office, and such I am sure is not occurring in any Field Post Office under my control.

Letters are redirected and are not unnecessarily delayed by Unit Orderlies.

The greatest delay occurs at a Command Depot where such a vast number of men simply pass through and are only in camp a couple of weeks before passing on to various Units, but their location is given as a Command Depot or Camp, and even at this point letters are attended to as promptly as possible and certainly none are destroyed or deliberately put out of course.

The only point where I see letters are likely to be seriously delayed reaching the addressee is when a man is continually transferring from one Unit to another and does not advise the Australian Base Post Office or F.P.O. of change.

Several complaints of non-receipt of correspondence from Australia which I have enquired into prove to be caused by the addressee having been transferred to another Unit, not advising his new address, then writing home complaining that he is not receiving

mail, but by the time complaint is investigated it is invariably found that the person is receiving mail correctly, but has neglected to advise his correspondents in Australia.

All members of the Australian Postal Corps have been invited to submit any suggestions for improvement, however slight, also to point out anything that is likely to lead to the non-delivery of postal matter.

E.HAZELDINE

D.A.D.P.S.

In reference to your circular regarding complaints of non-delivery of mail matter for members of the A.I.F. and inviting suggestions as to the reason of such non-delivery - if any - I wish to bring under your notice the following facts which have come to my knowledge during my connection with the Postal Corps.

First, and foremost, it is incontestable that mail matter, correctly addressed, almost invariably reaches the Unit concerned without any undue delay. (Note this remark does not apply to reinforcements, which I will deal with later).

If the addressees are with their Units, I think it will be conceded that the whole of their mail - if correctly addressed - is safely delivered, but in the cases of the absentees, such as wounded sick and detached etc., no other course is open but to return the mail to the B.R.O., where of course, some considerable time elapses before the men's whereabouts become known.

The Post Orderlies appointed by Unit Commanders are often, in my opinion, unsuitable for the work and sufficient care does not appear to be taken in their selection, and the responsibility of the Regimental authorities for the safe custody and delivery of mail is apparently not generally realised.

As these Post Orderlies, in most cases, do no other duty than Postal work, I think a great deal of the difficulty could be overcome by incorporating them in the Postal Corps, where they would be directly under the control of the D.A.D.P.S. concerned and of the N.C.O. in charge of the Field Post Office serving the Unit.

The whole crux of the question undoubtedly lies in the close control of Post Orderlies by the Postal authorities alone, and in the Record System, which to be effective - so far as the Postal Services are concerned - - must be of an absolutely reliable character and have immediate information as to the men's movements once they leave their Units.

This information from my own observation, does not appear to reach the B.R.O. sufficiently quickly to be of any great service to the Postal Department, as the addressees in a great many cases, have left the last recorded address long before the mail comes to hand.

This involves a constant circulation of mail from B.R.O. to France and vice-versa and in many cases is travelling for three or four months before eventually reaching the addressees.

The very same causes of delay apply to the reinforcements who are often drafted to Units other than those which they were originally intended to re-inforce and to which their mail is addressed.

I think such complaints, as the non-delivery of batches of 20 and 50 letters etc., arise from long delay in delivery and in no case from final loss.

In many cases the C.O.'s of Depots themselves, are ignorant as to the Units the men are marching out to reinforce, and this is especially noticeable of some of the drafts arriving from the camps in England.

Unless immediate information of the men's movements is obtainable, I cannot see how these complaints can be overcome as this, together with the Post Orderly question, is unquestionably the only solution for the difficulties set forth.

All correspondence reaching the Etaples A.P.O's is dealt with without delay, and no instance has come to my knowledge where any great delay has occurred in returning mail from the Unit Orderly rooms to the A.P.O's concerned.

A close watch is kept on the Post Orderlies, but this of course is a matter of great difficulty in the Field.

Even here, where the A.P.O's are stationary, such super-

vision as would be possible, were the Post Orderlies members of the Postal Corps, cannot be enforced.

Arguments will be advanced that this course would mean the withdrawing of a considerable number of men from combatant Units, but these objections are not, and never have been, valid ones.

C. FLETCHER Lt.
D.A.D.P.S. Etaples.

P A R C E L S.

Parcels were the delight of the soldier on Service. Letters were eagerly looked for but parcels were more than coronets.

The Argus of October 20, 1916 said that 186 tons (72,658) of Christmas parcels were despatched by the Melbourne General Post Office. When parcels arrived in London there was not room enough for them in the great Regents Park P.O., or rather in the Australian Section of it because the whole building occupied $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ground, therefore some were stacked under tarpaulins outside with a strong guard over them. The High Commissioner visited the office and was amazed at the bulk. He ventured the opinion that so many parcels could not be sorted, repacked when found damaged, listed and despatched for at least six months but they had all been delivered to the Units before the end of January.

With perhaps one exception no Army Postal Service listed its parcels and so treated them as registered articles. The sons of none of the Allies were so generously treated in the way of gifts and comforts as the Australians and it would be interesting, but never likely to be known what was the aggregate weight and number of parcels which the A.B.P.O. was called on to handle during the War.

It was not merely the duty of the postal staff to open a mail bag, empty it of parcels, sort them and enclose them again in other bags. In the earlier days before the recommendations of the O.C. A.B.P.O. passed through the Defence Dept to the people of Australia the majority of parcels in each bag were broken and their contents mixed. This was the result in some cases of flimsy and

careless packing but there was a far more serious reason, viz., the inclusion in the parcels of perishable matter. It can easily be understood that those parcels with the ungentle handling and the heat of the tropics were inevitably a nasty mess when the bags were opened in London but more than that they affected parcels with dry ^{contents} contiguous to them with disastrous results. His Majesty The King Her Majesty The Queen and Princess Mary paid a visit to Regent's Park P.O. and The King was particularly interested in the Australian parcels post.

As an example of many parcels the contents of this one, a cardboard box, is given. Chocolate, candles, glass, lemon, tins of milk, tins of cocoa, postcards, treacle, herrings, tomatoes, soap and biscuits. Eggs, butter, cheese and fruit were popular media for the expression of affection by Australian relatives and friends for the soldiers, but the chief optimist sent a dressed (uncooked) fowl which was variegated when its covering was removed at Regents Park.

These damaged parcels were most carefully dealt with from the inception of the A.B.P.O. First of all such contents of the bag as were useless owing to rottenness or pulping were thrown out as garbage. The balance cleaned from the filth were repacked as nearly as it could be judged with their respective fellows. All those parcels bore notices for the addressees that they had arrived in a damaged condition and in cases where it had been necessary to "jettison" any part of contents this also was stated.

Complaints of the non-delivery of parcels were naturally expected and they came to hand. It was impossible to inform every complainant of what is above stated but it was noticeable that complaints fell off considerably when the senders of parcels packed them more securely and rationally. The D.A.P.S. made special inquiry into the causes of non-delivery and found them to be - Failure to despatch from Australia; destruction by attrition in transit; destruction of parcels themselves and others lying next by the decomposition of perishable contents; the obliteration of addresses and distribution of contents of parcels for absentees

from Units by C.O's among addressees comrades. He recommended that these conclusions be referred to soldiers' relatives and evidently they were endorsed for the A.B.P.O. heard less of the hardship it was supposed to be causing. Towards the end of 1916 enquiry was received from Australia for nine parcels sent to Sapper No.5651 of the 14th Field Company Engineers and the report from the C.O. of that unit read "Attached list of parcels for 5651 Sapper ----- late of 14th F.C.E. were received and given to his section Sergt. No. 1256 Sergt.-----who distributed them amongst the men of the late Sapper's Section and where possible wrote to the sender giving an account of what had been done with the parcels".

PECULIAR ADDRESSING

The following address on a letter brought to the attention of the D.A.P.S. can hardly be termed "Insufficient address" "No. 2190 Private ----- Sick, 1st Australian Infantry 1st Battalion Australian Imperial Force, Australian Intermediate Depot, Bostall Health Camp Abbey Wood Kent No. 2 General Hospital Ward 35 Bed 15 Chelsea London S.W. c/o High Commissioner for Australia Commonwealth Offices London England"; or this "Private --- Boy Scout Association Ocean Beach Troop No. 29 Western Australia Belgium" . An example of a "wide" address is this "No. 20 Corporal -----Div. Amm. Dist. Ord. Stores Australian Imperial Force, France". As if to make the task of the postal Corps harder coincidence stepped in and provided some remarkable instances. Two Privates with the same surname and the same regimental numbers but different initials were by the transfer of one from another Unit in the 53rd Battalion and both were wounded about the same time. One Commandant A.I.F. Headquarters London who had three unusual names had a full namesake in a Sergeant of the Forces.

APPRECIATION

It would seem up to this point this report is an apologia for the Postal Service. Be that so or not it is now

pleasant to offer the other side of the picture. In the first place the soldier in the field was the chief consideration of the Postal Corps. He knew the conditions and whether to expect good or indifferent service. As already stated he had occasion for his "growse" because of the lack of organisation at the beginning and he did not let the occasion pass were he officer or private. However the soldiers were not content to voice their discontent they enquired as to the reason why and saw the reasonableness of the explanation. The uniform reply when they were asked if they were getting their mail regularly because their correspondents in Australia had complained that they had not was to this effect "Oh, it was bad for a time but I was on the move every thing O.K. now". Borton Pasha Postmaster General of Egypt wrote to Major Cunningham "As I was saying to you the other day the difficulties of your Post Office in this country were probably far greater than is generally known by those not cognisant with the onerous conditions under which you all had to work. On first arrival I gathered that most of your men had but little postal training and naturally the language difficulty in Egypt presented considerable trouble; moreover all postal equipment had to be made after arrival, as far as I remember, and owing to the junior rank of those in charge, there was much difficulty in obtaining information. Then again after Gallipoli the remaking of the Force presented enormous postal difficulty which naturally can hardly be understood by outsiders, but for you to find men who had left Australia in one Unit and joined another on arrival in Egypt, must have entailed great work and I can only congratulate you in your results".

Major General Monash was forever watching the personal welfare of the men of the A.I.F.. From many of his communications the following are culled :-

"Need I say once again how very grateful I am to you for your personal help in so greatly facilitating the rapid transmission of mails from Australia".

"Letter reached me (Gallipoli) today, i.e., only 5 days en

route, the quickest time on record so far as letters from Egypt usually take 8 to 10 days and some have taken 30 days."

"Most certainly there has been a great improvement in our mails since you took charge. Australian letters used to take 40 to 45 days to get here now they are coming in 33 to 35 days".

"I am very sorry that the A.I.F. will lose the benefit of your management of postal matters. For many months past, I can frankly say that no complaint of any kind has come to my notice. Comparing this state of things with that which prevailed before matters were fully in your charge I think nothing could reflect greater credit on your management".

Mr. Keith Murdoch in his report on the work of the Postal Corps in August 1915 said :-

"Complaints seemed justified in Australia but after a few breaths in the War Zone one is disinclined to criticise. I found the Australian Military authorities everywhere anxious that a soldier should receive every article posted to him. The officers in charge had the postal sense highly developed and were not satisfied till every means of delivering postal articles had been exploited.

Question of precedence of postal affairs arose when 16,000 wounded arrived in Egypt in a fortnight. Hospital officials were too occupied attending patients to supply returns for guidance of Postal Officials".

Brigadier General McGlinn.

"The mails have been A 1 for some time past. Keep them going so."

Mr. G.E. Lodge -

"I am very much obliged to you for all the trouble you have taken in the matter xxxxx Mails are being received all right".

Mr. T. Baker (Kodak Ltd) "I quite agree that the reason men's letters are delayed ^{is} as a rule their own negligence. On my last trip there were fewer complaints than in hospitals I had previously visited".

Lance Corporal A.Q. Sinclair "I must thank you for the trouble taken on my behalf. For the first two months I received letters regularly and in addition have received the overdue ones. I have no doubt my trip to Rouen Hospital caused most of the trouble, as letters had been twice to the Base before I received them".

The late Brigadier General Holmes shortly before his death wrote "Thank you for your letters and the trouble you have taken re my growl. I realise all the difficulties you have to contend with and am surprised you are able to do so well. On the whole the service is excellent and we have a lot to be thankful for. I congratulate you and those working with you".

No. 2937 Pte. G. Cumming, 8th Battalion "I am being transferred tomorrow to Harefield Park Hospital ~~xxxxxxx~~ I would just like to express my best thanks for the receipt of all my letters and parcels".

Sergt. Selby "Words cannot express my gratitude to you for hunting up so many of my missing letters which I am in receipt of. The trouble was caused through so many changes from one place to another. I was unable to send my people any definite address not knowing whether I would return to my original Unit".

G. Payne (Knightsbridge S.W.) wrote - "My nephew has this week received in No. 5 Hospital Reading three of his missing parcels from Australia. I am sure he owes them to your kind enquiries for which we are most grateful".

Captain Walker 17 A.A.S.C. wrote - "From the time of my notifying you of my whereabouts all letters have arrived safely. I wish to extend to yourself and staff my sincere gratification for the prompt and satisfactory manner in which my mail has been handled".

Alex. Cowan & Sons "We have been extremely indebted

to you for your kindness in helping us to trace men about whom we have had enquiries from our Australian House".

Lieut. Fielden "The long lost letter has arrived and I got it safely this morning. For this relief much thanks. I am very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken and I feel like a millionaire".

Bessie (Mrs) Fairbairn interested herself keenly in many young Australians in both the A.I.F. and B.E.F. making their troubles her own even to the extent of non-receipt of letters and parcels. She wrote "I have had letters from a score of boys telling me they have been getting all my parcels in a batch and they are glad I had not sent perishable goods. So you see your trouble over Allan Sowers (B.E.F.) spelled good for hundreds of others. Now you are at the helm all will be well".

Colonel Hooper "I have already spoken to General Sellheim on the completeness of your system and on the efficiency of your staff". .

Captain E.M. Connor - "I took a trip out to your sorting Dept. at Mt. Pleasant and found 2 of my missing letters. They were addressed as follows :-

"Capt.E.M. Connor,
14th Rfts.
25th Bn. 7th Inf.Bde.,
Salisbury Plains,
ENGLAND

I presume the remainder to be addressed in the same way.

Can I again enlist your personal interest? I think that at least 10 letters are missing, and would be very grateful if you could unearth them for me.

I am hopeful, for as I told you the other day I have reason to be more than satisfied with the A.I.F. Postal Dept.

During the Blizzard days at Anzac when shipping was suspended and afterwards while in different hospitals in Egypt, my mail of course did not reach me, but while back in Australia, the missing letters numbering well over 100 were all returned to me.

Again while on Salisbury Plains I received a letter through

your Department which was quite inaccurately addressed.

So now I hope you are going to justify my faith in your Dept."

The above are picked at random but representing all ranks in the Service, and are representative of appreciation by civilians. Reference is also made to letters published in the newspapers for instance by "Post Here" in The Argus of February 24, 1917; "Drivers Mother" The Argus November 9 1916; "H.W.L." The Argus December 7th 1916; "Pahranite" The Argus August 10, 1916; "Delighted" ditto ditto. Colonel Rhodes ex-Post Master General of New Zealand interviewed on his return to Australia said "It will be pleasing to the relatives of troops to know that in the great majority of cases the charges made against the administrative bodies ^(postal) were wholly groundless".

CHANGE OF METHODS.

On August 16, 1917 Major Cunningham relinquished the directorship at his own request and returned to Australia. The days of stress having passed and the work running smoothly covetous eyes were cast on the position of Director and a system of pin pricking began. Among these were visits by officers from Headquarters to Units of his command without notice to him and caustic remarks passed to his sub-officers in the presence of the men of his command tending in his opinion to affect discipline. His defence of his officers and men resulted in his own disfavour and he at once requested leave to resign. This was on May 1st 1917. The then Commandant prevailed on him to withdraw his resignation. Colonel Griffiths said his difficulty was to find someone to take his place and expressed the view that neither Captain Ross, Lieut. Wilson or Lieut. Tyler would suit. He asked Major Cunningham's opinion of Lieuts. Fletcher and Hazeldine and Major Cunningham said he could not recommend them as more fit than Captain Ross for the position of D.A.P.S. Colonel Griffiths then said when he found someone to take the position and Major

Cunningham was still of the same mind he would allow him to resign. A month later Major Cunningham again sent in a request for permission to resign as the official attacks on his command were continuing, but the Commandant saying he had no one fit to fill the position declined to pass the resignation to the Commander in Chief.. June 25, 1917 the A.Q.M.G. deputed two junior officers to report upon the Postal work ostensibly because complaints were being received from Defence Melbourne. The last despatch from Defence had however been answered in detail by Brigadier General Sir Robert McC. Anderson and the following acknowledgment had been received at A.I.F. Headquarters a few weeks before these junior inspecting officers were appointed :-

DEFENCE

16th March 1917.

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Commandant,
A.I.F. Administrative Headquarters,
130 Horseferry Road,
LONDON S.W.

With reference to your despatch No. 80 of the 11th January respecting the work of the Australian Army Postal Corps, I am directed to inform you that the Minister most highly appreciates your report on the proficiency of the Australian Postal Corps, and fully recognises the tremendous difficulties under which the postal services are carried out.

I am to add that a statement has been given to the press showing the activities of that Corps.

T. H. TRUMBLE
A/Secretary.

With full knowledge of these despatches Major Cunningham realised that an attempt was being made to secure the directorship for one of those deputed to report though that officer was ignorant of the simplest elements of postal work. He protested against the appointment which was made in the following terms :-

25th June, 1917.

Captn Sherrington.

For some months past an opinion has become prevalent in Australia that there is something wrong with our postal methods. We have had them reported upon by Members of the British Postal service, and the Post Office has been visited by prominent Australians who happened to be in London. These reports and our comments have been passed on to the Department of Defence, but there is evidently still lurking in the Minister's mind a suspicion that all is not as it should be.

The D.A.P.S. is a zealous officer, and from a cursory examination of the system it appears to be quite satisfactory but it will be an advantage to the D.A.P.S., as well as to the Commandant here, and the Minister for Defence in Australia, to get a detailed report with recommendations as to improvement, if such can be found.

The Post Office, of course, will always be a target for criticism, because it is so often used as a cloak for laziness on the part of soldiers who have not written to their relatives and friends, and who find it convenient to blame the postal people.

You are given full powers to investigate the whole service, and to interrogate any of the personnel, so that your investigation might be complete. You will use your own discretion as to how far to go, but it is suggested that you should concentrate your efforts on what appears to be the weakest line - redirection.

The Commandant places so much stress on having the postal work efficient, that he has decided to associate with you in your investigations, Captain Campbell Carmichael - his Staff Captain - and you will please confer and co-operate with him in your efforts. It is hoped that you will be able to let us have your joint report and recommendations with as little delay as possible.

H.J. WRIGHT
A.Q.M.G.

Neither of these officers had qualifications for the duty assigned to them and their appointment really meant a sitting in judgment on the high British officials who had already given a report on the subject of redirection. It will be noted that the appointing letter concludes "It is hoped that you will be able to let us have your joint report and recommendations with as little delay as possible", language which savours more of the hat and handbox trade than the Army. However Captain Carmichael did report independently of his colleague and promptly. Not so Captain Sherrington who has probably never to this day sent in any report. What he did was to proceed to Regents Park Parcels P.O. and give directions for large structural alterations. This brought him into conflict with Colonel Wheeler R.E. who informed Major Cunningham. The last named officer declined to retain responsibility while an outsider was permitted to interfere but secured no relief from Headquarters. He then sent in his resignation for the third time in the following terms -

The Commandant
A.I.F. A.H.Q.

I regret having again to submit an application that I be permitted to return to Australia to resign my Commission but I do so for the reason stated in my original application of May 1 attached.

C.S. CUNNINGHAM
Major
Director Army Postal Services, A.I.F.

130 Horseferry Road,
Westminster S.W. 1
30.7.17.

This was accompanied by the following letter :-

Dear Colonel Griffiths,

Regarding the attached application for leave to return to Australia to resign my Commission, the postal work of the A.I.F. in a greater degree than that of any other Force provides its own difficulties and anxieties, but when these are added to by constant, and I submit, unnecessary complaints and criticism from Australia I confess that I foresee less efficiency in the

future. I realise that you feel impelled by the unofficial and unmerited strictures from Melbourne to introduce drastic innovations in the methods hitherto adopted with the greatest success. These changes not only alarm me but have had the effect of making my Officers and N. C. Os. at the Australian Base Post Office restless and disgruntled. The A.I.F. on this side of the world as a whole is quite satisfied with the postal work, as I am almost daily assured and after all these are the persons most vitally concerned. If the Department of Defence had been content with an assurance that that was so and had relieved me of the stress it has compelled you to impose on me and my overworked staff, I would have been content to see the job through to the end of the campaign.

Should this application be approved I will notice with pleasure signs of continued success in the Section I have personally organised and if it be wished that I should do so, I will be glad on my return to Australia to visit the various General Post Offices of the Commonwealth and endeavour to secure better co-operation between them and the Base here.

Finally, as I have been serving three years with the A. I. F. and have had only one furlough of six days I will be grateful if I can be granted one month of leave. This would enable me to assist my successor for that period and would enable me to receive here instead of having redirected to me in Australia many letters privately addressed but bearing to some extent on official matters.

Yours faithfully.

C. S. Cunningham.
Major,
D.A.P.S., A.I.F.

130 Horseferry Road,
Westminster, S.W.1.
30.7.17.

The Commandant asked the D.A.P.S. who should be appointed to succeed him and he submitted the following:-

Commandant,
A.I.F., A.H.Q.

In obedience of your instruction I make the following remarks for your guidance in the selection of my successor as D.A.P.S., A.I.F., prefacing them with the fact that in addition to the natural difficulties peculiar to a service for scattered and constantly moving addressees with more or less makeshift offices and transport arrangements, the Australian Postal Corps handles mails of greater bulk than any State of the Commonwealth other than Victoria and New South Wales.

The Director has to serve each individual of the A.I.F. from the G.O.C. to the latest recruit and has probably to deal with them in their several capacities, but in doing his duty to them as a Force is the officer who is responsible for the technical guidance of the Commandant in matters affecting many important officials and institutions outside the Australian Army. The many serious problems which have been presented to you and your predecessors are too well known to need capitulation. He has in addition to these to negotiate with corresponding officials of other Army Administrations.

The essential qualities in a Director of Postal Services are a combination of expert postal knowledge plus a close acquaintance with the constitution of the Military Forces, a familiarity with shipping and railway transport and an ability to meet quickly any emergency and make a recommendation to his Chief on matters extending beyond his personal jurisdiction.

Coming now to the qualifications of the Officers of the Australian Postal Corps:

Captain Ross -, Has a wide knowledge of the work in the Field, being the first officer appointed for A.I.F. postal work. Since he has been at these Head-quarters he has gained a fair insight into the administrative work. He has proved reliable in all that has been entrusted to him. He has not, however, in my opinion, the resource to deal effectively with big and sudden problems and instead of advising them would have to refer to his senior officers for guidance. I do not regard him either as being strong enough to hold his own with others outside the A.I.F. when Australian interests are to be protected.

Lieut. Wilson
and
Lieut Tyler - Are both very expert postal officials in civil life and are well placed in the Base Post Office which more nearly approximates to a G.P.O. in any of the States. Neither would be at all suited for Field work nor do they understand its requirements sufficiently to administer it. They also lack the strength to safeguard Australian interests. I have found Lieut. Wilson, particularly in the early days of the Base Post Office, too yielding to pressure by the British Administration and too easily depressed by a big proposition.

Lieut. Hazeldine.)
Lieut. Fletcher)
Lieut. Waters)
and) Have all been working in the
Lieut. Hadley) Field with marked success.

They are however the converse of Lieuts. Wilson and Tyler, in that they know little or nothing of the Base work and consequently would be at a disadvantage in administering and keeping up to date that important element of the Australian Postal Service. They would be in the hands of the two Officers controlling that Department, having to accept their dictum on any expert point because they have not the expert knowledge to guide them to an independent decision. They have each done well in their respective spheres when negotiating with Officers of other Administrations. Lieut. Waters has had more of this duty than the others because of encroachment on his responsibility by an offer of the British Service and he has always maintained a sound position without undue friction. His ability as a correspondent is of a high standard owing no doubt to his training as a solicitor. He is, however, rather young and was imported as an officer with the Postal Corps from an Infantry Unit in Egypt.

So far as the Postal Corps Officers are concerned it will be seen that none of them has the necessary general experience. Captain Ross is the senior and has the wider knowledge of Base and Field work but is lacking in other essentials. Of the others I consider Lieut. Waters the most promising.

I have carefully scrutinised the Gradation List of Officers of the A.I.F. with a view to recommending a Director from outside the Postal Service. The only Officer who would at all fill the bill in my opinion is Major Hogben, who has had an insight into Civil postal work and whose meticulous work as an accountant and auditor would enable him to develop quickly into an ideal Director.

C. S. Cunningham.
Major,
D.A.P.S., A.I.F.

On August 16, 1917, Major Cunningham handed in the following report:-

A.Q.M.G.,
A.I.F.A.H.Q.

I have to report that I have to-day handed over the conduct of the postal affairs of the A.I.F. to Captain Ross, D.D.P.S. A.I.F., subject to the direction of the A.Q.M.G. Captain Ross has been assisting me as Director at these Headquarters since December 1916, and should have a thorough grasp of all matters and be able to advise the A.Q.M.G. on any matters of emergency arising, as well as carry out the system which I have established and improved as experience and change of conditions showed were necessary and advisable.

So far as my direction of the Postal Work is concerned, I leave the whole of the arrangements in smooth running order. Every Officer and man of the Postal Corps is in the place to which he is most suited, and I am able to assure you that every one of them is imbued with a proper sense of duty, and conscientiously performs his work.

Ever since the General Postal Business of the A.I.F., was instituted (8 months after the embarkation of the 1st. Division) there have been complaints concerning the results obtained. At first these came from the Field as well as the people of Australia, but in a very little while, as the extraordinary circumstances were met by proper organisation, there was an almost complete cessation of complaints from this side, and praise of the service was received from all ranks. It was not so, however, with the people in Australia owing to absolutely false statements being circulated there concerning the manner of dealing with mails. Angry criticism was levelled against the work in the public press, and in correspondence to the Defence Department. Chief among the allegations made were burning of letters, pillaging of parcels, and failure to open and deal with mails, when they were received in Egypt and London. These statements were all refuted by independent inspection but new grounds for complaint were invented. It was a noticeable feature of the bulk of those complaints that they

were general and few specific instances were quoted. Whenever a complaint was set out in detail prompt enquiry was started, and in every case satisfactory reason was given for the non-receipt of mail. It is generally realised that the time will never come when complaints will cease altogether, and in relinquishing my control of the Postal arrangements, I can confidently say that there will never be less justification for adverse criticism than at present.

Every postal item received is accounted for, being either delivered to the addressee or returned to the sender except in such cases as, in violation of the regulations, Officers Commanding Units persist in distributing contents of parcels for absentees among the men's comrades. I recommend that the strictest observance of the regulations in this regard be insisted upon, or that the regulations be absolutely abrogated, and at the same time the people of Australia informed that such distribution is authorised, and they must rest assured that the Postal work is faithfully carried out in all other respects, and if mail is not delivered it is for some good reason, which is not patent to them who are so far away from the field of operations.

So far as parcels are concerned the reasons for non-delivery are these:-

- (a) Failure to despatch from Australia.
- (b) Destruction by attrition in transit.
- (c) Destruction of parcels themselves, and others lying next by the decomposition of perishable contents.
- (d) The obliteration of addresses, and
- (e) Distribution of contents among the comrades of absentees from Units.

None of the first four cases can be controlled from England.

In the cases of (b) and (e) any articles contained in these parcels are sent to the Comforts Funds, for the use of A.I.F., soldiers generally.

A special Record system is needed for such work as is done by the Australian Base Post Office, and one was inaugurated from the outset. Theoretically the Post Office should lean on

Base Records for means to readdress undeliverable mail matter, and this should be forwarded regularly and promptly, but not waiting for it to come in the usual course it was always sought by me both at Headquarters and at 3rd Echelon. Without wishing to discredit the result of the work of the Officers of the Record Section I am compelled to say that their records have proved over and over again far behind the Post Office records which have the advantage of personal notification from the soldiers themselves, of changes in their location. A comparison of these by interchange of records will prove my contention. Therefore I urge that the valuable records of the Base Post Office be not disturbed.

The Postal system is working so smoothly that if it were not for the unjustifiable complaints from Australia the fact that it existed might easily be overlooked, but the complicated and arduous nature of the work is quickly made plain on investigation.

Inspections of Departments have from time to time been made by me and my Officers, the British Postal Officials, highly placed Military Officers and business men from Australia, and these latter have resulted in the highest commendations on all occasions.

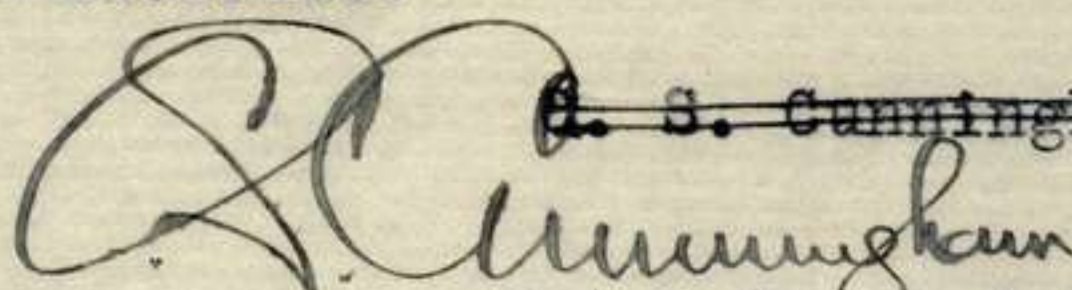
Though I have been able to bring the machinery up to a point where it should run smoothly and well, there is still in prospect a good deal to exercise the judgment and energy of the Director. Changes in composition and location of the forces which have been constant will continue, but the principal matter for consideration will be the arrangements when the repatriation, of our troops at the conclusion of the war, begins. However, I have confidence that whoever becomes Director will have the valuable advice and support of the prominent Officers of the Corps.

I regret very much that I have felt constrained to ask you to relieve me of my command. The work was interesting though full of anxiety, and I would have been glad to have seen it through to the end of the Campaign. The consideration which made me decide finally to ask for relief was, that while two Officers

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were as I understand appointed to report on the working of the Base Post Office, one of them in excess of his charter, proceeded at once to take the control out of my hands, proposing drastic innovations which were absolutely opposed to the recommendations of my Officers and my own judgment. It will be recognised that an Officer qualified to hold the important position of Director would not for one moment retain responsibility while others practically directed the work.

On my severance from the Service, I respectfully urge that the loyalty and faithful discharge of their duty by members of the A.I.F., Postal Corps might be fostered by occasional recognition of the most deserving members which I have found has been very seldom accorded.


~~G. S. Cunningham.~~
Major.
D.A.P.S., A.I.FORCES.

LONDON.
16th. August 1917.

A. I. F. POSTAL SERVICE.

HISTORICAL

When the Commonwealth launched the great enterprise which was to prove so successful in every respect in the War the necessity for providing amply for handling letters, parcels, newspapers etc. for the soldiers was evidently over looked. It is true that a postal establishment was provided but it was totally inadequate for even the First Division to which it was attached and was in such a form that it could not be enlarged as the strength of the A.I.F. increased.

The Postal Section comprised only seven men under Staff Sergt. A.W. Ross and was not equipped for the service that lay ahead of it. The result was that the Staff Sergt. (afterwards Captain Ross) had to improvise and shape his course without assistance or anything to guide him. In this respect the Postal Corps was unique among the units of the A.I.F. His altogether too small staff soon found that most of the 24 hours each day were needed to cope with the work and in times of stress were not sufficient. The N.C.O. had none of the machinery or facilities of the Postal Section of the Royal Engineers which carried out the same duty for the British Army. At the outset the leader should have had commissioned rank and his should have been an establishment on the lines of the Royal Engineers and capable of expansion. Furthermore, as was clearly demonstrated later, he should have been in close touch with Headquarters and entrusted with a certain amount of confidential information as to the contemplated changes in constitution and movement of troops. However the little postal section carried on in spite of its severe handicap and with surprising results.

When the A.I.F. embarked for Gallipoli the postal section accompanied it and the disembarkation and transport of its mails were undertaken by the British postal service. This arrangement was carried on until the beginning of June 1915 when after consultation with British Headquarters the Commandant of the Australian Intermediate Base (General Sellheim) decided to establish an Australian Base Post Office at Alexandria with a staff of twenty men under Lieut. C.S. Cunningham who had been recently transferred to the Intermediate Base from Headquarters of the Fourth Infantry Brigade and who had fortunately had a thorough training in all branches of the Civil Postal Service.

Thus after nine months delay a step was taken which should have been one of the first in the formation of the Expeditionary Forces. That nine months' lack of proper organisation brought about a chaotic state of affairs which was intensified when the troops embarked from Egypt and a still more chaotic state of affairs when the wounded began to pour back into the country and were despatched for treatment to all parts as well as to Malta and Cyprus without a proper record being taken of their destination. It must be remembered that all this had occurred before Lieut. Cunningham's command had been thought of and while Staff Sergt. Ross and his little band were doing their utmost on Gallipoli backed only by two N.C.O's and two privates in Cairo. That then was the handicap allotted to the Aust. Postal Corps at its birth and the bitter complaints which naturally arose both in the Field and in Australia damned the Corps before it began to function and gave it so bad a name that thereafter, notwithstanding the contentment of the soldiers themselves, Press and people in Australia never rested from abusing it. The newspapers were mainly to blame for publishing general abuse by correspondents instead of opening its space to specific complaints which could be answered. The publication of these letters had a very serious

effect on the minds of all Australians who had sons or brothers at the front, therefore protests were despatched from A.I.F. Headquarters from time to time. Direct protests were made too directly to the newspapers conspicuous in fault for this calamity. The reply of The Argus was that seeing that Lieut. Cunningham was the head of the postal service it could not possibly refuse to publish whatever groundless abuse was offered to it regarding the work of the Unit. That the complaints were groundless is completely demonstrated in the Despatches sent from the A.I.F. to the Defence Department again and again.

Well the Australian Base Post Office began its career on June 5, 1915. The provision of accommodation was to be made by the D.A.P.S., M.E.F. The only Office accommodation he was able to provide was half a Custom shed on the quay at Alexandria, a long dark building without ventilation, water supply, light or latrine services, and altogether too small for the amount of mail to be handled. Further, the other half of this shed which was not in any way partitioned off was occupied by a portion of the British Postal Section, and when the latter ceased work the building was closed and the Australian business had to be at a standstill.

On taking up duty the Officer Commanding the Australian Base Post Office at once pressed the D.A.P.S., M.E.F., for better accommodation, but in spite of daily representations it was not until July 28th, nearly two months later, that the proper accommodation was obtained by the conversion of an old theatre in Alexandria. On the date that occupation was entered into a mail from Australia arrived which would have filled the old Office completely leaving no room for fittings or staff. The conditions in the old office were such that there was a daily sick parade of six men out of the twenty constituting the staff. It was soon apparent that the authorised strength was altogether insufficient for the work and men were obtained from the Details Camp at Mustapha, until the total number of men

employed was 90. The D.A.P.S., M.E.F., in a report on the work urged that this number should be at once increased to 130 which was accordingly done.

The mails from Australia were landed at Suez and sent by train to Cairo for such Units as were still in that area, but the bulk of the mail which was for the Force in Gallipoli, was sent to Alexandria for despatch. The increased staff was able to deal with this mail, but as a result of operations in Gallipoli the undeliverable mail began to flow in in tremendous bulk. It was dealt with in Units and redirected according to information obtained by lists from the many Hospitals in Egypt and such information as could be got from the 3rd Echelon. The difficulties with which the 3rd Echelon met in locating men evacuated from Gallipoli to Egypt, Malta, Cyprus and England are well known, and it will be understood that the Base Post Office was absolutely unable to locate addressees^e. However, the work was carried on and redirected letters were sent to the various places at which wounded and sick Australian soldiers were known to be situated.

In August of 1915 there were 189,000 letters and a great number of parcels on hand, the addressees of which could not be traced by Records. These, however, were gradually redirected and sent on as returns from Hospitals were obtained. It was afterwards found that the Postal Orderlies of Hospitals outside the control of the Australian Base Post Office were not returning letters for Australian soldiers who had been discharged from those institutions but were holding on to them. This was particularly the case at Malta where, as a result of representations by the Officer Commanding Australian Base Post Office, and Officer of the British Administration at the Island made an investigation and found an accumulation of 3,000 letters. These were promptly returned to the Australian Base Post Office and readdressed from the material which had come to hand in the meantime.

It is notorious that at this time wounded men had been sent from Gallipoli to the various countries without system and their location was a matter of most serious difficulty.

The experience gained in the handling of returned undeliverable mail at this time was of the greatest value and though the results obtained would not compare at all favourably with the ~~present~~ ^{later} achievements the heads of the British Administration and the Egyptian Civilian Administration, who inspected the work declared that they could not suggest any improvement in the office or work. They were surprised at the bulk of the mails handled. From day to day as the conditions changed, new methods were adopted to meet them and the work was moving along with fair regularity when in December of 1915 in the midst of the Christmas rush the Australian Force was withdrawn from Gallipoli to Egypt. The re-arrangement rendered necessary by this move was completely under way when the splitting up of Units to create new Divisions was carried out. The effect of this splitting up was to render the letters for half the Australian Force absolutely unaddressed. A conference was held at A.I.F. Headquarters in Cairo at which were present General Sellheim (Commandant) General C.B.B. White, General Carruthers, Colonel Anderson, A.Q.M.G., Captain Fisher, D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Lieutenant Cunningham O.C., A.B.P.O., and Lieutenant McCurdy, O.C. N.Z. Postal Services. An attempt was made to evolve a method of dealing with the letters for the men who had been transferred from the Units to which their letters were addressed and for the reinforcements which were then arriving. The only scheme which was thought at all practicable was to send the mails in the first place to the Unit as addressed so that the mail for the personnel remaining with the parent Unit might be selected and the balance returned to the Base Post Office in order that it could be then submitted to the new Unit partly formed by the half of the parent Unit. At the same time a number of the Postal Staff were detailed to attend the 3rd Echelon to make out Nominal Rolls of all men transferred from original Units which could be used in the Redirection Department of the Base Post Office which had now grown to such an extent that it dealt with practically half the mail coming from Australia, instead of about 10 or 15 per cent which had been the average before the creation of the new units. This task was difficult

enough at the outset but it was intensified when the contingent moved from Egypt to France; then the mails were submitted to the parent or offspring Unit whichever remained in Egypt and the residue was sent across to France. Of this residue there was much mail for men supposed to be on French soil, but who had not actually been transferred. Their mail added to the returns resulting from casualties were sent down to 3rd Echelon at Rouen for redirection but it was found there absolutely impossible to cope with the mass.

Before the transference of the bulk of the A.I.F. from Egypt to France a new establishment was issued and for the first time (1916) Australian soldiers were afforded a service on the lines of the Royal Engineers Postal Section. Lieut. Cunningham was made Director of Army Postal Service with the rank of Captain, later that of Major, and commissioned rank was given to the heads of sections whose responsibilities had long been too great for men of N.C.O. rank.

In June 1916 the Australian Base Post Office was removed to London. It was August before the records which had been made in Egypt were co-ordinated with the addresses which the High Commissioner's staff had been recording in England. A card system was arranged in alphabetical order.

By the time this was completed, 474,000 letters had been received from 3rd Echelon, Rouen, and 239,000 others which were undeliverable as addressed had flowed in from Units. The Re-direction Staff was increased and reorganised to meet this problem and for the first time there was a prospect of starting un-interrupted work. It was possible to obtain returns and nominal rolls with something like thoroughness and with the aid of these not only was a daily inflow of from 15,000 to 20,000 letters matched by the despatch of redirected letters, but the bulk was gradually reduced, until 5. 11. 16 when there was an estimated residue of only 155,000 undelivered letters. That week 181,000 were redirected and despatched.

THE FOLLOWING TABLE SHOWS THE PROGRESS OF WORK IN
REDIRECTION DEPARTMENT FROM 17.8.16 -
WEEKLY from 17.9.16.

Date	Number on hand	Period	Number Received	Number Despatched
17.8.16	662,650			
17.9.16	712,950	17.8.16 to 17.9.16	480,100	429,800
24.9.16	662,800	17.9.16 to 24.9.16	112,000	162,150
1.10.16	566,175	24.9.16 to 1.10.16	115,000	211,625
8.10.16	445,950	1.10.16 to 8.10.16	101,000	221,225
15.10.16	365,450	8.10.16 to 15.10.16	142,000	222,500
22.10.16	298,000	15.10.16 to 22.10.16	154,000	221,450
29.10.16	199,000	22.10.16 to 29.10.16	132,000	231,000
5. 11.16	155,000	29.10.16 to 5.11.16	137,000	181,000

As the Force in France increased and the unfortunate casualties were more numerous the daily return of undeliverable letters from France amounted to an average of 30,000 per day for the seven days of the week, as well as a proportionate number of parcels.

The following is an outline of the procedure formerly carried out in connection with the handling of mails for reinforcements from the time of their arrival in the United Kingdom, and the present system has been instituted to meet new conditions and requirements regarding this particular section. Mails from Australia arriving at Australian Base Post Office were forwarded to the Training Camps. If the addressee was not there they were forwarded to the Divisional Base Depots, thence to Units in the Field, and if undeliverable were returned to the Australian Base Post Office. If no change of address was on record the letter was tried at various places at which the addressee was thought most likely to be located.

This system was giving an enormous amount of work to all concerned, wasting transport, stationery, delaying mail and using up staff who could be more profitably engaged without expediting the delivery of mail or having any good result, as well as increasing the circulation.

A change was made and found to be a vast improvement, resulting in 80% to 85% of mail matter being correctly delivered without delay at first location, where as formerly only 14% was deliverable. A record of all reinforcements arriving in the United Kingdom was kept at the Australian Base Post Office and on arrival of mail it was checked with records and forwarded accordingly. Any mail for an addressee whose name did not appear on record of arrivals was held pending location.

Marching In and Out States were obtained from all Training Areas, Bases, etc., and a list of reinforcements proceeding overseas was kept at sorting tables, and such mail was forwarded direct to Units without delay, the balance being despatched to the respective Training Depots, etc. Should any mail be returned from a Unit marked "not joined....." it was put through Records for location and in most cases an address was obtainable, the article being redirected and delivered.

No efforts were spared to get the soldiers to advise the Australian Base Post Office of their change of address. Circulars were distributed amongst Units, Hospitals, etc., in Egypt; notices were issued in Orders from time to time in the Anzac Bulletin and the British-Australasian and in the booklet of "Information to Australian soldiers in Hospital"; notices boards were exhibited in Headquarters and in Soldiers' Clubs, etc; Red Cross Official Visitors were asked to tell soldiers when they visited them in Hospitals; and finally there were notices inserted in men's paybooks as opportunity offered. The letters redirected from the Australian Base Post Office also bore a slip to that effect. There were approximately 1,800 personal notifications received daily at the Australian Base Post Office in addition to

the information contained in Returns, Nominal Rolls, etc.

The same system, but of course on a smaller scale, was being carried out in Egypt and so far as complaints were concerned with great satisfaction.

Ever since the first A.I.F. contingent landed in Egypt there had been complaints concerning the non-delivery of letters and parcels. The great bulk of these complaints had been from Australia either in the form of letters from private individuals direct or from the Defence Department, while there had been a great many in the Press of Australia. The utmost care had been taken to investigate every individual case and it was found that in nearly 100% of the cases the explanation has been satisfactory from a postal point of view. Letters had been missent but not in any greater proportion than would be found in any Civil postal system. About 3% of the actual receipts from Australia had been returned to the senders as undeliverable and some sent back incorrectly marked "Killed", "Missing" or "Wounded", and had resulted in the receipt of complaints, but it is pointed out that in returning these letters the postal system was justified by the endorsements on the letters made erroneously by an Officer of the addressee's Unit.

As an example the D.A.P.S. was informed by an Officer that an Australian Colonel whom he named had been killed. In the Area it was confidently believed to be true. The Colonel's letters might excusably have been marked "Killed in Action" but a few days later the D.A.P.S. encountered the supposedly deceased officer scathless.

The then system of dealing with undeliverable mail was the best that could be devised at that date, but it was amended from time to time by the light of experience which has been carefully noted from the earliest history of the Base Post Office.

Mr. Keith Murdoch who was specially appointed by the Defence Department to report on the Postal arrangements in Egypt said at the end of August 1915 "complaints seem justified in

Australia but after a few breaths in the war zone one is disinclined to criticise" and that he found the Australian Military Authorities everywhere anxious that the soldier should receive every article posted to him, and the Officers in charge had the postal sense highly developed and were not satisfied until every means of delivering the postal article had been exploited. What he stated concerning affairs at that time, it is claimed is what might well be said of the postal service since that date.

FIELD SERVICE CONDITIONS.

The outstanding effect of Field Service conditions is to show that the methods of the Civil Postal System cannot be slavishly adopted by an Army Postal Corps because the Civil Service was never confronted with the problems presented daily to the D.A.P.S. For instance what Postal Department has ever had to deal with undeliverable letters in such bulk and with such meagre information as to the whereabouts of the addressee? Again in the case of registered mail matter how would the Civil Service safeguard it if like the service in the field it possessed no strong rooms or safes? Taking the G.P.O. Melbourne for example, how would it act if the postal district of Fitzroy were suddenly removed in its entirety and to a location it was not made aware of? These difficulties would cause abuse to fall on the Department for non-delivery of mail but probably in its case its explanation would be accepted. Not so with the pre-damned Army Postal Corps. However that was not the worst experience of the A.I.F. postmen because as already stated on the return from Gallipoli to Egypt the Units were split, half retaining its old designation and being filled to strength by reinforcements while the other half assumed a new number and was also brought up to strength by drawing on reinforcements. The effect of this change from a postal point of view was as though half the residents of Prahran had been transferred to Williamstown and had been replaced by a similar number from Carlton and every suburb of the metropolis was similarly affected.

What would be regarded by the Civil Administration as a flagrant breach of regulations had to be resorted to by the D.A.P.S. Thousands of pounds were being remitted to A.I.F. soldiers through the Commonwealth Bank and sent out to the soldier concerned in Bank of England notes enclosed in envelopes bearing a big seal in wax and with the name of the Bank conspicuously upon it. There had been too many raids on outlying Field post offices and indeed on the Base Post Office itself and these registered letters practically screaming out the value of their contents were the lodestone. The Manager of the Bank was requested by Major Cunningham to notify the A.I.F. Paymaster of amounts due to soldiers and that officer who had means of guarding treasure which the postal service had not would disburse the amounts and draw on the bank. Furthermore the Paymaster could secure the signature of the payee which was not always possible by the postal orderly. For some reason best known to himself the Bank Manager persisted in sending currency through the post. It should be stated that in the event of the loss of a registered letter containing money no matter what the amount the compensation is only up to a certain amount according to the postage paid. In many cases a soldier who thus lost £20 could only receive £2. When the Bank Manager would not fall in with the effort to save the soldiers from risk of loss Major Cunningham took the extraordinary step of returning all registered letters to the Bank notwithstanding they had already been accepted by the British Postal Department and the postage obliterated. No Civil Postal Department would dare fly in the face of the Convention in this way but it was sufficient for the D.A.P.S. and resulted in the passing of the money through the Paymaster. Field Service Regulations Part II Sec. 99 Par. 7 says "All letters and articles sent by post are despatched at sender's risk the postal authorities giving no guarantee of delivery". These conditions could not have been known in Australia when yielding to the clamour of anonymous and groundless complaints already referred to the Defence Department sent out a postal detachment under Captain Fisher to re-organise

and administer the service. That Officer who had no experience in the Army immediately effected changes to bring the service into accord with the Civil System. He took charge on December 3, 1915 and held the position until March 28, 1916, ^{a little over three months} when Captain Cunningham resumed the command gradually reverting to field conditions.

REDIRECTION.

Regulations provide for records by Third Echelon (Records) and there is no provision for a record being kept by the Postal Section. This was emphatically pointed out by several high officers on Headquarters and the D.A.P.S. was instructed to discontinue the records he had inaugurated and rely on Third Echelon. He pointed out that if he desisted that day another would inevitably start next day when some member of the A.I.F. wrote asking for his mail to be re-directed in a certain way. For postal purposes Third Echelon records are useless owing to the method of their compilation. They are not so up-to-date as the Post Office records which result from direct intimation from the soldier of his rapid movements. The truth of the foregoing will be realised when it is remembered that the making of Third Echelon record is made as follows:- The daily state of each unit is passed through each Battalion, Brigade, Division and Corps to Third Echelon which was then at Rouen. The marchings in and out were duly "debited" and "credited" to the units concerned and a return made to Records Section Headquarters London. According to notices received by the Australian Base Post Office as many as 1800 men were moving from unit to unit each day so it is clear that the official records were being worked on day and night and were being used for other sections such as the Pay Corps, Deceased Soldiers' effects etc. In the circumstances they would not have been available to the Base Post Office Re-direction Section which would have required continual reference to them through-out the day and night. It will also be patent that records so compiled could not be so up to date as those made up from direct intimation from the man himself. For instance

a wounded man might pass through the Casualty, Field and Base Hospitals into a convalescent hospital and finally to Details or back to his unit in a few days. His various movements would be passed to the A.B.P.O. by Records Section one after the other with the delay caused by the routine above referred to and probably by the time the first had arrived the man had settled in his fifth location and notified the Base P.O. to that effect. To prove the advantage of the Base P.O. records a list of 50 names was submitted by the A.B.P.O. to Records at Headquarters for latest addresses on 5.7.17. Fifteen days later the list was returned. Notwithstanding the lapse of time the A.B.P.O. addresses were more recent in 21 cases. In three cases the Records Section had later addresses but these were dated after the despatch of the list from the A.B.P.O. A Lieutenant in the Headquarters Record Section admitted that only 80 names per man could be checked per day and a private in the section declared that it took 2 hours to scrutinise 25 names. Out of a list of 72 names submitted by A.B.P.O. to Records Section 13 were marked "no trace". If vindication of the A.B.P.O. records were required it is found in the fact that before they were established in London undeliverable letters were sent to Third Echelon Rouen where they stagnated accumulating to the extent of 500,000. As an example of the information supplied by the Headquarters Records section the following is instructive,- attention is invited to the occurrence of the dates which are in the order supplied.

3715 Private

11th Battalion.

(1)	O.C. Battn.	Joined Battalion	2. 3.16.
(2)	Embarked to join B.E.F. Alexandria		29. 3.16
	Disembarked at Marseilles		5. 4.16
(3)	Wounded in action, France		25. 7.16
(4)	1st Field Ambulance. Adm.G.S.W.	Back	20. 7.16
	44 C.C.S.	" " " France	23. 7.16
	3rd Sty. Hospital	" " Rouen	20. 7.16.
	To England per H.S. "St.Andrew"		25. 7.16
	3rd Western Gen. Adm.Wounded (Sick)		26. 7.16
	No. 1 Command Depot Marched in Classification		
	B.1a, Perham Down		22. 9.16

No. 1 Aux. Hospital, Amd. G.S.W. Back Harefield	12.8.16
Discharged to Perham Down, Class A.1 Fit	6.9.16
No. 1 Command Depot. Marched in from Hosp. Eng.	13.11.16
No. 1 Marched out to Parkhouse V.D.	1.12.16
Command Depot Marched in from Hosp.	11.12.16
" " To Brigade Hosp. V.D.	29.9.16
" " Sick to Brigade Hosp.	29.12.16
Parkhouse V.D. Adm. Bulford	20.12.16
Military Hosp. Trans. to Parkhouse	20. 1.17

Last report

Another example this time showing the efforts of the
A.B.P.O. to deliver an ordinary letter to a soldier.

PRECIS OF PAPERS RELATING TO DELIVERY OF LETTER
TO NO. 558 CORPORAL 13th BATTALION, A.I.F.

1916

1st April Australian Military Office, London, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F. Cairo
Letter enclosed for Corporal who has rejoined M.E.F. from here. Please deliver.

21st April A.I.F. Records, Cairo, show Corporal in Hospital, England, July 1915.

22nd April D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo, to O.C., Australian Records Section, M.E.F., Alexandria.
Please inform me of latest whereabouts of this soldier.

24th April O.C. Aust. Records Section, Alexandria, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo.
Latest report this soldier proceeded from England 24/3/1916 to join M.E.F.

1st May D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo, to O.C., Overseas Base, Tel-el-Kebir
If he is with you, please deliver this letter to Corporal .

5th May O.C., Details Camp, Tel-el-Kabir, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo.
No record of this Corporal.

6th May D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo, to O.C., Australian Section M.E.F. Alexandria.
Please inform me of latest whereabouts of Corporal .

17th May O.C., Australian Records Section, Alexandria, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., Cairo
No report later than that of 24/4/1916.

24th May O.C. Australian Base Post Office, Port Taufiq, to O.C., 13th Battalion, A.I.F.
Is Corporal with you, please?

26th May O.C., 13th Battalion, Serapeum, to O.C. Australian Base Post Office, Port Taufiq.
Corporal is not with this Battalion.

29th May O.C., Australian Base Post Office, Port Taufiq, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London.
Delivery cannot be effected in this country.

28th July D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London, to O.C., Australian Base Post Office, London.
Latest address recorded 4th Training Battalion, Tel-el-Kebir.

1916

- 13th August D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London, to O.C., 4th Training Batt'n.,
Tidworth
If Corporal is with you, please have attached
letter delivered.
- 3rd August O.C., 4th Training Battalion to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London.
Corporal joined the 13th Battalion and proceeded
Overseas from Egypt.
- 11th August D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London to O.C., 13th Battalion, France
If Corporal is with you, please have attached
letter delivered.
- 13th Septr. O.C., 13th Battalion, to O.C., 45th Battalion, A.I.F.,
Passed to you.
- 4th October O.C., 45th Battalion, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London
Lance-Corporal was evacuated sick to Hospital
17/9/1916/
- 11th October D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London to O.C., Northampton War
Hospital, Northampton.
If this man is in your Hospital, please have attached
letter delivered.
- 13th October O.C., Northamptonshire War Hospital, to D.A.P.S., A.I.F.
London.
This man has never been in this Hospital.
- 16th October D.A.P.S., A.I.F., London, to O.C., Australian Base Post
Office, London.
Have you any address for this man, please. If so, forward
letter.
- 20th October O.C. Australian Base Post Office, London, to O.C.
Northamptonshire War Hospital, Northampton.
Our records show Corporal to be at present in
your Hospital. Please deliver letter.
- 21st October O.C., Northamptonshire War Hospital, Northamptonshire
to O.C., Australian Base Post Office, London.
Letter has now been delivered to Corporal .
- 24th October O.C., Australian Base Post Office, London, to D.A.P.S.
A.I.F., London.
Correspondence returned herewith.

The correspondents of 2068 Pte no doubt grew
impatient when their letters did not reach him but probably
they did not know that he had been detailed to the following
duties -

To H.C.O. in Charge Records,
Base Post Office.

3rd Battalion	Signaller
St. George's Hospital	Malta
King Georges Hospital	
Kingston Hospital	
Orderly Room Staff	Abbey Wood
" " "	Weymouth
" " "	Overseas Base HQ.
	Egypt.
	(Acting C.S.M.)
Details 1st Training Btn.	
45th Battalion	
No. 2 Aux. Hospital	Heliopolis
14th Training Battn	Sig. Sergeant
5th A.D.B.D.	Orderly Room Staff
55th Battalion	
1st Southern General Hospital	
Horburne Hall Hospital	
A.I.F.H.Q.	Staff

The D.A.P.S. (Major Cunningham) of his own volition being troubled by the newspaper complaints in Australia asked General Williamson R.E. to have the Australian method of dealing with undeliverable mail reported on by his most expert officers. In his reply General Williamson said "I asked Colonel Wheeler and Mr. Green of the Returned Letter Section London to examine and report on your system and I enclose their reports. I agree with the general conclusion that your present system is too complete and no reasonable objection could be raised if letters were returned as finally undeliverable at an earlier stage, say after a month, as suggested by Colonel Wheeler instead of three months as at present. You will no doubt agree that in the case of correspondence posted in this country (England) for the Australian contingent there is no reason why the general practice in force in the British Expeditionary Force should not be followed and all letters except those for the killed and missing returned at once to the senders".

Mr. Green said "XXX the third search of the cards which I am informed does not result in the redirection of many letters. In view of the time and expense involved it is a question perhaps whether this third search is justified by results and whether there are not reasonable grounds for its discontinuance. There may be some objection to this on account of the strong

desire of the Australian Government that every possible letter should reach the addressee but the point is perhaps worth considering."

The British Postal service has no redirection department and its officers urged Major Cunningham to return an undeliverable letter at once to the sender. He, however, pointed out that it was then taking ten weeks for a letter to pass to or from Australia and while there was the remotest chance of delivery the effort should be made.

The personnel of the A.B.P.O. was entirely composed of A.I.F. soldiers but when reinforcements were not coming forward in sufficient numbers female clerks were employed by Major Cunningham at Mt. Pleasant and Regents Park (Parcels P.O.) releasing more than 50 per cent of his male staff for the fighting force.

COMPLAINTS.

Complaints against the A.I.F. postal service were divisible into several classes

(1) Genuine complaints which arose from irregularities consequent on the lack of organisation for the first nine months, then from lack of information as to the whereabouts of men wounded on Gallipoli, then through the splitting of units resulting in 50 per cent of the Men's mail having to be re-addressed.

(2) Complaints by persons who erroneously assumed that their soldier friends were not receiving their mail because no replies were being received to letters; and

(3) Deliberate misrepresentation.

The first class emanated from soldiers in the Field and became negligible when the A.B.P.O. got fairly to work and it was realised that the best efforts were being made on their behalf.

The second class continued right through until repatriation was complete.

The third class on the other hand did not begin to be made until after the evacuation of Gallipoli. While the first two classes were made to the Postal Staff direct the last were passed back to Australia and came to light in anonymous letters to newspapers. Some were specific but others were so general in character that it was impossible to deal with them.

The favourite charge made by those not daring to make their names known was the burning of letters. This class of complaint needed no answer because it was obvious no letters were delivered to any soldier or the complainants were deliberately picked out for 12 months and were destroyed. The burning charge was like King Charles head, paraded on every conceivable occasion but while the circumstances alleged in each case were the same the location of the offence was variously stated. A typical case is here stated :-

In February 1916 a Corporal of the 24th Battalion who was at the time in the Base Details Camp, Zeitoun, Egypt, stated to Captain Fisher, the then D.A.P.S., A.I.F., that "A Corporal in the Y.M.C.A. tent, Zeitoun, had told him that an N.C.O. and 3 men had been furnished with a list of names of men in the 6th Brigade who were in Base Details, Zeitoun, and a special leave pass to proceed to Tel-el-Kebir and on arriving there found that the mail had been burnt."

Captain Fisher visited Zeitoun to obtain confirmation of this statement, but nobody could give any definite information, although rumours of the burning of mail matter were current.

Statements were also made at the same time that mail at one of the Divisional Artillery Camps, Tel-el-Kebir, had been burnt.

Both cases were referred to Headquarters, Australian Provisional Formations, for investigations which elicited that a case of alleged burning had occurred in the 1st Australian Divisional Artillery. About 6th January 1916 a report was made by a Gunner of the 1st Field Artillery Brigade that he had seen a bag of mail taken to and emptied into an incinerator. In

consequence of this the Post Orderly of the 1st Divisional Artillery was court-martialled, but was acquitted. Nothing was ascertainable in regard to the 6th Infantry Brigade.

In April 1916 a letter appeared in the "ARGUS" newspaper, written by a Miss _____, Surrey Hills, Victoria stating inter alia, that letters for soldiers were burnt. Miss _____ was written to on the 8th June 1916 by the D.A.P.S., A.I.F., and replying on the 9th August mentioned that "the statement I made about the burning of letters is a fact and we are not the only family that has received the news." It was added that the letters were in a box at Zeitoun marked "Unclaimed letters - To be burnt". Miss _____ letters were based on information she was given by her brother, No. 2191 Private _____ 5th Battalion, A.I.F. He was accordingly communicated with and asked to furnish any information he could to enable the matter to be investigated by Board of Enquiry. To this request he replied that he was receiving his letters regularly and that "the party from whom the statement came was unfortunately killed at Pozieres".

The questions asked in Parliament by Mr. Maloney, M.P. on 7th and 14th December 1916 refer to the rumours in circulation in Egypt which have been dealt with above. Although the investigation previously made did not result in any confirmation of the statements, further enquiry was again made and Headquarters, 2nd Aust. Division, reported that "nothing was known of the burning of these letters" and the General Officer Commanding, 6th Australian Infantry Brigade, stated that "(1) No official enquiry was made in January/February 1916 into the burning of mail letters of the 6th Aust. Infantry Brigade, Tel-el-Kebir or elsewhere; (2) No 6th Brigade letters have been burnt by Order or otherwise within the knowledge of anyone in the Brigade.

Another case of alleged burning of mail matter was referred to with a view to a statement being obtained from No. 4494 Pte. _____ who had returned to Australia. Unless Pte _____ could give something definite, this case also became one of rumour.

It will be seen that while so many people "knew" that letters were burnt, none could give any particulars definite enough to enable a Board of Enquiry to investigate the case. Perhaps Mr. Maloney, M.P., or his correspondent will give us these particulars.

In a letter to a newspaper a soldier's wife complained that her husband got only one letter out of many until she sent them under cover to be reposted in England and then all was well. The essence of her complaint vanishes at once when it is pointed out that the letters reposted in England still had to pass through the Australian Army postal service to the soldier.

Only 3 per cent of the letters received by the A.B.P.O. were finally returned to Australia as undeliverable.

The Secretary of the Australian War Contingent Assn. London sent a strong protest from a soldier that he had been away from home 18 months and had received no letters. The man's record was turned up and it was found that he had enlisted in Queensland only a year before and had landed in England only six months before he wrote his complaint !!!

Another case - Mr. G.H.F. of Legrave England complained that Pte had not received letters or parcels and one parcel specially indicated. A.B.P.O. was able to show the complaint was unfounded and the soldier confessed to the complainant that he had received all that were due - Mr G.H.F. apologised and said the soldier was to be penalised by having neither letters or parcels sent to him for six months.

On February 24th "The Age" published a letter from L.D. stating that he had posted a letter to his brother in France on the 13th inst. and had it returned six days later marked "Unable to trace received unclaimed from abroad".

Sister complained that she had not received even one letter from her mother since leaving Australia and said they were addressed "care of the Matron in Chief". It was suggested to her that they probably went to the Matron in Chief British

Forces and in that case would be returned at once as she was not known. Sister subsequently wrote saying the surmise was correct and that she was then receiving all her letters.

Here is a case of a complaint self rebutted. The Age of August 14, 1916 said a young man in Egypt had received only three letters out of hundreds sent to him and he wrote to his parents expressing his disappointment, humiliation and suspense which was worse than war. It was said that while certain men in the unit received their letters regularly others never received a letter. Is it not clear that the fault lay outside the postal service? The disappointed soldiers must have received occasional letters at least or the postal service hard pressed with the heavy work must have added to its toil by "running" the letters to pick out and destroy theirs.

Major Cunningham although thoroughly satisfied that such complaints were groundless resolved to ascertain the views of his officers and sent the following communication receiving the appended replies.

Complaints continue to be made in Australia that some members of the A.I.F. abroad do not receive their letters, and that it is not a question of missing an occasional letter but that none, though as many as 50 are sent, reach them.

Assuming that the missing letters are properly addressed, posted and despatched from Australia it is absolutely impossible to believe that every letter miscarries while well over 90 per cent of letters from Australia reach the addressees. It would mean that the letters which are the subject of the complainants are deliberately picked out and destroyed or that to insure that none out of say 20 letters reach a man, hundreds of thousands are lost or destroyed. Such a suggestion would be ridiculous to any one who knows the working of the Australian Postal Corps, but I wish you to give the matter the closest attention and set out any explanation that occurs to you. In doing so state

clearly whether any letters are held at any of the Offices in your sphere, or at the Battalions, and whether you have any knowledge which would justify rumours that letters are burnt. It is incredible that such should occur because I realise that the members of the Australian Postal Corps are not only familiar with the strict Postal Regulations, but also faithfully observe them.

You might remind the members of the Corps of the invitation issued to them in Egypt to submit suggestions which their particular duty leads them to believe would in any way improve the Service.

Director Army Postal Services, A.I. Forces.

October 10, 1916.

16th October 1916

I beg to state that, based on the figures recently taken of the amount of mail matter handled at this Base for the month of August last, it is estimated that, excluding correspondence for the "Killed and Missing" men, barely 7 per cent of the letters, packets and parcels, which are returned from Units for various reasons are returned to Australia as "Undeliverable to addressee".

The major portion of such correspondence returned is owing to the addressee's being transferred to another Unit, and failing to advise this Base of such changes.

Taking the whole mail of the Australian Imperial Force, I am of opinion that quite 97 per cent is delivered to the addressee, and considering the many disadvantages under which Army Postal work has to be conducted, and the indifference shown by so many members of the Australian Imperial Force in failing to notify us of their change of address, I think you will agree that the result is very satisfactory.

C.P. WILSON, Lieutenant.
O.C., Australian Base Post Office.

19th October 1916.

The only instances of the delays complained of I have been able to trace are cases where the addressees have been frequently transferred from Unit to Unit in quick succession, not allowing their

correspondence sufficient time to reach them between transfers, e.g. Private A.O. in my own Office left Australia with the 6th reinforcements to 23rd Battalion, was drafted from Details to the 58th Battalion, then attached to Base P.O., Egypt, thence to Base P.O., Marseilles, A.P.O., and finally to this office. He received no letters during four and a half months, but after remaining some time in this Office letters reached him in large numbers, many of them having been to Base Records Office and his correspondence is now up-to-date.

No letters are knowingly held at a Field Post Office for any length of time, as it is always to the advantage of an F.P.O., to keep the Office as clear as possible owing to the likelihood of a move at any time. The same would apply to a Unit, but I have encountered several instances of mail being held by Units, all of which cases happened some time ago and no recurrences have come to notice lately.

I have no knowledge of mail matter ever having been burnt or destroyed and am of opinion that the rumour is groundless and absurd. All members of the Postal Staff fully realise the gravity of such an offence.

The last para of your memo of 10th instant has been brought to notice and any suggestions received will be forwarded.

A.W. ROSS Lieutenant
D.A.D.P.S., 1st ANZAC.

16th October 1916.

With reference to yours of the 10th instant relative to the non-receipt of letters by some members of the A.I.F., I beg to state that I have given the matter careful consideration and thorough investigation.

If letters are properly addressed, posted and despatched from Australia, I most decidedly state that the addressees would receive same.

The suggestion that letters are deliberately picked out and destroyed is almost too farcical to consider, as when a mail

arrives, all the Post Orderlies are present, and witness the opening of bags and the subsequent sorting of the mail. I also make it a point - when possible - of visiting the Field Post Offices under my control at the time when a mail arrives and make a personal check of mails.

No letters are ever held at any of my offices. They are either delivered to the Postal Orderly, re-addressed or returned to the Base as "undeliverable", or for the purpose of tracing addressee. Again the Travelling Warrant Officer visits the various Field Post Offices at least twice and generally three times a week and reports to me.

The members of the Corps under my control have been reminded of the particulars contained in your last para.

A. J. Wilson Lieut
D.A.D.P.S 2nd. ANZAC
10th October 1916.

For such a case as stated to occur it would mean a deliberate breach of regulations by one of the delivering Office, and such I am sure is not occurring in any Field Post Office under my control.

Letters are redirected and are not unnecessarily delayed by Unit Orderlies.

The greatest delay occurs at a Command Depot where such a vast number of men simply pass through and are only in camp a couple of weeks before passing on to various Units, but their location is given as a Command Depot or Camp, and even at this point letters are attended to as promptly as possible and certainly none are destroyed or deliberately put out of course.

The only point where I see letters are likely to be seriously delayed reaching the addressee is when a man is continually transferring from one Unit to another and does not advise the Australian Base Post Office of F.P.O. of change.

Several complaints of non-receipt of correspondence from Australia which I have enquired into prove to be caused by the addressee having been transferred to another Unit, not advising his new address, then writing home complaining that he is not receiving

mail, but by the time complaint is investigated it is invariably found that the person is receiving mail correctly, but has neglected to advise his correspondents in Australia.

All members of the Australian Postal Corps have been invited to submit any suggestions for improvement, however slight, also to point out anything that is likely to lead to the non-delivery of postal matter.

E.HAZELDINE

D.A.D.P.S.

In reference to your circular regarding complaints of non-delivery of mail matter for members of the A.I.F. and inviting suggestions as to the reason of such non-delivery - if any - I wish to bring under your notice the following facts which have come to my knowledge during my connection with the Postal Corps.

First, and foremost, it is incontestable that mail matter, correctly addressed, almost invariably reaches the Unit concerned without any undue delay. (Note this remark does not apply to reinforcements, which I will deal with later).

If the addressees are with their Units, I think it will be conceded that the whole of their mail - if correctly addressed - is safely delivered, but in the cases of the absentees, such as wounded sick and detached etc., no other course is open but to return the mail to the B.R.O., where of course, some considerable time elapses before the men's whereabouts become known.

The Post Orderlies appointed by Unit Commanders are often, in my opinion, unsuitable for the work and sufficient care does not appear to be taken in their selection, and the responsibility of the Regimental authorities for the safe custody and delivery of mail is apparently not generally realised.

As these Post Orderlies, in most cases, do no other duty than Postal work, I think a great deal of the difficulty could be overcome by incorporating them in the Postal Corps, where they would be directly under the control of the D.A.D.P.S. concerned and of the N.C.O. in charge of the Field Post Office serving the Unit.

The whole crux of the question undoubtedly lies in the close control of Post Orderlies by the Postal authorities alone, and in the Record System, which to be effective - so far as the Postal Services are concerned - - must be of an absolutely reliable character and have immediate information as to the men's movements once they leave their Units.

This information from my own observation, does not appear to reach the B.R.O. sufficiently quickly to be of any great service to the Postal Department, as the addressees in a great many cases, have left the last recorded address long before the mail comes to hand.

This involves a constant circulation of mail from B.R.O. to France and vice-versa and in many cases is travelling for three or four months before eventually reaching the addressees.

The very same causes of delay apply to the reinforcements who are often drafted to Units other than those which they were originally intended to re-inforce and to which their mail is addressed.

I think such complaints, as the non-delivery of batches of 20 and 50 letters etc., arise from long delay in delivery and in no case from final loss.

In many cases the C.O.'s of Depots themselves, are ignorant as to the Units the men are marching out to reinforce, and this is especially noticeable of some of the drafts arriving from the camps in England.

Unless immediate information of the men's movements is obtainable, I cannot see how these complaints can be overcome as this, together with the Post Orderly question, is unquestionably the only solution for the difficulties set forth.

All correspondence reaching the Etaples A.P.O.'s is dealt with without delay, and no instance has come to my knowledge where any great delay has occurred in returning mail from the Unit Orderly rooms to the A.P.O.'s concerned.

A close watch is kept on the Post Orderlies, but this of course is a matter of great difficulty in the Field.

Even here, where the A.P.O.'s are stationary, such super-

vision as would be possible, were the Post Orderlies members of the Postal Corps, cannot be enforced.

Arguments will be advanced that this course would mean the withdrawing of a considerable number of men from combatant Units, but these objections are not, and never have been, valid ones.

C. FLETCHER Lt.
D.A.D.P.S. Etaples.

P A R C E L S.

Parcels were the delight of the soldier on Service. Letters were eagerly looked for but parcels were more than coronets.

The Argus of October 20, 1916 said that 186 tons (72,658) of Christmas parcels were despatched by the Melbourne General Post Office. When parcels arrived in London there was not room enough for them in the great Regents Park P.O., or rather in the Australian Section of it because the whole building occupied $5\frac{1}{2}$ acres of ground, therefore some were stacked under tarpaulins outside with a strong guard over them. The High Commissioner visited the office and was amazed at the bulk. He ventured the opinion that so many parcels could not be sorted, repacked when found damaged, listed and despatched for at least six months but they had all been delivered to the Units before the end of January.

With perhaps one exception no Army Postal Service listed its parcels and so treated them as registered articles. The sons of none of the Allies were so generously treated in the way of gifts and comforts as the Australians and it would be interesting, but never likely to be known what was the aggregate weight and number of parcels which the A.B.P.O. was called on to handle during the War.

It was not merely the duty of the postal staff to open a mail bag, empty it of parcels, sort them and enclose them again in other bags. In the earlier days before the recommendations of the O.C. A.B.P.O. passed through the Defence Dept to the people of Australia the majority of parcels in each bag were broken and their contents mixed. This was the result in some cases of flimsy and

careless packing but there was a far more serious reason, viz., the inclusion in the parcels of perishable matter. It can easily be understood that those parcels with the ungentle handling and the heat of the tropics were inevitably a nasty mess when the bags were opened in London but more than that they affected parcels with dry ^{contents} contiguous to them with disastrous results. His Majesty The King Her Majesty The Queen and Princess Mary paid a visit to Regent Park P.O. and The King was particularly interested in the Australian parcels post.

As an example of many parcels the contents of this one, a cardboard box, is given. Chocolate, candles, glass, lemon, tins of milk, tins of cocoa, postcards, treacle, herrings, tomatoes, soap and biscuits. Eggs, butter, cheese and fruit were popular media for the expression of affection by Australian relatives and friends for the soldiers, but the chief optimist sent a dressed (uncooked) fowl which was variegated when its covering was removed at Regents Park.

These damaged parcels were most carefully dealt with from the inception of the A.B.P.O. First of all such contents of the bag as were useless owing to rottenness or pulping were thrown out as garbage. The balance cleaned from the filth were repacked as nearly as it could be judged with their respective fellows. All those parcels bore notices for the addressees that they had arrived in a damaged condition and in cases where it had been necessary to "jettison" any part of contents this also was stated.

Complaints of the non-delivery of parcels were naturally expected and they came to hand. It was impossible to inform every complainant of what is above stated but it was noticeable that complaints fell off considerably when the senders of parcels packed them more securely and rationally. The D.A.P.S. made special inquiry into the causes of non-delivery and found them to be - Failure to despatch from Australia; destruction by attrition in transit; destruction of parcels themselves and others lying next by the decomposition of perishable contents; the obliteration of addresses and distribution of contents of parcels for absentees

from Units by C.O.'s among addressees comrades. He recommended that these conclusions be referred to soldiers' relatives and evidently they were endorsed for the A.B.P.O. heard less of the hardship it was supposed to be causing. Towards the end of 1916 enquiry was received from Australia for nine parcels sent to Sapper No. 5651 of the 14th Field Company Engineers and the report from the C.O. of that unit read "Attached list of parcels for 5651 Sapper ----- late of 14th F.C.E. were received and given to his section Sergt. No. 1256 Sergt.----- distributed them amongst the men of the late Sapper's Section and where possible wrote to the sender giving an account of what had been done with the parcels".

PECULIAR ADDRESSING

The following address on a letter brought to the attention of the D.A.P.S. can hardly be termed "Insufficient address" "No. 2190 Private ----- Sick, 1st Australian Infantry 1st Battalion Australian Imperial Force, Australian Intermediate Depot, Bostall Health Camp Abbey Wood Kent No. 2 General Hospital Ward 35 Bed 15 Chelsea London S.W. c/o High Commissioner for Australia Commonwealth Offices London England"; or this "Private --- Boy Scout Association Ocean Beach Troop No. 29 Western Australia Belgium" . An example of a "wide" address is this "No. 20 Corporal -----Div. Amm. Dist. Ord. Stores Australian Imperial Force, France". As if to make the task of the postal Corps harder coincidence stepped in and provided some remarkable instances. Two Privates with the same surname and the same regimental numbers but different initials were by the transfer of one from another Unit in the 53rd Battalion and both were wounded about the same time. One Commandant A.I.F. Headquarters London who had three unusual names had a full namesake in a Sergeant of the Forces.

APPRECIATION

It would seem up to this point this report is an apologia for the Postal Service. Be that so or not it is now

pleasant to offer the other side of the picture. In the first place the soldier in the field was the chief consideration of the Postal Corps. He knew the conditions and whether to expect good or indifferent service. As already stated he had occasion for his "growse" because of the lack of organisation at the beginning and he did not let the occasion pass were he officer or private. However the soldiers were not content to voice their discontent they enquired as to the reason why and saw the reasonableness of the explanation. The uniform reply when they were asked if they were getting their mail regularly because their correspondents in Australia had complained that they had not was to this effect "Oh, it was bad for a time but I was on the move every thing O.K. now". Borton Pasha Postmaster General of Egypt wrote to Major Cunningham "As I was saying to you the other day the difficulties of your Post Office in this country were probably far greater than is generally known by those not cognisant with the onerous conditions under which you all had to work. On first arrival I gathered that most of your men had but little postal training and naturally the language difficulty in Egypt presented considerable trouble; moreover all postal equipment had to be made after arrival, as far as I remember, and owing to the junior rank of those in charge, there was much difficulty in obtaining information. Then again after Gallipoli the remaking of the Force presented enormous postal difficulty which naturally can hardly be understood by outsiders, but for you to find men who had left Australia in one Unit and joined another on arrival in Egypt, must have entailed great work and I can only congratulate you in your results".

Major General Monash was forever watching the personal welfare of the men of the A.I.F.. From many of his communications the following are culled :-

"Need I say once again how very grateful I am to you for your personal help in so greatly facilitating the rapid transmission of mails from Australia".

"Letter reached me (Gallipoli) today, i.e., only 5 days en

route, the quickest time on record so far as letters from Egypt usually take 8 to 10 days and some have taken 30 days."

"Most certainly there has been a great improvement in our mails since you took charge. Australian letters used to take 40 to 45 days to get here now they are coming in 33 to 35 days".

"I am very sorry that the A.I.F. will lose the benefit of your management of postal matters. For many months past, I can frankly say that no complaint of any kind has come to my notice. Comparing this state of things with that which prevailed before matters were fully in your charge I think nothing could reflect greater credit on your management".

Mr. Keith Murdoch in his report on the work of the Postal Corps in August 1915 said :-

"Complaints seemed justified in Australia but after a few breaths in the War Zone one is disinclined to criticise. I found the Australian Military authorities everywhere anxious that a soldier should receive every article posted to him. The officers in charge had the postal sense highly developed and were not satisfied till every means of delivering postal articles had been exploited.

Question of precedence of postal affairs arose when 16,000 wounded arrived in Egypt in a fortnight. Hospital officials were too occupied attending patients to supply returns for guidance of Postal Officials".

Brigadier General McGlinn.

"The mails have been A 1 for some time past. Keep them going so."

Mr. G.E. Lodge -

"I am very much obliged to you for all the trouble you have taken in the matter xxxxx Mails are being received all right".

Mr. T. Baker (Kodak Ltd) "I quite agree that the reason men's letters are delayed ^{is} as a rule their own negligence. On my last trip there were fewer complaints than in hospitals I had previously visited".

Lance Corporal A.Q. Sinclair "I must thank you for the trouble taken on my behalf. For the first two months I received letters regularly and in addition have received the overdue ones. I have no doubt my trip to Rouen Hospital caused most of the trouble, as letters had been twice to the Base before I received them".

The late Brigadier General Holmes shortly before his death wrote "Thank you for your letters and the trouble you have taken re my growl. I realise all the difficulties you have to contend with and am surprised you are able to do so well. On the whole the service is excellent and we have a lot to be thankful for. I congratulate you and those working with you".

No. 2937 Pte. G. Cumming, 8th Battalion "I am being transferred tomorrow to Harefield Park Hospital xxxxxxxx I would just like to express my best thanks for the receipt of all my letters and parcels".

Sergt. Selby "Words cannot express my gratitude to you for hunting up so many of my missing letters which I am in receipt of. The trouble was caused through so many changes from one place to another. I was unable to send my people any definite address not knowing whether I would return to my original Unit".

G. Payne (Knightsbridge S.W.) wrote - "My nephew has this week received in No. 5 Hospital Reading three of his missing parcels from Australia. I am sure he owes them to your kind enquiries for which we are most grateful".

Captain Walker 17 A.A.S.C. wrote - "From the time of my notifying you of my whereabouts all letters have arrived safely. I wish to extend to yourself and staff my sincere gratification for the prompt and satisfactory manner in which my mail has been handled".

Alex. Cowan & Sons "We have been extremely indebted

to you for your kindness in helping us to trace men about whom we have had enquiries from our Australian House".

Lieut. Fielden "The long lost letter has arrived and I got it safely this morning. For this relief much thanks. I am very much obliged to you for the trouble you have taken and I feel like a millionaire".

Bessie (Mrs) Fairbairn interested herself keenly in many young Australians in both the A.I.F. and B.E.F. making their troubles her own even to the extent of non-receipt of letters and parcels. She wrote "I have had letters from a score of boys telling me they have been getting all my parcels in a batch and they are glad I had not sent perishable goods. So you see your trouble over Allan Sowers (B.E.F.) spelled good for hundreds of others. Now you are at the helm all will be well".

Colonel Hooper "I have already spoken to General Sellheim on the completeness of your system and on the efficiency of your staff". .

Captain E.M. Connor - "I took a trip out to your sorting Dept. at Mt. Pleasant and found 2 of my missing letters. They were addressed as follows :-

"Capt. E.M. Connor,
14th Rfts.
25th Bn. 7th Inf. Bde.,
Salisbury Plains,
ENGLAND

I presume the remainder to be addressed in the same way.

Can I again enlist your personal interest? I think that at least 10 letters are missing, and would be very grateful if you could unearth them for me.

I am hopeful, for as I told you the other day I have reason to be more than satisfied with the A.I.F. Postal Dept.

During the Blizzard days at Anzac when shipping was suspended and afterwards while in different hospitals in Egypt, my mail of course did not reach me, but while back in Australia, the missing letters numbering well over 100 were all returned to me.

Again while on Salisbury Plains I received a letter through

your Department which was quite inaccurately addressed.

So now I hope you are going to justify my faith in your Dept."

The above are picked at random but representing all ranks in the Service, and are representative of appreciation by civilians. Reference is also made to letters published in the newspapers for instance by "Post Here" in The Argus of February 24, 1917; "Drivers Mother" The Argus November 9 1916; H.W.L." The Argus December 7th 1916; "Prahranite" The Argus August 10, 1916; "Delighted" ditto ditto. Colonel Rhodes ex-Post Master General of New Zealand interviewed on his return to Australia said "It will be pleasing to the relatives of troops to know that in the great majority of cases the charges made against the administrative bodies ^(postal) were wholly groundless".

CHANGE OF METHODS.

On August 16, 1917 Major Cunningham relinquished the directorship at his own request and returned to Australia. The days of stress having passed and the work running smoothly covetous eyes were cast on the position of Director and a system of pin pricking began. Among these were visits by officers from Headquarters to Units of his command without notice to him and caustic remarks passed to his sub-officers in the presence of the men of his command tending in his opinion to affect discipline. His defence of his officers and men resulted in his own disfavour and he at once requested leave to resign. This was on May 1st 1917. The then Commandant prevailed on him to withdraw his resignation. Colonel Griffiths said his difficulty was to find someone to take his place and expressed the view that neither Captain Ross, Lieut. Wilson or Lieut. Tyler would suit. He asked Major Cunningham's opinion of Lieuts. Fletcher and Hazeldine and Major Cunningham said he could not recommend them as more fit than Captain Ross for the position of D.A.P.S. Colonel Griffiths then said when he found someone to take the position and Major

Cunningham was still of the same mind he would allow him to resign. A month later Major Cunningham again sent in a request for permission to resign as the official attacks on his command were continuing, but the Commandant saying he had no one fit to fill the position declined to pass the resignation to the Commander in Chief., June 25, 1917 the A.Q.M.G. deputed two junior officers to report upon the Postal work ostensibly because complaints were being received from "Defence Melbourne". The last despatch from Defence had however been answered in detail by Brigadier General Sir Robert McC. Anderson and the following acknowledgment had been received at A.I.F. Headquarters a few weeks before these junior inspecting officers were appointed :-

DEFENCE

16th March 1917.

MEMORANDUM FOR

The Commandant,
A.I.F. Administrative Headquarters,
130 Horseferry Road,
LONDON S.W.

With reference to your despatch No. 80 of the 11th January respecting the work of the Australian Army Postal Corps, I am directed to inform you that the Minister most highly appreciates your report on the proficiency of the Australian Postal Corps, and fully recognises the tremendous difficulties under which the postal services are carried out.

I am to add that a statement has been given to the press showing the activities of that Corps.

H. TRUMBLE
A/Secretary.

With full knowledge of these despatches Major Cunningham realised that an attempt was being made to secure the directorship for one of those deputed to report though that officer was ignorant of the simplest elements of postal work. He protested against the appointment which was made in the following terms :-

25th June, 1917.

Captn Sherrington.

For some months past an opinion has become prevalent in Australia that there is something wrong with our postal methods. We have had them reported upon by Members of the British Postal service, and the Post Office has been visited by prominent Australians who happened to be in London. These reports and our comments have been passed on to the Department of Defence, but there is evidently still lurking in the Minister's mind a suspicion that all is not as it should be.

The D.A.P.S. is a zealous officer, and from a cursory examination of the system it appears to be quite satisfactory but it will be an advantage to the D.A.P.S., as well as to the Commandant here, and the Minister for Defence in Australia, to get a detailed report with recommendations as to improvement, if such can be found.

The Post Office, of course, will always be a target for criticism, because it is so often used as a cloak for laziness on the part of soldiers who have not written to their relatives and friends, and who find it convenient to blame the postal people.

You are given full powers to investigate the whole service, and to interrogate any of the personnel, so that your investigation might be complete. You will use your own discretion as to how far to go, but it is suggested that you should concentrate your efforts on what appears to be the weakest line - redirection.

The Commandant places so much stress on having the postal work efficient, that he has decided to associate with you in your investigations, Captain Campbell Carmichael - his Staff Captain - and you will please confer and co-operate with him in your efforts. It is hoped that you will be able to let us have your joint report and recommendations with as little delay as possible.

H.J. WRIGHT
A.Q.M.G.

Neither of these officers had qualifications for the duty assigned to them and their appointment really meant a sitting in judgment on the high British officials who had already given a report on the subject of redirection. It will be noted that the appointing letter concludes "It is hoped that you will be able to let us have your joint report and recommendations with as little delay as possible", language which savours more of the hat and handbox trade than the Army. However Captain Carmichael did report independently of his colleague and promptly. Not so Captain Sherrington who has probably never to this day sent in any report. What he did was to proceed to Regents Park Parcels P.O. and give directions for large structural alterations. This brought him into conflict with Colonel Wheeler R.E. who informed Major Cunningham. The last named officer declined to retain responsibility while an outsider was permitted to interfere but secured no relief from Headquarters. He then sent in his resignation for the third time in the following terms -

The Commandant
A.I.F. A.H.Q.

I regret having again to submit an application that I be permitted to return to Australia to resign my Commission but I do so for the reason stated in my original application of May 1 attached.

C.S. CUNNINGHAM
Major
Director Army Postal Services, A.I.F.

130 Horseferry Road,
Westminster S.W. 1
30.7.17.

This was accompanied by the following letter :-

Dear Colonel Griffiths,

Regarding the attached application for leave to return to Australia to resign my Commission, the postal work of the A.I.F. in a greater degree than that of any other Force provides its own difficulties and anxieties, but when these are added to by constant, and I submit, unnecessary complaints and criticism from Australia I confess that I foresee less efficiency in the

future. I realise that you feel impelled by the unofficial and unmerited strictures from Melbourne to introduce drastic innovations in the methods hitherto adopted with the greatest success. These changes not only alarm me but have had the effect of making my Officers and N. C. Os. at the Australian Base Post Office restless and disgruntled. The A.I.F. on this side of the world as a whole is quite satisfied with the postal work, as I am almost daily assured and after all these are the persons most vitally concerned. If the Department of Defence had been content with an assurance that that was so and had relieved me of the stress it has compelled you to impose on me and my overworked staff, I would have been content to see the job through to the end of the campaign.

Should this application be approved I will notice with pleasure signs of continued success in the Section I have personally organised and if it be wished that I should do so, I will be glad on my return to Australia to visit the various General Post Offices of the Commonwealth and endeavour to secure better co-operation between them and the Base here.

Finally, as I have been serving three years with the A. I. F. and have had only one furlough of six days I will be grateful if I can be granted one month of leave. This would enable me to assist my successor for that period and would enable me to receive here instead of having redirected to me in Australia many letters privately addressed but bearing to some extent on official matters.

Yours faithfully.

C. S. Cunningham.
Major,
D.A.P.S., A.I.F.

130 Horseferry Road,
Westminster, S.W.1.
30.7.17.

The Commandant asked the D.A.P.S. who should be appointed to succeed him and he submitted the following:-

Commandant,
A.I.F., A.H.Q.

In obedience of your instruction I make the following remarks for your guidance in the selection of my successor as D.A.P.S., A.I.F., prefacing them with the fact that in addition to the natural difficulties peculiar to a service for scattered and constantly moving addressees with more or less makeshift offices and transport arrangements, the Australian Postal Corps handles mails of greater bulk than any State of the Commonwealth other than Victoria and New South Wales.

The Director has to serve each individual of the A.I.F. from the G.O.C. to the latest recruit and has probably to deal with them in their several capacities, but in doing his duty to them as a Force is the officer who is responsible for the technical guidance of the Commandant in matters affecting many important officials and institutions outside the Australian Army. The many serious problems which have been presented to you and your predecessors are too well known to need capitulation. He has in addition to these to negotiate with corresponding officials of other Army Administrations.

The essential qualities in a Director of Postal Services are a combination of expert postal knowledge plus a close acquaintance with the constitution of the Military Forces, a familiarity with shipping and railway transport and an ability to meet quickly any emergency and make a recommendation to his Chief on matters extending beyond his personal jurisdiction.

Coming now to the qualifications of the Officers of the Australian Postal Corps:

Captain Ross -, Has a wide knowledge of the work in the Field, being the first officer appointed for A.I.F. postal work. Since he has been at these Head-quarters he has gained a fair insight into the administrative work. He has proved reliable in all that has been entrusted to him. He has not, however, in my opinion, the resource to deal effectively with big and sudden problems and instead of advising them would have to refer to his senior officers for guidance. I do not regard him either as being strong enough to hold his own with others outside the A.I.F. when Australian interests are to be protected.

Lieut. Wilson
and
Lieut Tyler - Are both very expert postal officials in civil life and are well placed in the Base Post Office which more nearly approximates to a G.P.O. in any of the States. Neither would be at all suited for Field work nor do they understand its requirements sufficiently to administer it. They also lack the strength to safeguard Australian interests. I have found Lieut. Wilson, particularly in the early days of the Base Post Office, too yielding to pressure by the British Administration and too easily depressed by a big proposition.

Lieut. Hazeldine.)
Lieut. Fletcher)
Lieut. Waters)
and) Have all been working in the
Lieut. Hadley) Field with marked success.

They are however the converse of Lieuts. Wilson and Tyler, in that they know little or nothing of the Base work and consequently would be at a disadvantage in administering and keeping up to date that important element of the Australian Postal Service. They would be in the hands of the two Officers controlling that Department, having to accept their dictum on any expert point because they have not the expert knowledge to guide them to an independent decision. They have each done well in their respective spheres when negotiating with Officers of other Administrations. Lieut. Waters has had more of this duty than the others because of encroachment on his responsibility by an offer of the British Service and he has always maintained a sound position without undue friction. His ability as a correspondent is of a high standard owing no doubt to his training as a solicitor. He is, however, rather young and was imported as an officer with the Postal Corps from an Infantry Unit in Egypt.

So far as the Postal Corps Officers are concerned it will be seen that none of them has the necessary general experience. Captain Ross is the senior and has the wider knowledge of Base and Field work but is lacking in other essentials. Of the others I consider Lieut. Waters the most promising.

I have carefully scrutinised the Gradation List of Officers of the A.I.F. with a view to recommending a Director from outside the Postal Service. The only Officer who would at all fill the bill in my opinion is Major Hogben, who has had an insight into Civil postal work and whose meticulous work as an accountant and auditor would enable him to develop quickly into an ideal Director.

C. S. Cunningham.
Major,
D.A.P.S., A.I.F.

On August 16, 1917, Major Cunningham handed in the following report:-

A.Q.M.G.,
A.I.F.A.H.Q.

I have to report that I have to-day handed over the conduct of the postal affairs of the A.I.F. to Captain Ross, D.D.P.S. A.I.F., subject to the direction of the A.Q.M.G. Captain Ross has been assisting me as Director at these Headquarters since December 1916, and should have a thorough grasp of all matters and be able to advise the A.Q.M.G. on any matters of emergency arising, as well as carry out the system which I have established and improved as experience and change of conditions showed were necessary and advisable.

So far as my direction of the Postal Work is concerned, I leave the whole of the arrangements in smooth running order. Every Officer and man of the Postal Corps is in the place to which he is most suited, and I am able to assure you that every one of them is imbued with a proper sense of duty, and conscientiously performs his work.

Ever since the General Postal Business of the A.I.F., was instituted (8 months after the embarkation of the 1st. Division) there have been complaints concerning the results obtained. At first these came from the Field as well as the people of Australia, but in a very little while, as the extraordinary circumstances were met by proper organisation, there was an almost complete cessation of complaints from this side, and praise of the service was received from all ranks. It was not so, however, with the people in Australia owing to absolutely false statements being circulated there concerning the manner of dealing with mails. Angry criticism was levelled against the work in the public press, and in correspondence to the Defence Department. Chief among the allegations made were burning of letters, pillaging of parcels, and failure to open and deal with mails, when they were received in Egypt and London. These statements were all refuted by independent inspection but new grounds for complaint were invented. It was a noticeable feature of the bulk of those complaints that they

were general and few specific instances were quoted. Whenever a complaint was set out in detail prompt enquiry was started, and in every case satisfactory reason was given for the non-receipt of mail. It is generally realised that the time will never come when complaints will cease altogether, and in relinquishing my control of the Postal arrangements, I can confidently say that there will never be less justification for adverse criticism than at present.

Every postal item received is accounted for, being either delivered to the addressee or returned to the sender except in such cases as, in violation of the regulations, Officers Commanding Units persist in distributing contents of parcels for absentees among the men's comrades. I recommend that the strictest observance of the regulations in this regard be insisted upon, or that the regulations be absolutely abrogated, and at the same time the people of Australia informed that such distribution is authorised, and they must rest assured that the Postal work is faithfully carried out in all other respects, and if mail is not delivered it is for some good reason, which is not patent to them who are so far away from the field of operations.

So far as parcels are concerned the reasons for non-delivery are these:-

- (a) Failure to despatch from Australia.
- (b) Destruction by attrition in transit.
- (c) Destruction of parcels themselves, and others lying next by the decomposition of perishable contents.
- (d) The obliteration of addresses, and
- (e) Distribution of contents among the comrades of absentees from Units.

None of the first four cases can be controlled from England.

In the cases of (b) and (e) any articles contained in these parcels are sent to the Comforts Funds, for the use of A.I.F., soldiers generally.

A special Record system is needed for such work as is done by the Australian Base Post Office, and one was inaugurated from the outset. Theoretically the Post Office should lean on

Base Records for means to readdress undeliverable mail matter, and this should be forwarded regularly and promptly, but not waiting for it to come in the usual course it was always sought by me both at Headquarters and at 3rd Echelon. Without wishing to discredit the result of the work of the Officers of the Record Section I am compelled to say that their records have proved over and over again far behind the Post Office records which have the advantage of personal notification from the soldiers themselves, of changes in their location. A comparison of these by interchange of records will prove my contention. Therefore I urge that the valuable records of the Base Post Office be not disturbed.

The Postal system is working so smoothly that if it were not for the unjustifiable complaints from Australia the fact that it existed might easily be overlooked, but the complicated and arduous nature of the work is quickly made plain on investigation.

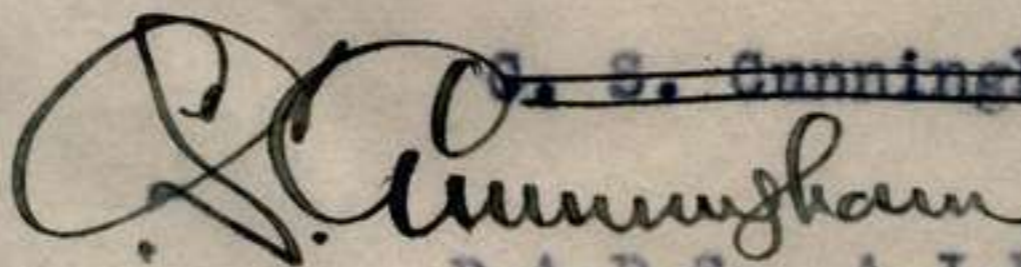
Inspections of Departments have from time to time been made by me and my Officers, the British Postal Officials, highly placed Military Officers and business men from Australia, and these latter have resulted in the highest commendations on all occasions.

Though I have been able to bring the machinery up to a point where it should run smoothly and well, there is still in prospect a good deal to exercise the judgment and energy of the Director. Changes in composition and location of the forces which have been constant will continue, but the principal matter for consideration will be the arrangements when the repatriation, of our troops at the conclusion of the war, begins. However, I have confidence that whoever becomes Director will have the valuable advice and support of the prominent Officers of the Corps.

I regret very much that I have felt constrained to ask you to relieve me of my command. The work was interesting though full of anxiety, and I would have been glad to have seen it through to the end of the Campaign. The consideration which made me decide finally to ask for relief was, that while two Officers

were as I understand appointed to report on the working of the Base Post Office, one of them in excess of his charter, proceeded at once to take the control out of my hands, proposing drastic innovations which were absolutely opposed to the recommendations of my Officers and my own judgment. It will be recognised that an Officer qualified to hold the important position of Director would not for one moment retain responsibility while others practically directed the work.

On my severance from the Service, I respectfully urge that the loyalty and faithful discharge of their duty by members of the A.I.F., Postal Corps might be fostered by occasional recognition of the most deserving members which I have found has been very seldom accorded.


~~J. S. Cunningham.~~
Major.
D.A.P.S., A.I.FORCES.

LONDON.
16th. August 1917.