

## GUIDE TO READING

# UNIT DIARIES

Margin for Filing Purpose

ARMY FORM W.2010 (BOOKS OF 100)  
Date of last A.F. W.2010 rendered

52/42  
2/48 Aust Inf Bn (Unit) CASUALTY RETURN—OFFICERS AND NURSES 24 Jul 1942 Number of sheets attached to this return.

Detail of casualties to officers and nurses which have occurred since last return. The detail should include all battle casualties, accidents, admission to and discharge from hospital, casualty clearing station, etc. Promotions (acting, temporary, local or substantive), transfers, postings, attachments, etc., courts-martial, leave of absence, particulars of marriage and birth or death of children, alteration in next-of-kin with postal address, transfers to "X" List and any other items connected with an officer's or nurse's service.

Rank	Name and Initials	Corps	Nature and date of casualty	Date	Remarks. (In the case of casualties from wounds or disease, any available information for compensation to relatives should be stated.)
Lieut	REID W R	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adj	25 Jul	
Lieut	LEWIS R W	do	Marched in	22 Jul	From A Tk Course
Lieut	WRIGHT M	do	do	22 Jul	do
<b>BATTLE CASUALTIES - Killed in Action</b>					
Capt	WILLIAMS C P	do	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	THREMGOLD P B	do	do	22 Jul	posms at EL ALAMEIN
Lieut	JEFFRON L H	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	GILL G T	do	do	23 Jul	Result of shelling, At EL ALAMEIN.
<b>BATTLE CASUALTIES - Wounded in Action</b>					
Lieut	KIMBER D G	do	Wounded in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	SMITH J W	do	do	22 Jul	posms at EL ALAMEIN.
Lieut	GOODEN C D	do	do	22 Jul	Evacuated to 2/11 Aust Fd
Lieut	LEHNESSURIER R W	do	do	22 Jul	Amb - X List
<b>NEXT OF KIN - Change of Address</b>					
Lieut	ROBBINS P	do	Next of Kin - Mother, Mrs. D. D. Robbins, New Address - 54 Northgate Street, UNLEY PARK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.		

(Date) 29 JUL 1942

Forma W 2010/2

2/48 Aust Inf Bn (Unit)  
26 Aust Inf Bde

Service records can only give you a limited amount of information. For example, they rarely tell you exactly where someone was wounded or killed and don't really give you any idea of what they actually did. This is where the unit diaries are important.

Unit diaries kept track of the daily activities of headquarters, formations and units and casualty lists. The appendices at the end of the diary may also include orders, reports, intelligence, photos, maps and sketches, but they are not always easy sources to read.

This guide will help you to understand Australian unit diaries from World Wars One and Two. It contains:

- I. Finding what you need
- II. Understanding casualty Lists
- III. Reading handwriting
- IV. Looking for keywords
- V. Where to go for more help

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Lieut	LEWIS R W	do	Marched in	22 Jul	From A Tk Course
Lieut	WRIGHT M	do	do	22 Jul	do
<b>BATTLE CASUALTIES - Killed in Action</b>					
Capt	WILLIAMS C P	do	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	THREMGOLD P B	do	do	22 Jul	posms at EL ALAMEIN
Lieut	JEFFRON L H	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	GILL G T	do	do	23 Jul	Result of shelling, At EL ALAMEIN.
<b>BATTLE CASUALTIES - Wounded in Action</b>					
Lieut	KIMBER D G	do	Wounded in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	SMITH J W	do	do	22 Jul	posms at EL ALAMEIN.
Lieut	GOODEN C D	do	do	22 Jul	Evacuated to 2/11 Aust Fd
Lieut	LEHNESSURIER R W	do	do	22 Jul	Amb - X List
<b>NEXT OF KIN - Change of Address</b>					
Lieut	ROBBINS P	do	Next of Kin - Mother, Mrs. D. D. Robbins, New Address - 54 Northgate Street, UNLEY PARK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.		

(Date) 29 JUL 1942

Forma W 2010/2

2/48 Aust Inf Bn (Unit)  
26 Aust Inf Bde

29 Jul 1942  
Received a nurse to saddle up and get ready to move immediately at 11.30 am. The Regt had previously moved while the company was at the camp. Got 4th A Bn sent to 4th A Bn. Nurses were at 4th A Bn.

Appendix 29/7/42  
- OCT 1917  
653/81

READING AIF SERVICE RECORDS

FINDING WHAT YOU NEED

2/48 Aust Inf Bn (Cas) CASUALTY RETURN—OFFICERS AND NURSES 24 Jul 42

Rank	Name and Initials	Grade	Name and Date of Service	Date	Remarks
Lieut	NEED	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adjt	27 Jul	
Lieut	LOWRY	do	Marched in	22 Jul	From A To Course
Lieut	WRIGHT	do	do	22 Jul	do
<b>OFFICERS - WOUNDED OR KILLED IN ACTION</b>					
Capt	WILLIAMS	do	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	STANDISH	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	REDFERN	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	GILL	do	do	23 Jul	Transit of Shilling at
<b>BATTLE CASUALTIES - WOUNDED IN ACTION</b>					
Lieut	KIRBY	do	Wounded in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	SMITH	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	SCOTT	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	LEITCH	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	ROBERTS	do	do	22 Jul	do

Official unit diaries may contain a lot of information. There is a simple way of finding what you want quickly without having to read every single page from beginning to end.

**LOOK FOR DATES**

This is the key to finding out the extra information that does not appear in the individual's service record. Look for specific dates on which your individual was wounded/killed.

Use the unit diaries to fill in "gaps" in the service record. For example, if your serviceperson was with the 2nd/10th Australian Infantry Battalion during World War Two in April 1941, he was probably involved in the siege of Tobruk, which lasted from 10 April to 25 October. Read what the unit was doing in its diary at that time. This will give you a better idea of what your serviceperson experienced.

Remember it wasn't all about firing machine guns and being hit by artillery shells. The unit diary gives you a great idea of the overall experience of service.

**PURIATA RIVER AREA**

**1. LOOK FOR DATES**

On night 21/22 Nov flashing lights were observed near the mouth of the PURIATA RIVER, Air reconnaissance over the area the following day revealed 3 Japanese dragging stores across the beach towards the jungle 300 yards north of the river mouth. Nearby were skid marks in the sand from the water line to the jungle. Later, numerous fires were observed in the vicinity and up river as far as HAIGI MISSION. Presence of considerable numbers of enemy in the area was also confirmed by air sightings of new gardens, some being several acres in extent.

Enemy casualties to 21 Nov are:-

Killed 9890  
Captured 103

Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information
TOBRUK	8 Apr	0500	Stand to Coys. consolidating. 3 ITALIAN 100 mm. guns put into commission in Bn. area Our patrols out all night along Bn. front.
"	9 Apr	0930 2000	Heavy air raid on TOBRUK. Another ITALIAN 100 mm. gun put into commission; and 3 47 mm. A/Ts put into commission. Coys. consolidating. Heavy A/A barrage over TOBRUK. Our patrols out all night.
"	10 Apr	1000 1200 1730	Bad dust storm German plane machine-guns "C" Coy. Preparations for relief commence. Relief by 43 and 44 Bns. begins.
"	11 Apr	0030 0230	En. embussed; relief completed except for "A" Coy. En. arrives at WADI AUDI. Troops settle down for night.
"	12 Apr	0300 0330	En. preparing to move. Embuss proceed to area at X-roads BARDIA -EL ADEM Rds.
"	13 Apr		Coys. settling down -digging on inner perimeter. 3 Tommy guns and gunners sent to EDE. H.Q.
"	14 Apr	0325 0700 0840 0910	Enemy break through on night at EL ADEM RD. Shells falling on X-Roads. Air raid in progress. Tank battle in valley approx. 1 mile from our B.H.Q. German planes machine-gunned Bn. area - no casualties. Mobile patrol sent out. 1 platoon motorized inf and 1 se carriers

The unit diaries provide clear descriptions of the nature of warfare and the situations soldiers

## READING AIF SERVICE RECORDS

# UNDERSTANDING CASUALTY LISTS

2/48 Aust Inf Bn (Cas) CASUALTY RETURN—OFFICERS AND NURSES 24 Jul 1942

Details of casualties of officers and nurses which have occurred since last return. The detail should include all battle casualties, sickness, admission to and discharge from hospitals, or death of officers, admission to medical depot, temporary loss of attachment, temporary postings, attachments, etc., together with names, ranks, dates of joining, production of medical and service records, and other information which may be of value to the unit.

Rank and Name	Service Number	Rank and Date of Accession	Remarks	Date	Remarks
Lieut. ROSE	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adj. 25 Jul			
Lieut. LEWIS	do	Marched in 22 Jul			From A F Course
Lieut. WRIGHT	do	do			do
<b>OFFICERS - KILLED IN ACTION</b>					
Capt. WILLIAMS	C 5	do	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut. STRENGTH	P 8	do	do	22 Jul	posts at EL ALAMIN
Lieut. HOFFMAN	P 2	do	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut. GILL	P 2	do	do	22 Jul	Remit of shelling at EL ALAMIN.
<b>BATTLE CASUALTIES - Wounded in Action</b>					
Lieut. KIMBER	D 9	do	wounded in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut. SMYTH	C 7	do	do	22 Jul	posts at EL ALAMIN.
Lieut. SCOTT	C 2	do	do	22 Jul	Forwarded to 2/23 Aust Bn
Lieut. LEITCH	H 2	do	do	22 Jul	Amb - X List
<b>LIST OF R.N. - Change of Address</b>					
Lieut. ROBINSON	P	do	Next of Kin - Mother, Mrs. D.B. Robbins, New Address - 24 Verdugo Street, DUNDY PARK, SOUTH AUSTRALIA.		

As well as recording what happened in and to the unit on a daily basis, unit diaries contain the casualty lists. This is the number of service personnel sick, wounded, or killed according to their status; commissioned officers, non-commissioned officers and “other ranks”, ie. everyone else.

For frontline units such as infantry and artillery, these lists were incredibly important for commanding officers, as they needed to know the “strength of the regiment”, ie. how many men they would have for future actions.

Date.	Place and Time.	2nd Light Horse.	Remarks or References to Appendices, &c., attached.
		<p><i>f gallantly led by Major T.L. LOGAN. Lieut's Burge + Norris, the former two were killed + the latter wounded. Lieut. H.G. HINTON being killed in the trenches during the attack. The Casualties in other ranks were 1 NCO + 13 Killed, 9 NCO's + 27 men wounded.</i></p>	

Commissioned officers, such as Lieutenants and Majors were often listed by name. Non-commissioned officers (NCOs) such as Corporals and Sergeants, and other ranks (ORs), eg. Privates, were often just numbered.

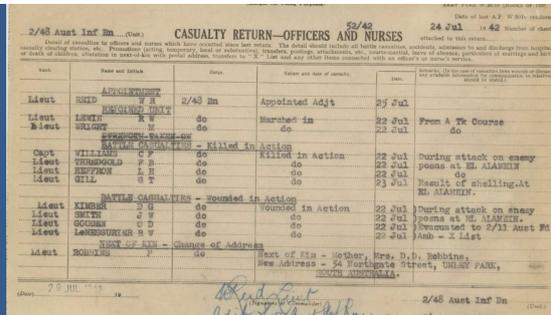
For example, from the fighting in Monash Valley at the beginning of the August Offensive on the Gallipoli Peninsula in 1915, the 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment had 1 Major and 2 Lieutenants, 1 non-commissioned officer and 13 other ranks killed,

	Killed	Wounded
Majors	1	0
Lieutenants	2	1
Non-commissioned officers	1	9
Other Ranks	13	27

20-8-15	QUINN'S POST	5pm	Capt. L.A. Lewis, went to hospital today (Dysentery).
22-8-15	QUINN'S POST	NOON	Lieut. W.C. Kelly, sick to hospital. Lumbago etc. List of Casualties
25-8-15	QUINN'S POST	7pm	Lieut. S.F. Rowell rejoined Regt. from Hospital 1/8/15 to 31/8/15
31-8-15	QUINN'S POST	6pm	Strength of Regiment .16 Officers 326 Other Ranks. vide Appendix 9.
31-8-15	QUINN'S POST	12 Noon	Heavy posted to A.A.G. 3rd Echelon. M.E.F.

Casualty lists were not just for killed and wounded men. The fighting strength of units could be just as badly affected by illness.

# READING HANDWRITING



This can be the trickiest part of reading World War One unit diaries (the World War Two unit diaries are often typed), but don't let it stop you from understanding these documents. Think of it as a puzzle; follow the steps below, stick with it and you will get there.

1. Think of it like a coded message and start by finding words that you can read easily.
2. Use the letters in these words to start to read other words. You can even create an alphabet (by hand or with the computer).

Route March - Full marching Order - Z  
 Route March to Despres - Troops  
 Inspection & Gas drill. Firing practice  
 One section with 10<sup>th</sup> Btn engaged in

Route March—Full Marching Order      **March**

Inspection & Gas drill. Firing practice      **Inspection**

	= c		= h
	= t		= r
	= M		= p
	= l		= s

3. Some letters can look similar, eg. “r” and “n”, so look at the surrounding letters and think logically. “M a n c h” doesn’t make sense, but “M a r c h” does.
4. Remember that joining letters together might make them look like something different. Eg. “in” might look like an “m”.
5. Show the word to someone else, without telling them what you think the word is.

Tried all of the above and still stuck? The RSL Virtual War Memorial team is here to help. Turn to page 6, to find out how to get in touch with us.

READING AIF SERVICE RECORDS

LOOKING FOR KEYWORDS

2/48 Aust Inf Bn (Cas)		CASUALTY RETURN—OFFICERS AND NURSES		24 Jul 1942	
Lieut	NEED	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adjt	27 Jul	
Lieut	LOVELL	do	Marched in	22 Jul	From A Pl Co Course
Lieut	WRIGHT	do	do	22 Jul	do
BATTLES CASUALTIES - Killed in Action					
Capt	VILLIERS	C P	do	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	STANDFIELD	P B	do	22 Jul	posts at Mt MARCHIE
Lieut	HEFFNER	J B	do	22 Jul	do
Lieut	GILL	O P	do	23 Jul	Result of shelling at Mt MARCHIE.
BATTLES CASUALTIES - Wounded in Action					
Lieut	KIRBY	D B	do	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	SMITH	O P	do	22 Jul	posts at Mt MARCHIE.
Lieut	SCOBBS	C P	do	22 Jul	Wounded on 2/11 Aust Bn
Lieut	LEITCH	H W	do	22 Jul	Amb - X List
NEXT OF KIN - Change of Address					
Lieut	ROBERTS	P	do		Next of Kin - Mother, Mrs. D.B. Robbins, New Address - 54 Yorkgate Street, ULLADULLA, NEW SOUTH WALES.

Although it is great to be able to read every word in a unit diary, sometimes even professional historians find this difficult. You can get around this by looking for important keywords that will help you to discover and tell the story of your service person. The following list includes some of the keywords should help you to understand the soldier's experiences from the unit diary.

1. **Casualty** - this is usually associated with a list of the number of personnel who have killed, wounded or hospitalised due to illness.
2. **Attack** - this could refer to an action by the Australians or by the enemy.
3. **Engaged/contacted** - when the Australian forces fight with or are attacked by enemy forces
4. **Patrol** - when a group go out to scout or survey territory for signs of enemy. This will show up often in unit diaries for World War Two where Australians were fighting in environments like jungles.
5. **Enemy** - this is an obvious one, but very important for understanding both attacks, and the preparations that troops would make.

Unit Diary of the 2nd Australian Light Horse Regiment, August 1915.

6/8/15, The Regt was required to make an **attack** on QUINN'S Post, this was

War Diary of the 2nd Australian Corp General Staff (Intelligence), November 1944.

BOUGAINVILLE  
UPPER LARUMA VALLEY

Activity in the UPPER LARUMA VALLEY has been confined mainly to minor patrol clashes,

On 25 Nov our patrol sighted fresh tracks and **contacted** an enemy occupied pill box in the area NE of PIAT-ERAPAIA. This position was later **engaged** by mortar fire and hits were observed. Another patrol in the same area discovered an enemy position in course of construction, It was later destroyed by artillery.

Further north, an Allied **patrol** encountered an undetermined number of enemy in the SISIVIE area. After an exchange of fire, our patrol advanced approximately 150 yards to the north, where an ambush of an estimated 14 enemy was contacted.