

UNIT DIARIES

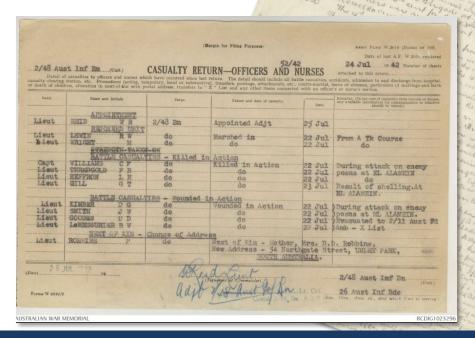
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	at Inf Bn(Unit.) casualties to officers and nurses whistation, etc. Promotions (acting, teren, alteration in next-of-kin with p	CASUALTY RETU	JRN—OFFICERS AND Noture. The detail should include all but, transfers, postings, attachments, etc., "List and any other items connected any other items connected."	URSES	Date of host A.F. W.3011 reblered 24 Jul. 19.42 Number of sheets attached to this return. coldents, admission to and discharge from hospital, eave of absence, particulars of marriage and birth or nume's service.
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Lieut	REID W R	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adjt	25 Jul	
Lieut	LEWIN R W WRIGHT M	do do	Marched in	22 Jul 22 Jul	From A Tk Course
Capt	BATTLE CASUAL WILLIAMS C F	TES - Killed in	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut Lieut	HEFFRON L H	do do	do do	22 Jul 22 Jul 23 Jul	posns at EL ALAMEIN do Result of shelling.At
Lieut	BATTLE CASUALS KIMBER D G SMITH J W	do	Wounded in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	GOODEN O D LEMESSURIER R W	do do	do do	22 Jul 22 Jul 22 Jul)posns at EL ALAMEIN.)Evacuated to 2/11 Aust Fd
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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





FINDING WHAT YOU NEED

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					Date of last A.F. W.201, rendered
	nt Inf Bn(Unit.)	CASUALTY RETU	JRN—OFFICERS AND	NURSES	24 Jul 19.42 Number of sheets attached to this return
or death of child	iren, alteration in next-of-kin with p	nporary, local or substantive stal address, transfers to "	transfers, postings, attachments, etc., X." List and any other items connecte	courts martial, d with an office	ccidents, admission to and discharge from hospital, feave of absence, particulars of marriage and birth r's or nurse's service.
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	APPOINTMENT				
Lieut	REID W R	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adjt	25 Jul	
Lieut	LEWIN R W	do	Marched in	22 Jul	From A Tk Course
	BATTLE CASUALA	-ew TES - Killed in		22.001	Q0
Capt	WILLIAMS CF	do	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	THREDGOLD P.B	do	do	22 Jul	posns at EL ALANEIN
Lieut	GILL G T	do	do	23 Jul	Result of shelling.At
	BATTLE CASUAL	TES - Wounded i	n Action		AD ALACEDIN.
Lieut	KIMBER D.G.	do	Wounded in Action	22 Jul	During attack on eneay
Lieut	GOUDEN C D	do	do do	22 Jul 22 Jul	posns at ML ALAMEIN.
Lieut	Lenessurier R V	Change of Addre	do	22 Jul	Amb - X List
Lideut	ROBRINS P	do do	Next of Kin - Mother.	Mrs. D.	D. Robbins,
			New Address - 54 Nort	RALIA.	rent, UNLEY PARK, 4600
	BH 45.65	161	10.		
(Date)	19	40Kes	a tent		2/48 Aust Inf Bn
		Adik	To Dat Ru		26 Avest True Day

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 gardans, some being several acres in extent.

Enemy casualties to 21 Nov are:-

Killed 9890 Captured 103

NAME OF TAXABLE PARTY.					and the same
Place		Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	
TOBRUK	8	Apr	0500	Stand to Coys. conselidating. 3 ITALIAN 100 mm. gunsput into commission in Bn. area Our patrols out all night along Bn. front.	-
n.	9	Apr	0930	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 patrels out all night.	
н	1	O Apr	1000	Bad dust storm German plane machine-guns "C" Coy.	
The unit diaries			1200 1730	Preparations for relief commence. Reflief by 43 and 5 ans. begins.	
provide clear	1	1 Apr	0030	En. embussed; relief completed except for "A" Coy.	P
descriptions of the			0230	Bm. arrives at WADI AUDI. Troops settle down for night.	
nature of warfare	12	2 Apr	0300	En. preparing to move. Embuss proceed to area at X-roads BARDIA -EL ADEM Rds.	
and the situations	h	3 Apr		Coys. settling down -digging on inner perimeter.	-
soldiers			-	3 Tommy guns and gunners sent to BDE. H.O.	
		4 Apr	0325 0700 0840 0910	Enemy break through on night at EL ADEM ED. Shells falling on X-Roads. Air raid in progress. Tank battle in valley approx. 1 mile from o B.H.Q. German planes machine-gunned En. area - no casualties. Mobile patrol sent out. 1 platoon motorized inf and 1 se carriers	ur
100 Jan 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 100 10		WHEN THE	9720	wearre harter cours of a t brancou meconized tur and I be carriers	1 6

READING UNIT DIARIES

UNDERSTANDING CASUALTY LISTS

Place and Time.



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.

		a aga viole.	to Appendices, &c., attached.
	1	(11 41 1 1 1 4 -11	
Commissioned officers, such as		fallantly led by Major T.J. LOGAN. Lieut.	5
Lieutenants and Majors were often		Burge & Norris, the former two were	
listed by name.		Killed & the latter wounded. Lieut H.S.	HINTON
Non-commissioned officers (NCOs)		being Killed in the trenches during the	attack
such as Corporals and Sergeants, and		The Casualties in other ranks were	corner .
other ranks (ORs), eg. Privates, were		INCO & 13 Kill I O WOLL BY	
often just numbered.	+	1.NCO + 13 Killed, 9 NCO's + 27 mer wood	unded.

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	Post (Dysentey).
22-8-15	POST (Dysentery). POST (Dysentery). POINNSPOST MON Lient. W.C. Kelly, sick to Hospital. Lumbayor etc. Inst of Casualtie puinnspost The Lient. S.F. Rowell rejoiner Regl. from Hospital 1/8/15 631/8/15
31-9-15	QUIRNS POST 6 pm Strength of Regiment 1/6 Officers 326 other Ranks . vide appendic 9.
	QUINNS FOST 12 How bleary posted to A. A.G. 3 thelaw. 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.

Remarks or Reference

READING UNIT DIARIES READING UNIT DIARIES READING HANDWRITING Line 1882 L

death of child	station, etc. Promotions (acting, ber two, alteration in next-of-kin with p	mporary, local or substan	set recurs. The detail should include all be live), transfers, postings, attachments, etc. "X" List and any other items connects		cidents, admission to and discharge from hospit leave of absence, particulars of marriage and be 's or marse's service.
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	APPOINTMENT				
Lieut	REID W R	2/48 Bn	Appointed Adjt	25 Jul	
Lieut bieut	LEWIN R W	do	Marched in	22 Jul	From A Tk Course
	BATTULE CASTIALA	TIES - Killed			do
Capt	WILLIAMS C P	do	Killed in Action	22 Jul	During attack on enemy
Lieut	HEFFRON L H	do	do	22 Jul	posns at EL ALANSIN
Lieut	GILL G T BATTLE CASUAL:	do	do	23 Jul	Result of shelling.At
Lieut	KIMBER D G	de Wounded			
Lieut	SMITH JW GOUDEN CD	do	Wounded in Action	22 Jul 22 Jul	During attack on enemy posns at ML ALAMEIN.
Lieut	Lenessurier R V	do	do	22 Jul 22 Jul)Evacuated to 2/11 Aust B
ldeut	ROBBINS P	Change of Addi	Next of Kin - Mother	Mrs. D.	D. Robbins,
			New Address - 54 Nor	thizate St	rest, UNLEY PARK, 400

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).

- 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.



LOOKING FOR KEYWORDS



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.

was required to make an

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

BOUGAINVILLE

UPPER LARUMA VALLEY

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

was

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.