

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

Chaplains

Item number: 6/3/12

Title: Senior Chaplain, Presbyterian,
Headquarters AIF, London

December 1918



AWM4-6/3/12

Senior Presbyterian Chaplain's
(Australian)

WAR DIARY

or

INTELLIGENCE SUMMARY.

(Erase heading not required.)

Rev. W. Floyd Shannon
Aust. Adm. HQ
London.

Army Form C. 2118.

Instructions regarding War Diaries and Intelligence
Summaries are contained in F. S. Regs., Part II.
and the Staff Manual respectively. Title pages
will be prepared in manuscript.

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	474	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1918		<p>Chaplain the Rev. E. G. Pettwick (5th Battalion) held five church parables during the month, and by utilising factories and Cinema Halls were held indoors - a welcome change adding to the heartiness of singing and the spirit of devotion. Five evening "Singsongs" were held, and Communion service was held at least once each Sunday, and sometimes twice. He also conducted Bible class meetings for the 5th and the 8th Battalions on Tuesdays and Thursdays, & these were well attended. He acts temporarily as the Education Officer, & consequently much of his time is taken up with students, and arranging for men to be drafted to various workshops. The interests involved are becoming more complex; teachers are taken from the Battalion, and students depart on leave or for Australia, and the result is that a feeling of unrest and unsettlement is engendered. Education classes on a large variety of subjects are being carried on. Through the courtesy of M. Guyaux of the town (Bonapierre) the Chaplain was able to arrange for parties of men to visit the marble works and steel rolling mills. The death by pneumonia of the instructor in Accountancy, Cpl. F. Roberts, a gifted man & a favorite with everyone, caused deep and widespread regret.</p> <p>The Brigade scheme of sports is being carried on,</p>		

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	December 1918		<p>And football interest is specially keen. The Championships seems to lie between the 5th and the 8th Battalions. In this Brigade they run three grades of Australian football and one of soccer.</p> <p>A special dinner was provided on Christmas day, enjoyed all the more because it was "Peace Christmas". On New Years Eve a dance was held in the Cinema Hall, and invitations were extended to the townsfolk.</p> <p>Plenty of other amusements are provided in the neighboring city of Charleroi - it is a vast industrial centre, and the men take advantage of opportunities to visit its coal mines, soda mines, pottery, marble works, foundries, glass works, &c. And the keen alert minds of Australian lads are profiting by these experiences. The valley of the Sambre with its cities & industrial plants, is a startling contrast to the quiet valley of the Somme.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. R. J. W. G. Crawford (20th Battalion) was unable to do any work outside his own Battalion owing to the continuous movements of the Brigade, but he held voluntary parade services every Sunday (except the 9th) & these were well attended; but no evening services were practicable owing to lack of room and of lighting facilities.</p> <p>In connection with the Education Scheme, this</p>		

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	December 1918.		<p>Chaplain has been acting as an emergency teacher. The classes are not so large as they might be, owing to the fact that the Battalion is scattered among two villages, & the Brigade over a wide area. Not much work was done in conjunction with Y.M.C.A. as the resting-places were away from the lines of communication. There is no Battalion Hospital to look after, and the Field Ambulance nearby has been almost empty. Chaplain Crawford represents the Headqs. in the football matches.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. John Calder (34th Battalion) has started a lending library in the Battalion, & provided reading & writing materials for the men's hut; he also drew up a Programme of popular lectures illustrated by lantern slides, & so helps on the Education Scheme. Lectures on "Japan - its life and scenery", and on "Pompeii - Past and Present", and on other helpful subjects have been given. He has to manage the Canteen, and this takes up much of his time. Amusements and outdoor sports are provided for the men when weather permits, & in these the Chaplain takes his share. Concert parties and entertainments of a varied nature have been arranged, and much appreciated by the men.</p> <p>Sunday Parade services have been regularly held</p>		

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1918.		<p>and were attended by all the men available. During the month the Battalion moved from Faucourt to Buigny-les-Gamaches, and later to Miannay, 6 miles west of Abbeville.</p> <p>Chaplain Rev. F. W. Rankin (40th Battalion) held parade every Sunday morning, and a voluntary service every Sunday evening, and a Communion service occasionally - a Bible class every Wednesday evening at the Battalion Headquarters, and another every Tuesday & Friday with the Companies. He also organises recreation, tournaments, etc. for the men, and helps with the Education Scheme.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. Fred. J. Paton (14th Battalion) finds the men getting very tired, discontented, and chafing at the inactivity; they have neither been sent to the front, nor back, nor to Australia; rations have lately been very poor and irregular; and the dissatisfaction has been openly shown. If there is a long wait in Belgium with its lower moral standards, he thinks it will be a curse to Australia for a generation. The estaminets seem decent - for estaminets - but the education scheme "hangs fire", and the men have little to do, - and the result is that they more easily fall into bad habits. The increasing popularity of dances, even though they are good clean dances, means fewer men at Education</p>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1918.		<p>Classes, Lectures, and even at Concerts. Bible Classes also have been more irregular in consequence. Still the Sunday services and Communion have been most helpful. And in these times of unrest and discontent there is more need of chaplains than ever. During the month the following items of an excellent programme have been carried out: Mock Municipal Election; Concert; Debate; Draughts Contest; Lecture by the Padre; Class in Book Keeping and in French; Debate: "That the War will prove to be an ultimate benefit to mankind"; Dance at which the people of Sains were welcomed - (1200 present including the soldiers); Debate: - "Is Amaturism or Professionalism the better for athletics?" Route march; local Debate; Lecture by Chaplain Durnford on "Paris" with Slides. Debate final for Brigade Cup "That in the best interests of Australia Prohibition would be necessary." The Cup was won by the 14th Battalion. Both teams were splendid + worked hard for success. They had hours per day of study and of team work - and each man had his part; there was no repetition in argument, + it was acknowledged that the team work of the 14th Battalion was perfect." On several nights the carbide failed, and the result was that no meeting was possible. On two or three other occasions route marches were in progress, and no place for meetings was available.</p>	474

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December	1918.	<p>Chaplain the Rev. W. J. Gray. (3rd Tunnell's Coy.) maintained regular services on Sundays during the month, and Communion service twice; together with a special service on Christmas Day. He also provides a service every Sunday for the 89th Brigade, R. G. A. which was camped near by. This was done at the invitation of the Commanding Officer. He also held the position of Education Officer, + Lecture Officer of the unit, + was also entrusted with the distribution of information and the preparation of applications under the Demobilization Department. The most difficult task is that of keeping the men amused in these days of partial idleness, + at the same time encouraging them to mental, physical, and spiritual development. Chaplain Gray has kept up a regular programme of sports, indoor games, lectures, concerts, and cinema shows, and has also himself delivered lectures on historical topics &c.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. R. C. Racklyeft (A.I.B.D.) owing to an attack of the prevalent influenza was only able to conduct two parade services and take part in another. In conjunction with the other Presbyterian and Methodist Chaplains at the Base, the local Hospital has been very regularly visited, and also the large General Hospital,</p>	474

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1918.		<p>and several military prisons in other parts of the City. Drafts of men going out from the Base have been well attended to, and comforts of various kinds distributed to them.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. Frank H. L. Paton (A. G. B. D.) arrived at this Base on 30th November, and has been very busy during this month of December. He is one of those Chaplains who devote most of his energy to direct spiritual work, and so he finds that personal interviews with men privately about spiritual things has led several to make a new beginning in the better life. For this purpose he has a Chaplains Room placed at his disposal by the Y.M.C.A. He has also a very helpful Black-Board Bible Talk every day at 2 o'clock in the Y.M.C.A. quiet room - except Saturdays and Sundays. The membership is constantly changing as the men move out and fresh drafts come in. He cooperates closely with the Y.M.C.A. in entertaining the men in healthful entertainments, sports, lectures, &c. This not only means helping to entertain the men in the recreation room, but also involves lectures at various camps in the neighbourhood.</p> <p>He helps in distributing comforts to the drafts of men leaving the depot nearly every day. He pays a weekly visit to the large (No. 39) General</p>	474

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1918.		<p>Hospital, and he finds this particular work most encouraging, and already a number of men have decided for Christ. Church parades and voluntary services have been regularly held, and special services were held during Christmas week, and entertainments given; and the Ymca provides excellent and varied programmes calculated to serve as a good clean attraction from baser things. Every Sunday Evening the Chaplains and Ymca workers meet for prayer & Conference, and from these gatherings several developments have resulted - including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) a daily service for drafts of men passing through, & lasting half an hour. (b) a quarter hour's devotions every evening before bed-time. (c) a daily prayer meeting for the Chaplains and Ymca workers in the A. I. F. D. (d) a weekly meeting for intercession of all the workers in the three depots. <p>The prisoners in various places of detention are regularly visited, and some literature is supplied to them. Of course the general unsettlement, and the rapidity with which the men pass through the Base interfere greatly with the continuity of the work, but this cannot be helped.</p> <p>Chaplain the Rev. George M. Baird (O.T.B. England) arrives from Australia on November 14, and started work at this unit on November 26th, and owing to the neighboring Camp of 1 Command Dept being temporarily without a</p>	

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Place	Date	Hour	Summary of Events and Information	Remarks and references to Appendices
	December 1918.		<p>Presbyterian Chaplain, Mr Baird carries on the work in both Camps during part of December, and also visited the local Hospital almost daily. He has also visited four detention centres, and been enabled to help many of the men by correspondence with their relatives &c.; he attends the Y.M.C.A. regularly and meets the men there; held one funeral during the month, and did other general work. But owing to the cessation of hostilities, the men are in a very restless unsatisfactory state, tired of physical exercises, and anxious to get back to Australia. This affects every part of the Camp life; the men will not volunteer for any job, and fatigue parties are hard to get. It also affects the Church parades, the attendances at which are not satisfactory. The first three Sundays, out of all the Presbyterians, Methodists, and O.P.D. men, the average attendance was only about 200. The Voluntary services and Communion services have been regularly held, though the attendances were not what they should be.</p> <p>Chaplain Rev. A. E. Bates (3 A.A.H. England) arrived late in the month, but was able along with C. of E. Chaplain, to hold a united Christmas service, and also the ordinary Sunday morning and evening services in conjunction with the same Chaplain. He also holds a Bible class once a week. The social side of life is well catered for, and there is a picture show</p>	

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	December 1918.		<p>once or twice a week, and a concert once or twice a week, and a whist drive every Monday. He visits the wards daily, and endeavors to get into as close touch as possible with the men.</p> <p>Senior Chaplain Rev. W. F. Shannon (A. I. F. Headqrs. London), in addition to the usual administrative work of the Presbyterian Chaplaincy, visited Lewes (Summ) Detention Barracks, and Hospitals in the following centres - Taunton, Exeter (4 hospitals), Torquay (3 Hospitals), Plymouth, and Devonport. On 12th inst. he was invested by the King with the Order of the British Empire. Two of the Chaplains of his denomination, Revs. D. P. Macdonald and J. A. Forrest, returned to Australia during the month; and Chaplain Bates arrived from Australia; and Rev Frank Y. Hanlin lately employed as YMCA officer, was appointed a Chaplain, so that the total numbers remain the same as before.</p> <p>It is worthy of note, as showing the marvellous speed (?) with which things can be done even in the Australian Army, that the Senior Chaplain's first application for the appointment of Mr. Hanlin as Chaplain was made about the third week in July, and he actually got his appointment on 9th December!</p>	