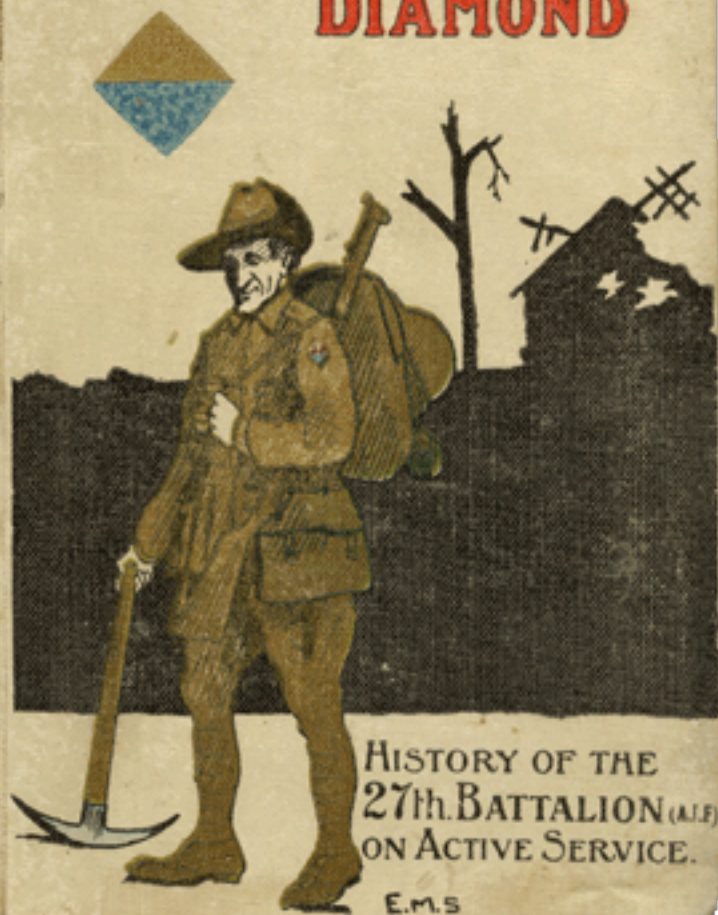


THE BLUE AND BROWN DIAMOND



HISTORY OF THE
27th. BATTALION (A.I.F.)
ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

E.M.S

THE Blue and Brown Diamond

A History of the 27th Battalion
Australian Imperial Force
1915-1919

BY
LIEUT.-COL. W. DOLLMAN, V.D.
AND
SGT. H. M. SKINNER, M.M.



FOREWORDS BY
MAJOR-GEN. SIR C. B. B. WHITE, K.C.M.G., C.B., D.S.O.,
A.D.C. TO HIS MAJESTY THE KING,
AND
BRIG.-GEN. E. A. WISDOM, C.B., C.M.G., D.S.O.,
COMMANDING 7TH BRIGADE INFANTRY.

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DEDICATED TO
OUR GLORIOUS DEAD

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ERRATA.

Page 123, in next to last line, for I. Corps
read V. Corps.

The Signature to Report on Operation on
page 142 should be Evan A. Wisdom.

FOREWORDS

I.

Nothing could be more praiseworthy than the efforts which are being made to record the achievements of units of the Australian Imperial Force. That Force established the foundations upon which Australia's national character is building. The detailed histories of its units are something more than recountals of stirring incidents. They possess a spirit of incalculable value. That spirit is the very soul of the traditions which for all time will stir the hearts of Australians to patriotism and unselfishness.

I am extremely glad, therefore, to usher forth by this brief foreword the history of the 27th Battalion. Australia is proud of the 27th Battalion, and because that Battalion nobly served the Empire and Australia the State from whence it was drawn may be justifiably gratified.

There are many points in the history of the 27th that incite more than a passing interest. Raised in March, 1915, it sailed for Egypt at the end of May of that year as one of the four splendid Battalions of the 7th Infantry Brigade. In Egypt, all too quickly from the point of view of time for preparation, it became part of the 2nd Australian Division. I say all too quickly advisedly. There is unfortunately a prevalent notion that an assembly of men can with little or no training be safely thrown into battle. To a nation relying upon its citizens for its military protection this is a fatal misconception. It is true, I am prepared to assert, that the Australian citizen can be more quickly trained than any other personnel with which I am acquainted. But the very fact argues a need for the utmost husbanding of such personnel, and one sure way of husbanding such valuable resources is by ensuring their training to a fixed standard before employing them in battle.

But that is a digression. Whilst in Egypt the 27th Battalion made full use of time and facilities for training. In consequence when it arrived in Gallipoli in September, 1915, it was able to give a good account of itself. At Gallipoli it quickly became saturated with the indomitable spirit which Australia had established there. And with Australian steadfastness it remained at Gallipoli until the evacuation.

In March, 1916, the 27th Battalion was transferred to France, and had the proud distinction of being one of the first Australian units

to confront the might of Germany. From that time until the termination of hostilities the 27th was to the fore in all encounters of importance, and its number was registered in German intelligence diaries as one of Australia's invincible battalions.

It is well that we should proudly remember the achievements of our soldiers. But more than remembrance is required of us. Their devotion to duty and their sacrifices call urgently to us for action. We must complete the task which they began. I hope that this little history will ever be a reminder of our responsibilities. It was the co-operative spirit of the 27th Battalion which made it unconquerable in battle. To achieve its aims and to maintain that spirit its members shrank from no sacrifice. In shouldering our future responsibilities, sacrifice, both individual and national, will be demanded of us. But the sacrifices of peace are small compared with those demanded by war. With the example which this history, and so many other records, place before us, can Australia fail to achieve greatness or fall short in a high standard of national character? I think not.

C. B. B. WHITE, Major-General.

II.

You have asked me to write some sort of an Introduction to the "History of the 27th Battalion," which you are having published. As I know from personal contact and knowledge what the "27th" was, and what it did, that is from the time I took command of the Brigade; and whatever may have happened before that time, I can confidently say that from then on the "27th" never failed me.

To a Brigadier who had a Brigade composed of men of four different States, it is difficult to specially praise the men of one of these, and, further, it can't be done! When all is said, it will be agreed that there is little difference in the men of the several States. All were just splendid, some Divisions, some Brigades, and some Battalions had better opportunities than others, and therefore better records, but as far as the quality of the officers, non-commissioned officers and men was concerned, there was little difference.

As regards the "27th" particularly, it has a record second to none in the A.I.F., and, of course, that is in my humble opinion, better than that of any other Battalion in any other Force engaged in the Great Adventure. While I write, my mind rushes from one great incident to another; I think of Malt Trench, that wonderful bomb fight of the "27th." LAGNICOURT, where you held up the counter-attack. BULLECOURT, where you held the exposed flank for fourteen days. MENIN ROAD, BROODSEINDE

RIDGE, PASSCHENDAELE, VILLERS BRETONNEUX, THE GREAT ADVANCE! That determined rush at BIACHES, MONT ST. QUENTIN RIDGE, BEAUREVOIR, and many minor stunts, and I cannot think of one of these occasions where the "Good old 27th" did not cover itself with glory.

It is a splendid thing to publish this book. It is only just and right and proper it should be done. It is just to the members of the Battalion and to your State that their great achievement should be recorded and become more than mere tradition. It is right and proper that those who come after should know what these hardy fighting men of the past have done, and how much they owe to their patriotism, bravery, and stubbornness. It is right and proper that the example of these men should be retained before the youth of future generations for their emulation. It is right and proper that the fame and glory of these achievements should be held by future generations as a proud heritage, inspiring them to a similar spirit of patriotism and splendid self-sacrifice for Liberty, Home, and Country. Your book will do this! I can imagine Paterfamilias, late Private in the "Gallant 27th," on being asked, "What did you do in the Great War, Daddy?" blushing modestly as he says "Hand me down THE BOOK, Mum," and thrilling with pride as he expounds its pages to his wondering offspring. Every man of the "27th" can be proud of this book, because it is a faithful record of a gallant Battalion. A magnificent, brave, hard-fighting, and hard-living Battalion. For those who have lost dear ones the book will be a source of consolation. It will give them pride in the achievements of their lost ones, which will, I am sure, temper their sorrow. It will help them to realise the great part their dear ones took in the great struggle for "the liberty of the world," "the preservation of the nationality of Australia," and "the sanctity of their homes. . . ." Those who died won all these great essentials to our happiness by their sacrifice, and when we consider conquered BELGIUM and FRANCE as we saw them, and knowing the manner of the enemy as we knew it, we must surely agree that the sacrifice was worth while. For all the above reasons I am glad indeed that this book is to be published. I commend it not only to the late members of the Battalion, but to the public generally, who should be equally proud with yourselves of the record of the Battalion. I wish it every success!

EVAN A. WISDOM, Brigadier-General.

INTRODUCTION

In presenting this book to the ex-members of the 27th Battalion and to the general public, the compilers have in view the production of a history which will inscribe upon the scroll of fame the splendid and self-sacrificing part played by the members of the Battalion in the great world-war of 1914-1918. Every unit that left Australia helped to immortalize Australia's fair name, and the deeds of her sons must inevitably be recorded in any published history of the War. The object of the book is to give prominence to the life and action of the Battalion from its inception until its disbandment, and while at times other units must necessarily be referred to, it will be merely to assist in the portrayal of the Battalion's engagements.

Space has been reserved in the front of the book for the insertion of a photograph and particulars of service of a member of the Battalion. It is felt that where this provision is availed of the book will have an added value and significance to those personally interested in the member.

It is a matter of especial interest to record that the book is published by the 27th Battalion Club, the details of publication being left to a History Sub-Committee. The narration of the history from the inception of the Battalion in 1915 to August, 1916, is by Lieut.-Colonel Dollman, and is continued from that date by Sgt. Skinner. With the exception of one or two minor details, the work of printing the book has been done entirely by ex-members of the Battalion.

Members of the History Sub-Committee: Sgt. G. G. Solly (Chairman), Lieut.-Colonels W. Dollman, V.D., and J. C. F. Slane, D.S.O., V.D., Major W. S. Hosking, D.S.O., M.C., Capt. P. G. Bice (Hon. Secretary), Lieut. S. S. Woods, M.C., R.Q.M.S. V. Harvey, Sgt. H. M. Skinner, M.M., Ptes. H. W. Marshall (Hon. Editor) and G. R. Barrington (Hon. Photographer).

WALTER DOLLMAN }
H. M. SKINNER } Authors.

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The inconveniences and discomforts of those early days of camp life were in marked contrast to the advantages and recreative opportunities of later times, to say nothing of the lack of hygienic and sanitary precautions, the provision of which, at a later date, made the Camp at Mitcham a model for the Commonwealth. Despite the dust of the first few weeks and the mud of later days, very great pride was taken in the Battalion quarters. All ranks were accommodated in the old-fashioned and now discarded "bell" tents, and set themselves with cheerfulness and thoroughness to make themselves as cosy as possible. The necessary physical and disciplinary training was carried out with all celerity, and it was not long before the unit was sufficiently trained for embarkation. In equipping the troops, much difficulty was experienced owing to shortage of supplies, and when, shortly before embarkation, the requisite quantities were available, the Quartermaster's branch was kept busy, early and late, receiving and issuing clothing, arms, and equipment.

It is encouraging to record that many of the business men of Adelaide were very liberal with gifts of goods and luxuries for the troops. Besides gifts for the comfort of the men collectively and individually, many articles for the use of the Battalion generally were received. Among other presentations were a typewriter from Messrs. Colton, Palmer and Preston, and a large clock from Mr. H. Heylen (himself an old soldier). This clock, as all the old members of the Battalion will recollect, travelled with the unit until July, 1916, when it was packed, with other regimental impedimenta, and sent across to England. It was set up in each of our training camps, and recorded Regimental time on Gallipoli, and later in France.

The newly-formed Cheer Up Society in Adelaide, founded to give cheer to local and visiting soldiers, made the comfort of the men in camp their particular care, and were responsible for countless acts of kindness and forethought which went far to relieve the monotony and tedium of life under canvas. Early in the month of May, the Battalion and other allotted troops in camp were invited by the Society to a luncheon in the Jubilee Exhibition Building, Adelaide, and they marched to the city via Unley through gaily decorated streets lined with cheering and enthusiastic crowds. A very fine display was made at the Unley City Hall. When the troops arrived at the Jubilee Exhibition Building they were at once seated

at bountifully supplied and decorated tables, where, to the accompaniment of fervent patriotic addresses the good things of life were freely partaken of, and the men showed their appreciation in the most striking manner. This day lives in the memory of the original Battalion survivors, and was a striking and fitting encouragement for them on the eve of their embarkation.

A matter worthy of mention occurred at a farewell gathering about this time, when Lieut.-Col. Dollman, speaking on behalf of the Battalion, made some comparison between the men of the first contingent and those then preparing for embarkation. In effect he said: "The memorable landing on Gallipoli has been made, the first casualty lists have been published, and the men of the 27th fully recognized that the task before them is a 'dinkum soldiers' job.'" The term stuck. The 27th Battalion became the "Dinkums," and the expression spread first to the Brigade, then to the Division, and later to the whole Australian Army. After the evacuation of Gallipoli General Birdwood sent for the C.O., and was much interested in learning how the term had originated.

It was early ascertained that a great number of the men allotted to the Battalion were from the suburban City of Unley, and in recognition of this fact the 27th was adopted as "Unley's Own." The then Mayor (Mr. T. E. Yelland) and a number of enthusiastic citizens organized a splendid farewell gathering, which was held in the City Hall on May 12th. His Excellency the Governor (Sir Henry Galway) attended, and after the Mayor and others had given fervent addresses, His Excellency, with an inspiring address, presented a pair of binoculars to Colonel Dollman on behalf of the citizens. Miss Dollman then made presentations to each of the Unley boys in the Battalion, and response on their behalf was made by the Commanding Officer. Sir Henry Galway visited the Battalion in camp at Mitcham, and reviewed the men on parade, after which, on behalf of Mrs. A. G. Miller, he presented a beautiful flag to the unit. His Excellency afterwards lunched with the officers.

So the time sped away till orders were received to embark. The early morning of May 31st found the Battalion in the bustle of preparation for their first real move as an organized unit. The principal stores and equipment had already been taken on board, and when final inspections were over the troops were entrained from Mitcham on two special trains.

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Upon arrival at the Outer Harbor, where the troopship Geelong, officially registered as A2, was lying, a very great crowd of friends was found already assembled to bid the lads "Good-bye." Very little time was lost in embarking the battalion. The regimental band was mustered on the upper deck, and, until the transport sailed, enlivened the proceedings with a fine programme of music. Amid the greatest enthusiasm from soldiers and civilians alike the transport slowly swung out from the wharf, while fluttering ribbons and waving flags evidenced the deep sentiment of affection which characterized the parting. And so they sailed, these men of the Twenty-Seventh Battalion, bound overseas to take their part in the mighty conflict between nations, leaving behind sorrowing but brave hearts to bear the suspense of separation, and to pray for the safe return of their dear ones. Slowly the troopship leaves the wharf, the long streaming ribbons grow taut and snap, the band plays farewell music, to those on board the cheering grows faint, the groups of watching figures on the wharf merge into one another, and the home-land fades from sight.

The great majority of the men were unused to sea life, and found troopship conditions uncomfortable in the extreme, but with a ready will and buoyant spirit soon set themselves to overcome the monotony of the voyage. A certain amount of physical exercise was possible, and regular instructional parades were held, sports and concert committees worked hard with excellent results, and after leaving Western Australia, where other troops were embarked, everybody had settled down to the novel surroundings. As usual with troopship sailings, our course and destination were unknown, but it was generally surmised that our destination was Egypt en route to Gallipoli.

From Western Australia our course lay direct to Suez, and for a few days our ship was buffeted and tossed under the influence of monsoons, but as we neared the equatorial waters better conditions prevailed, and life on board passed smoothly enough.

We all remember how our troopship wallowed and rolled on the slightest provocation, and having in memory now the better conditions of transports on which we afterwards sailed, it is but natural that we think the fare and accommodation on the "Geelong" was very poor in comparison.

An incident which occasioned much sorrow on board was the passing away of our comrade W. A. Graham, of Hamley Bridge, who died on board and was buried at sea. He was the first of our lads to answer the roll call for the "Other World," and his death was deeply mourned. On the night following his death, at about ten o'clock, the officers assembled in the stern of the ship, and in the absence of a Protestant Chaplain, Colonel Dollman read the burial service, and the body was committed to the deep. Then in the impressive stillness of the starlit night, the silence deepened by the fact that the monotonous throbbing of the engines had ceased, the body was gently and tenderly given to the waves. A minute's solemn silence, and then "full steam ahead," and we left our "soldier pal" to his rest.

When passing Aden, at the entrance to the Red Sea, news was received by wireless of a native rising against the garrison there, and although the possibility of our landing was discussed, our services were not requisitioned. A day or two later, in the early morning, wireless calls reached us from a vessel in distress. A dusty haze from the African shore made visibility difficult, but soon after daylight we sighted a British-Indian ship aground upon one of the many islands which abound thereabouts. The "Geelong" stopped, and the stranded ship put off a boat, and some of her officers came on board. Our captain undertook to stand by and afford what relief he could, but the arrival of a collier and almost simultaneously a wireless message from Aden that a rescue ship had been dispatched, enabled us to continue our voyage towards Suez, leaving the collier to stand guard. Suez was sighted on July 5, and the next morning instructions reached us to disembark and proceed by train to Cairo. While lying at the wharf we saw the troopship "Ballarat" leave for Australia with the first batch of wounded men from Gallipoli.

CHAPTER II.

IN EGYPT.

We travelled from Suez to Heliopolis in three special trains, the last one arriving in the early hours of the morning. Our first camp was on the outskirts of the city, and was known as the Aerodrome Camp. Here the 27th was attached temporarily to the 5th Brigade, the other battalions of the 7th Brigade having been isolated on account of an outbreak of measles while on the voyage. Our accommodation was very comfortable, the sleeping quarters being airy tents, and dining and recreation huts being provided. Plenty of shower baths were available, and as an issue of tropical clothing was made, the troops very soon adapted themselves to the new conditions. Reveille was at 4 o'clock daily, and training was carried on till 8 o'clock, and after breakfast theoretical training occupied the time between 10 o'clock and noon. At four in the afternoon training recommenced and continued until seven. Limited evening leave was given, and each week-end a liberal proportion were given freedom on the Saturday and Sunday afternoons.

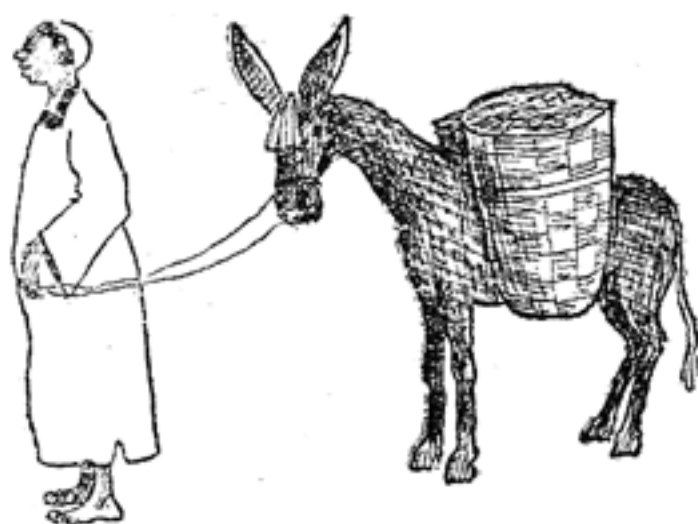
About a fortnight after our arrival we moved camp to Abbasia and joined the other units of the brigade. A detailed programme of work was carried out, including trench digging, night marches, and attack and defence practices.

Among the duties which fell to the lot of the battalion was that of garrisoning the Kasr-el-Nil Barracks at Cairo and supplying a town picquet and several guards. This work was very well done and gained commendation from the Imperial authorities.

Several instructional courses were held for the benefit of officers and non-commissioned officers. These, together with the hearty and enthusiastic interest shown by the rank and file in the various branches of training, soon brought the battalion to a high state of efficiency.

After a period of two months in Egypt, instructions were received to prepare for embarkation for Gallipoli, and immediate steps were taken to completely overhaul all equipment, and make good any deficiencies.

On the night of September 3, 1915, we boarded trains for Alexandria, and next morning embarked on the Cunard liner "Ivernia" in company with the 28th Battalion. This was our first experience of voyaging in submarine-infested waters, and stringent precautions were taken for the safety of all on board. Lifebelts were worn day and night, submarine guards mounted and no lights permitted after dark. We reached Lemnos on September 9, and anchored in Mudros Harbour until the 12th, on which day the whole of the 7th Brigade was transhipped to smaller vessels and made ready for the landing on Gallipoli.



FRUIT MERCHANT - CAIRO

attached, our C.O. received instructions to visit the trenches held by the New Zealand Mounted Rifle Brigade and a New Zealand Infantry Brigade. This Col. Dollman and several of the company officers of the battalion did during the afternoon, and, later, instructions were received to move the battalion up during the night and take over the trenches from the New Zealand troops on which was called Cheshire Ridge. During that night, the 13th of September, we slowly and silently took over and commenced our garrison duty on Gallipoli. Our trench, which was poorly constructed — having been established by the New Zealand troops, who were weakened both in numbers and physique owing to continuous and arduous service — ran along the top of a ridge and was distant from the enemy about eighty to four hundred yards. The ridge was high, and afforded a splendid view of Suvla Bay, the Salt Lake, and Anafarta, also the "W" Hills position, and we could see enemy troops out of range of our own fire. Our immediate enemy concern was a position held in what once had been a farm, but was now battered beyond all recognition. Enemy trenches, however, had been made and strengthened, and offered a continuous menace to our lines. It was soon recognised that our trenches could be much improved, and we constructed splendid forward fire positions, which gave better and more effective command over the enemy. In this regard the men under Major Slane, Captains Chalmers, Blacket, Dey, and Malpas, and, later, Major Cunningham, did excellent work. It was in carrying out some constructional work that Captain J. W. Blacket was wounded. This officer had been adjutant of the Battalion until our arrival at Lemnos, when, as Major Padman was found medically unfit to proceed, Captain Blacket was appointed to command C Company, Lieut. Pearce being appointed adjutant.

It was found desirable to send nightly patrols between our own and the Turkish lines, and on one of these Lieut. Pearce, who was sent out as leader, was badly bombed and two or three men with him were killed or wounded. Quite a number of bodies, both of friend and foe, were lying on No Man's Land, and many of these were buried at night by the chaplain (Captain W. J. Stevens). At the time of our first arrival on Gallipoli, the summer weather conditions still prevailed, and by reason of shortage of water, the prevalence of flies, and the number of unburied dead, the amount of sickness (principally enteric, para typhoid, and jaundice) was very great. The water and supplies for the use of the men in the

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trenches were conveyed per medium of mules, under the control of an Indian corps. These animals were well cared for and proved most reliable and trusty in their work, although they possessed the amiable trait of kicking at unexpected times and without provocation, as several of our men will readily testify. Our "dump" was at the foot of the hill below the lines, and Captain Uffindell, with his efficient staff, kept the supplies at high-water mark. There were times, however, when the water-barges failed, and our ration of water for all purposes was but a thimbleful. Occasionally it was found possible to allow a platoon at a time as far as the beach for a bathe, where the diggers sported in the waves, in spite of the shrapnel Johnny Turk sent after them. At times, especially after rain, the steep road from the beach was impassable even for mules, and on such occasions parties had to be sent from the men in the reserve to act as beasts of burden and bring our supplies to the firing line.

To reach the lines held by our Battalion from the beach it was necessary to traverse the Chalak Dere, a deep gully which in places was exposed to the full view of the enemy, and working parties were usually fired upon, principally by machine guns. Our lines were well within bombing range, and a lot of casualties resulted from this cause, while some very narrow escapes were experienced. A very great amount of ingenuity was displayed in making shelters, and the provision of suitable winter quarters was proceeding when "our relief" arrived on November 12. We marched out by platoons at intervals, and although badly shot at on the way to the beach, suffered no casualties. While on duty at Cheshire Ridge we had several visits from Generals Sir Ian Hamilton, Sir W. R. Birdwood, Sir C. B. B. White, Sir A. Godley, and other distinguished officers, who complimented the Battalion highly upon the excellent work accomplished.

Our next post was on a place known as Wellington Plateau, in support to Russell's Top and Walker's Ridge, in which position we assisted the garrison and provided strong mining fatigue. Here our position was on a narrow ledge (called by our regimental officers Chamois Ledge) overlooking a deep gully, along the sides of which shelters had been cut for the transport mules while off duty. Our men were set to terrace the slope and to make shelters in the solid earth of the hill. Owing to the absence of timber or revetting material the task was heartbreaking, but nevertheless was well carried out,

and several adequate shelters constructed, the principal difficulty experienced being to overcome the reluctance of the men to sleep in them.

It was while we were holding this position that Lord Kitchener visited Gallipoli, and his tour of inspection took him through our Battalion lines. During November a very trying snow blizzard was experienced, which caused a lot of sickness among all Australian units.

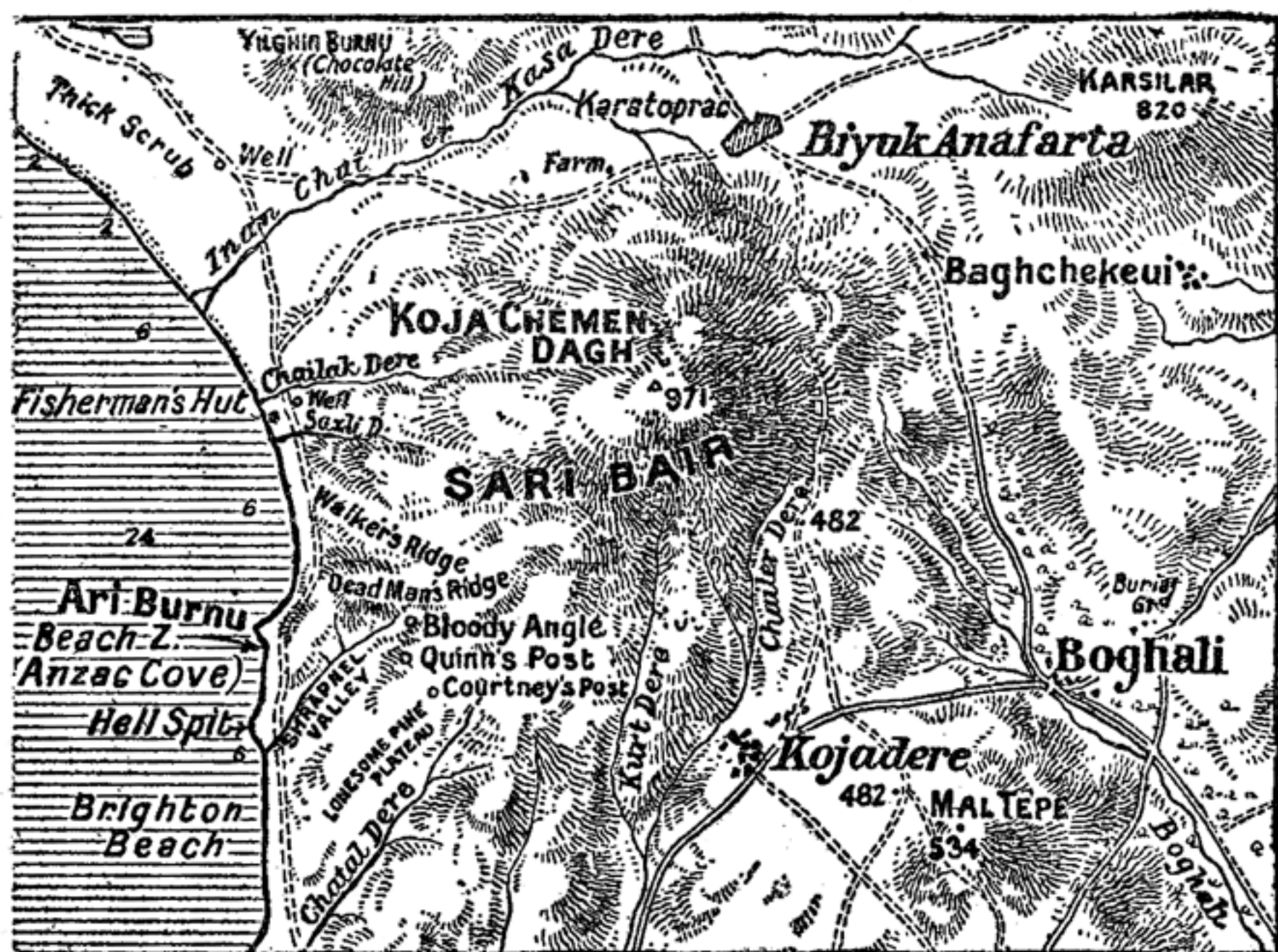
Our next move was to a gully known as Happy Valley, and from this position we supplied beach fatigues and working parties for some days. Then came definite news of the intention to evacuate the Peninsula, and we supplied the men necessary to transport vast quantities of stores as well as troops to waiting troopships, which came silently out of the distance each night after darkness had set in. We removed our quarters to the beach camp and could see, from day to day, the garrison grow less in numbers. On Dec. 12 word came that it was our turn to leave, and the 27th Battalion, with the 26th and 28th, embarked on barges that night.

Even at the time we write, it is difficult to understand how our troops could so completely disengage themselves without the knowledge of the enemy. For some weeks, it is true, there had been periods of silence during which no rifle fire came from our lines, and the enemy doubtless thought nothing of the silence which ensued upon the departure of the troops until accident or design revealed the emptiness of our trenches.

The vessel that bore us away was the "Osmania," and our feelings may easily be imagined as she slowly gained way and left behind the shore of Gallipoli. Relief at our personal safety, regret at the failure of the enterprise, and deep-seated sorrow that so many brave and gallant comrades had fallen by the way, and that we were leaving their graves in our enemy's hand. With hats off we stood while the dim and distant shore slowly receded from sight, and in a few hours a new day dawned as we made our way into Mudros Harbour once more, and made ready to land. This was accomplished by midday, and we marched to a camp site known as Sarpi, where we rested for the night.

The casualties sustained by the Battalion on Gallipoli were not heavy if those caused through sickness are excepted,

but naturally the death of those smitten thus early was felt more keenly than later, when the more heavy toll fell upon us. Captain J. W. Blacket was the first officer wounded in action, and of other ranks the first wounded was Private A. J. Potter, and the first to die of wounds, Sergeant R. R. Poyntz. The death of Stretcher-bearers Cairns and Caseldine, who were both killed while assisting a wounded comrade, was particularly regrettable, both these fine lads having won a high reputation for soldierly qualities. The last casualty before leaving the Peninsula was probably that of Sergeant Rofe, who was hit by a shell fragment, which he carefully preserved as a souvenir.. The total casualties sustained on the Peninsula were: Killed, 10; wounded, 65; evacuated sick, 587.



SURVEY MAP OF ANZAC.

Showing scene of operations and principal points held by the Australian Imperial Force.

CHAPTER IV.

EGYPT ONCE MORE.

It was rather a strange experience to be once more under canvas in battalion formation, and to have a full night's rest without interruption. We missed the incessant crack of the Turkish machine guns that had been a feature of every night on the Peninsula, and on the morning of Dec. 14 we woke to a beautiful day, with water and rations in abundance.

About midday on Dec. 16 we marched to No. 2 Camp, overlooking the entrance to the harbour, and here the whole of the 7th Brigade was eventually quartered. The countryside was strewn with stones, which made any military movement off the roads a very difficult matter, and it was necessary for us to clear not only our sleeping quarters, but also an area large enough for battalion parades.

The Christmas of 1915 was spent in our new quarters, and as an excellent British army canteen was nearby, the usual liquid adjuncts for a festive season were obtained and enjoyed. The ration issue included Christmas pudding in tins, and every man had an adequate supply of this Christmas "luxury," for such it seemed after the privation experienced on the Peninsula.

On Christmas Eve much excitement was created by the distribution of billycans sent by the good folk at home. These typical Australian utensils were filled with gifts of value and utility. No two were alike. Surely no children ever searched their stockings, after the visit of Santa Claus, with greater delight than did the boys examine the contents of their billycans. It was a glorious thought on the part of the home folks, and brought from Australia a very dear intimation of kindly love. During the Christmas period each battalion in turn supplied the programme for a campfire concert, and as much leave as possible was granted to enable the troops to visit the

towns and villages on the island. These explorations, which were of great interest to the troops, to whom the sights and customs of the natives had not yet become irksome, incidentally meant a much increased and lucrative business for the local inhabitants. A few miles from the camp was a hot spring, and here the natives had arranged "hot baths," which, although primitive in character, were nevertheless well patronised.

On the 8th of January, 1916, the 27th Battalion, together with the 23rd and 24th Battalions, embarked on the transport "Minnewaska," and after an anxious but uneventful voyage, arrived at Alexandria two days later. The troops were at once entrained for Tel-el-Kebir, where they arrived about midnight, and found many members of the Battalion who had been evacuated from Gallipoli through sickness and wounds, waiting to rejoin their unit.

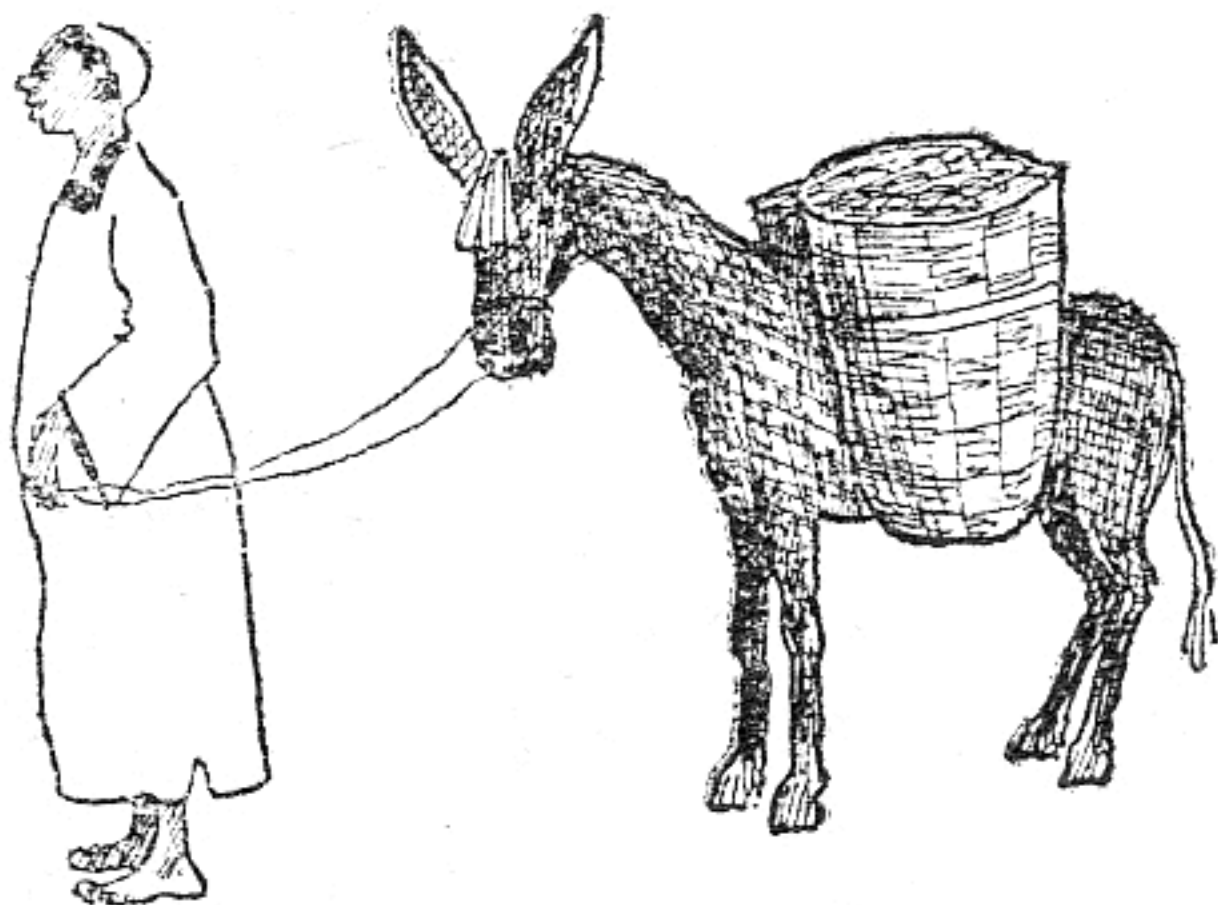
The plains of Tel-el-Kebir made a splendid camping ground. A fine canal ran parallel with the front of the camp, and along its banks some excellent plantations and gardens were flourishing, while the railway from Suez to Cairo also crossed our front, the railway station being in the township about a mile distant. The desert on our side of the canal was studded with many-coloured pebbles, which made the ground solid and suitable for marching, but on the other side of the canal beyond the irrigation belt, there were great moving sandhills most wearisome to tramp over.

The locality was of historic interest from the fact that just beyond our lines were the original earthworks thrown up by Arabi Pasha's force in 1882, when Sir Garnet Wolseley inflicted so decisive a defeat upon the rebels. We found many interesting war trophies and mementos of this historic battle-field, and the troops never tired of wandering over the old defensive works and in fancy fighting the battle of Tel-el-Kebir as they imagined it was fought thirty-four years earlier. Very limited leave was possible here, and soon the whole of the Australian forces were concentrated, and their camping ground made a noble show. Training was vigorously carried out in preparation for expected operations against a threatened Turkish invasion of Egypt.

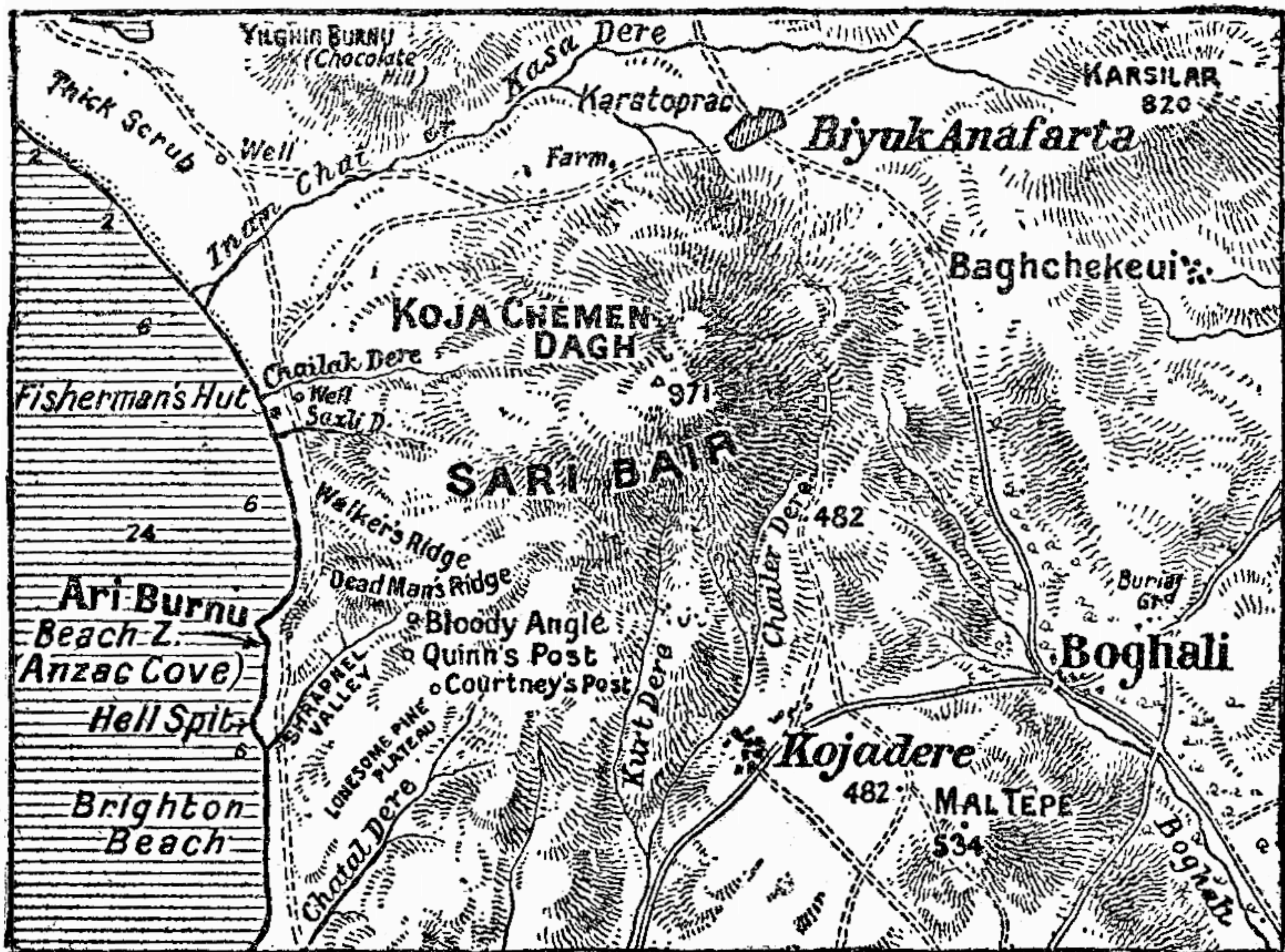
On the 3rd of February the Battalion entrained once more and proceeded to Ismalia, where the Suez Canal was crossed by pontoon bridges. Here we took up a new position on the Asiatic shore, on the exact spot where the Turks had made

their ill-fated dash on the canal in 1915. Defensive positions were at once commenced, both at the canal and in the desert about ten miles inland. The Camel Corps was much in evidence in the making of a road, and a desert railway was laid down. Most of our time was taken up in digging and fortifying trenches and supplying outposts, but as much training as possible was carried out. On the 5th of March we re-crossed the canal and marched to Moascar, where preparations were commenced for our move to France. We occupied the lines of a New Zealand unit which had taken over the duties we had held on the other side of the canal. We were inspected by General Birdwood, who gave us much valuable advice as to the new conditions we would experience in France.





FRUIT MERCHANT - CAIRO



SURVEY MAP OF ANZAC.

Showing scene of operations and principal points held by the Australian Imperial Force.



"VIVE LA FRANCE"

MARSEILLES.
23. 3. 16