

Historical Officers Report

Events of the Great War as reported in the Camden News
Cables from the European War. January 1917

4th January

An important move is reported on the Somme front. The British troops have taken control of a much larger portion of the line. The transfer of the troops was affected with great secrecy. By creating a diversion in the neighbourhood of Ypres General Haig completely deceived the enemy as to his Intentions and the change was effected without a hitch.

On the West front the Germans did not seek trouble on Christmas Day. The Tommies listened to the German carols and concerts and to their tin whistles, but kept their rifles ready.

Commenting on the importance of the El Arish success, Mr. Massey, the official war correspondent, pays a tribute to the Anzac mounted division. Nobody understood the resourcefulness, courage, and endurance of the Anzacs better than the enemy.

Mr. Massey, describing the defence works on the Suez Canal, emphasises their permanency as well as their enormous magnitude. The army has civilised the desert he says, and the results will remain when the war has become history.

Serious riots occurred in Cork on Saturday night. Six hundred Sinn Feiners attacked 50 soldiers who fled. Police charged the crowd with baton, and injured several persons. The Sinn Feiners dispersed, but afterwards attacked isolated soldiers.

A Copenhagen message reports that starving men and women crowd the quays in Germany awaiting neutral ships bringing food. Screaming women stormed several ships.

A review of the work performed by the Allied Air Corps is also given. This claims that 900 enemy aeroplanes and 80 kite balloons were brought down during the past twelve months.

9th January Light Horse Capture Rafa



11th January

The transport Ivernia a Cunard liner of 14,278 tons) was torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean on Monday; 120 Soldiers and 33 seamen are missing.

During 1916 the Allies captured 600,000 prisoners; including 400,000 in General Brussiloff's offensive in Volhynia and about 120,000 were taken on the Somme and at Verdun. The Germans lost 700,000 men on the Somme.

Archbishop Riley, Chaplain-General with the Australian forces was on board the torpedoed transport Ivorian, but was saved.

It is estimated that nearly 50,000 Americans are fighting with the Allied armies. Many are sons of millionaires and Harvard men.

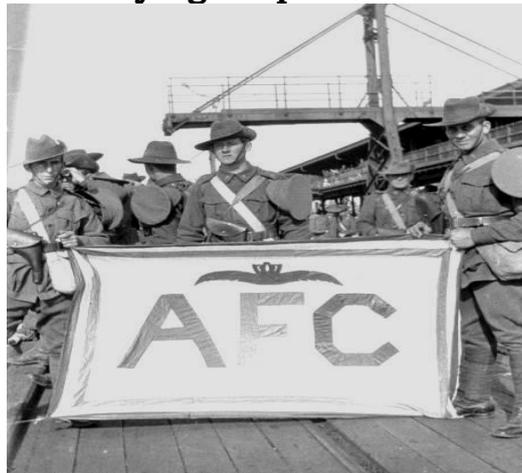
An Amsterdam statement says German travellers report that all 18-year-old boys were called up in Germany in November. They have been drafted to the West front, and were informed that Germany would attempt a great offensive early in the spring.

The London correspondent of the New York "Times" believes that the greatest battle in history will take place in France within the next, few months.

A new Zeppelin has been completed at Friedrichshafen, The propellers work noiselessly, and a new device envelopes the airship with gas, rendering it invisible.

17th January

No.4 Squadron Australian Flying Corps sail for France



18th January

Mr. Lloyd George's golf club at Walton Heath has allotted five acres for potato growing. The King will permit crops to be grown on two of his parks.

The Anzac Mounted and the Imperial Camel Corps, captured a strong position of entrenchment six main redoubts and the central keep covering Rafa, north-east of El Arish.

The position has carried after a long day's fighting. Enemy killed and wounded in British hands number 600, while 1600 prisoners and four mountain guns were taken.

On Wednesday the Mesopotamian force captured the majority of the trenches in, the loop north-east of Kut-el-Amara.

In their offensive at Riga advanced Russian detachments entered trenches and captured the steeping outposts. The first line was unguarded, and easily taken. They carried the second and third line trenches without meeting serious resistance. The fourth line was also seized.

Mr. Philip Gibbs says that the series of small encounters north of Beaumont Hamel are part of a definite and deadly policy of hammering the enemy throughout the winter.

Mr. Massey, telegraphing from El Arish stated that the Desert column's victory at Rafa was one of the finest achievements of the Egypt war period. The New Zealanders made an enveloping movement to attack the town the Australians approached from the south-east and the Imperial Camelry from the south. A magnificent and stirring spectacle was witnessed as the large bodies of light horse galloped into action while the dismounted Camelry made a model infantry attack. While Rafa was being taken a Squadron of Australians came into action with a squadron of Turkish cavalry and a squadron of Turkish Camelry.

These fresh enemy troops were driven off. An examination of the enemy trenches at Rafa proved the devastating effect of the British Artillery fire. Prisoners described it as terrible.

25th January

A fire, which started in a munitions factory to the east of London, caused an explosion, which shook the whole of the city. The fire broke out in the mixing shop. Dr. Angell, the chief chemist, while advising operatives to seek safety, attempted to combat the fire and perished. A number of workers were killed and buried in the ruins. All the explosives in the factory were completely destroyed, and fires were caused in neighbouring warehouses and factories, including an important flourmill.

The flames spread quickly, until there were fires over an area of more than a square mile. It was necessary to demolish several buildings to check the progress of the flames. The number killed and wounded has not been ascertained. Between 30 and 40 bodies have been recovered. About 100 persons are reported to be seriously injured.

The British have driven out the enemy from the area north-east of Kut-el-Amara, and now hold a trench system on a front of 2500 yards to a depth of 1100 yards.

From the Home Front

Mr. Ted. Roberts, late shoemaker in Camden, has enlisted for active service, offering to go wherever the military authorities choose to send him. As he is a cripple, and not allowed to go as a fighter like his brother, he was accepted as a shoemaker in the army. Considering his serious handicap as regards Limbs it shows the great pluck of the young man to serve the Empire in its need. He is a splendid example to able-bodied young men who have no ties or responsibilities, and who have not yet heeded the Empire's urgent call to duty.

On Sunday evening last about 40 people assembled at Mr. Joseph Holdsworth residence at Camden Park, to bid farewell to Private Walter Holdsworth, and present him with gifts. An enjoyable evening was spent. Several toasts were proposed and honoured. Private Holdsworth is leaving shortly for the front.

NEW BUILDING FOR THE CAMDEN FIRE STATION.

The old Camden Fire Station has at last been evacuated by the Local Brigade, the fire fighting appliances having been moved from the old building in Hill Street, to the new premises in John Street, adjoining the School of Arts.

For many years the old building has been ridiculously small and inconvenient, the necessary appliances of the Brigade taking up so much room that it was impossible to move about the station with freedom, and the proverbial cat's chances of being swung in the building without losing several of its nine lives, were remote.

Ray Herbert
Historical Officer