

PRISONERS of WAR at the OTTOMAN FRONT during WWI

By Kemal Giray

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PRISONERS of WAR at the OTTOMAN FRONT during WWI

Ottoman Prisoners of War & Prisoners of War in Turkey

A Postal History and Ephemera Perspective

by

Kemal Giray, AWP

 **Balkan
Phila**

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Sidi Bishr camp is situated 15km to the northeast of Alexandria. Visited by the Red Cross delegates on 6th of January the 1917. The camp contains 430 officers, 60 of whom have been here since February, 1915; 410 orderlies captured with their officers; 10 imams; 20 civilians, who were captured by the Sherif of Mecca and handed over to British. All new arrivals pass 14 days in quarantine. At the Red Cross' visit there were 36 officers and 34 orderlies were quarantined. Officers accommodated in solid wooden barracks.

According to regulation, the number of occupants of each chamber depends upon their grade. Officers up to the rank of captain are quartered four in each dormitory; captains three, and colonels two. The orderlies and privates are housed in tented accommodation. The health of inmates of Sidi Bishr

Camp is looked after by an English doctor, Captain Gillespie assisted by an Armenian doctor, who practiced at Aleppo before the war. These two doctors speak Arabic and Turkish. A Turkish Surgeon-Major, Dr. Ibrahim, interned at the camp, is present at operations performed upon his Ottoman comrades in the hospital.

The officers were offered two hours' walk every morning outside the camp, in parties of 26, under the supervision of an unarmed soldier, on condition of their giving their parole not to escape. Prisoners may write as often as they like, but seldom take advantage of the privilege, and as a rule receive few letters, which take from 40 to 45 days in reaching them. Few money orders come to the camp. Officers' pay is fixed by the War Office. That of lieutenants comes to 5 francs daily, that of captains to 5 francs 75, that of superior officers is proportionate to their rank. The orderlies, being privates, are not paid. Some of them receive pay from their officers, others get nothing. There was a Gestetner printing machine to publish their own camp newsletter. Later Sidi Bishr became the largest PoW camp for Ottoman Military personnel and Civilian internees. There were also some Austro-Hungarian and German military personnel too.



1917 dated picture of the commandant of the camp Lieutenant Colonel Coates and the staff

Football



18 November 1919 dated photograph inscribed 'Hilâl-i Türkî terk-i ayak topu kulübü ve 51 üyesinin isimleri' (Turkish Crescent football club and names of its 51 members)



Inscribed; Hilâl-i Türkî 1336 (Turkish Crescent 1920)



1920 (3 February). Registered cover franked with 2d and 2 ½d of KGV Great Britain stamps tied by BRITISH A.P.O. CONSTANTINOPLE date stamps addressed to Hacı Ahmet Paşa prisoner number 2739 at Verdala Camp. Straight line PASSED CENSOR cachet and on reverse 12 February arrival cds. Arrived Malta on 2 June 1919 and released on 30 April 1921. **Very few incoming mail to any prisoner recorded.**

Hacı Ahmet Paşa was the father of **Enver Paşa** who was the War Minister of the Ottoman Empire. Sender [Mehmed] Kamil Bey is his son and Enver Paşa's younger brother.

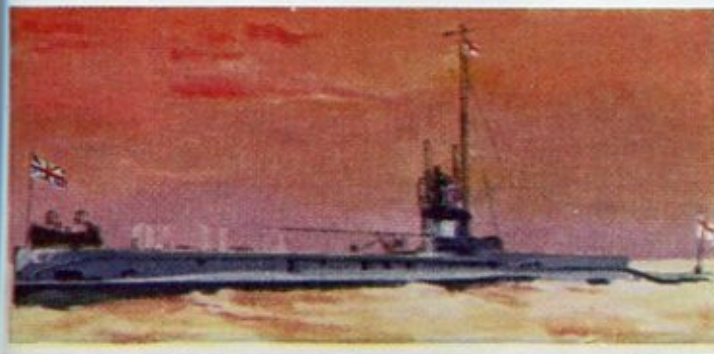


15 November 1920 and 2 February 1921 dated lettersheets from Hacı Adil Bey [Arda], prisoner no. 2757 to Istanbul struck by PC.5 CENSORED E.S. censor cachets. The reason for the use of E.S. initials on censor cachet and its location unknown. Arrived Malta on 21 September 1919 and was released on 30 April 1921 to Taranto, Italy where he spent some time. Eventually joined the Turkish War of Liberation.

Hacı Mehmed Adil Arda was the Chairman of the Parliament at the time of his arrest. After joining the Turkish War of Liberation, he became a Governor of Adana and then to Bursa when it was liberated from the enemy.

H.M. Submarine E7

E7 was a British E class submarine built at Chatham Dockyard. She was sent to Dardanelles to relieve E14. She passed through Dardanelles to Marmara Sea and stayed there for 24 days. During her stay, she sank 5 steamers and sailing vessels. Also she bombarded a railway destroying some trains on the Dardanelles Straits. On her way back on 4 of September 1915, she was trapped in anti-submarine nets laid by the Ottoman battleship Turgut Reis at Çanakkale (Nagara Point) and eventually all her crew of 3 officers and 25 sailors were taken into captivity for the rest of the war. Four members of the crew subsequently died in captivity. All taken to Istanbul first, then to Ankara and then transferred to working camps around various places in Anatolia. Commander of the submarine Lieutenant Commander Cochrane (later received DSO - Distinguished Service Order) escaped from prison on his second attempt and reached Cyprus.



Lyons Tea series Teacard of H.M. Submarine E.7

No. 10 Series of 32

HMS 1902-1962

H.M. SUBMARINE E.7 Admiralty Saddle Tank Type

The first British submarine to be internally sub-divided by watertight bulkheads and to carry beam torpedo tubes. Fifty-six of these very successful boats were built and gave splendid service during World War I. Twenty-six were lost to enemy action. 181 feet long with a beam of 22½ feet, armed with three to five 18-inch torpedo tubes and one 6-pounder or 4-inch gun. Diesel driven on the surface and by electric motors submerged, they could cruise on the surface at 15½ knots and 9½ knots underwater. E.7 was scuttled in September, 1915, in the Dardanelles after damage by enemy depth charges.

LYONS TEA

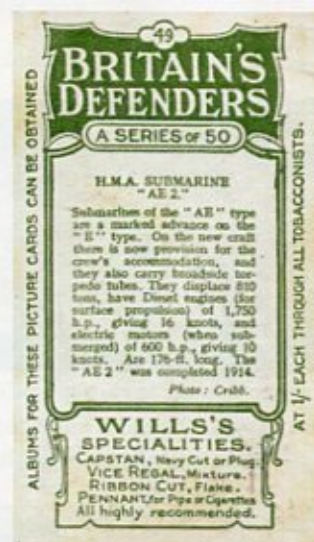
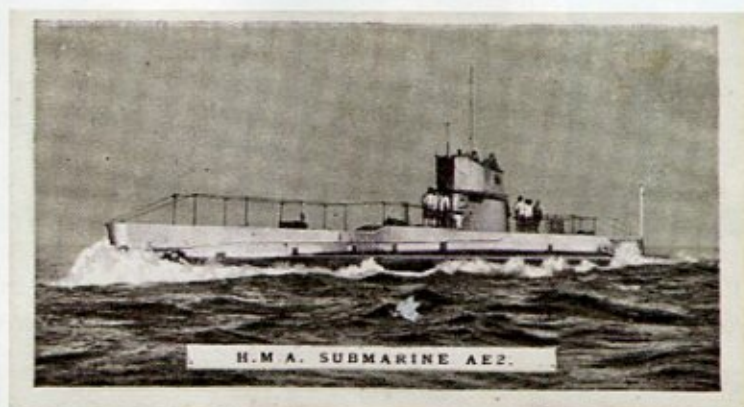
Teacard albums are obtainable from your grocer price 6d.

J. Lyons & Co. Ltd., Cadby Hall
London W.14. Printed in England



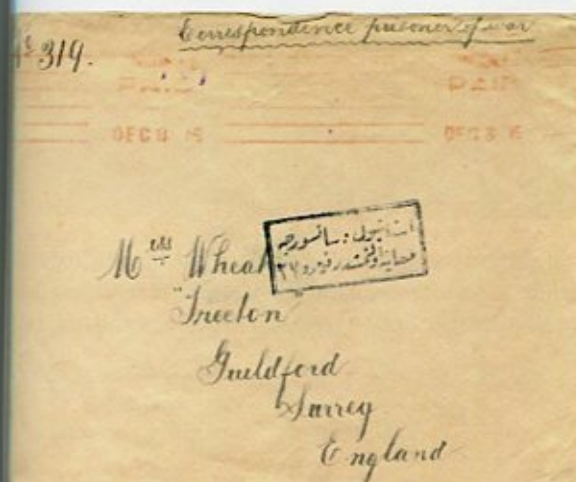
Photocard (ed. M.J.A.F. Constantinople) titled 'Bei den Dardanellen gefangene Engländer' (Captured British from Dardanelles) and inserted top left box in Ottoman Turkish 'Çanakkalede batırılan İngiliz Tahtelbahiri mürettebatından İstanbul'a getirilen userâ' (PoWs from the immersed British Submarine at Dardanelles brought to Istanbul)

Will's Britain's Defenders series Cigarette Card of
H.M.A. Submarine AE2



Able Seaman John Harrison Wheat Correspondence

Royal Australian Navy no. 7861, prisoner number 319. He was repatriated on 17 December 1918 in Cairo then via London to Australia on 6 January 1919.



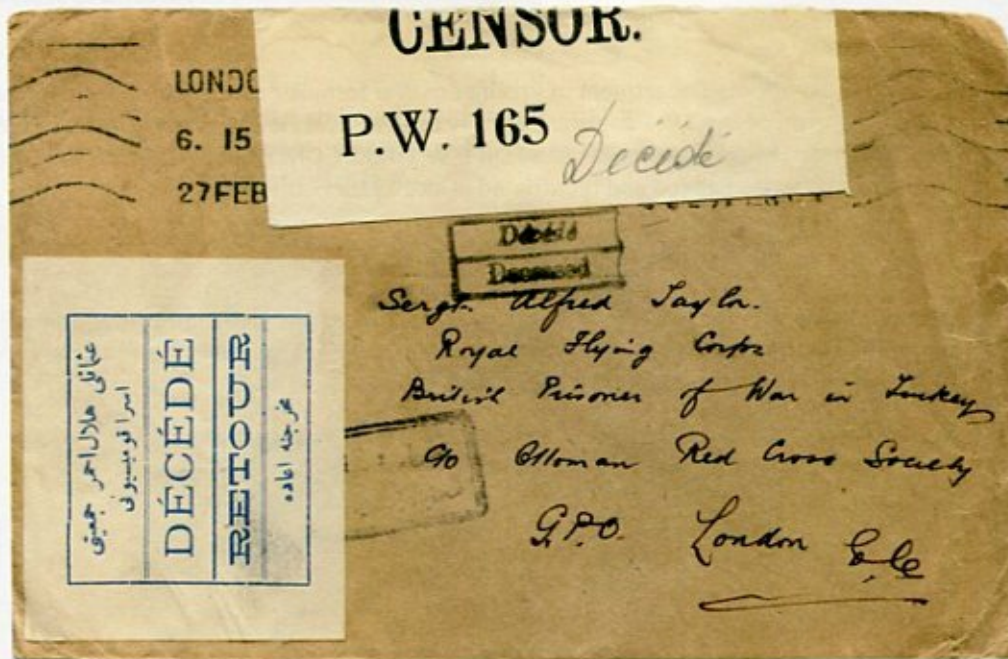
1915 cover to England struck by Istanbul censor no. 27 cachet and on reverse green rosette label. Received 8 December London machine cancellation on arrival.



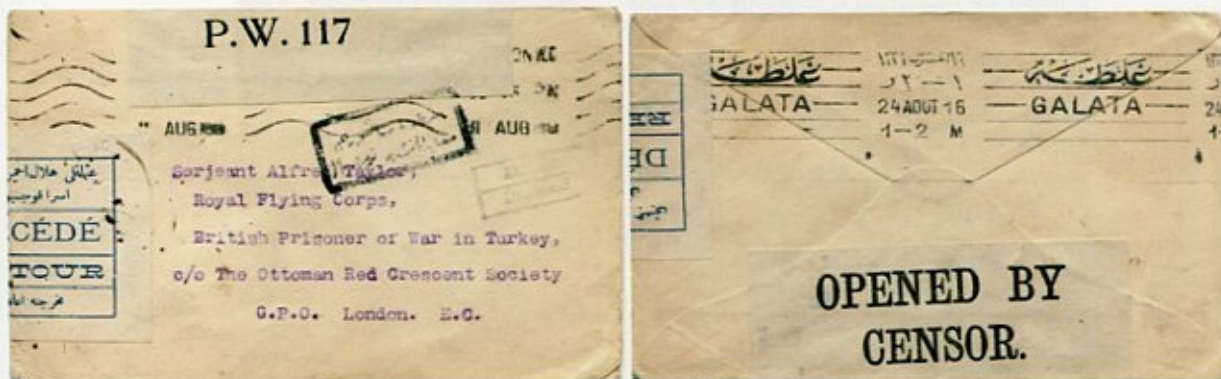
Undated cover to England struck by Istanbul censor no. 58 hand cachet and on reverse red rosette label.

Royal Flying Corps

In 31 July 1915 No.30 Squadron was formed officially at Ismailia in Egypt but this was back-dated to 24 March 1915 because a Royal Flying Corps detachment that had been operating in the region to defend the Suez Canal since November 1914. The Squadron was equipped with BE2s, two French-built Maurice Farman MF7s and an MF11. In April 1916 the Squadron carried out the world's first air supply operations when food and ammunition were dropped to the besieged forces defending the town of Kut al-Amara against the Ottomans, but "as often as not their parcels go into the Tigris or into the Ottoman trenches!" as described in one of the pilot's war diaries. Between January and mid-April 1915 approximately 30 successful supply drops delivered essential supplies to the garrison, including a 70 pound millstone that was dropped using a special parachute on 27 March. Two aircraft were grounded, waiting for repairs. Their pilots and a team of mechanics stayed in Kut, working on the planes and were therefore caught up in the siege. All 29 become prisoners of war.



Regiment fought
Ottomans with
defenses of Kut
to relieve their
prisoners of war.
1915, 72 died

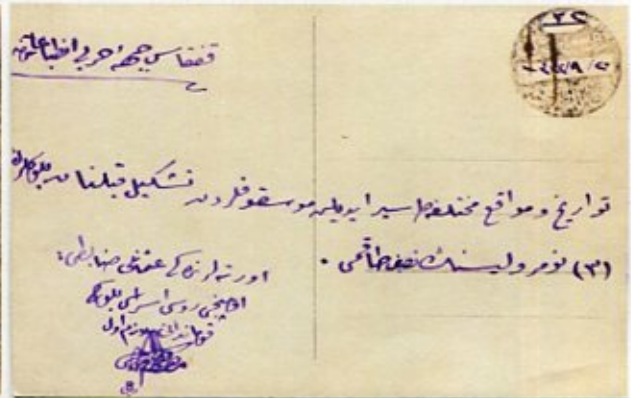


11 August 1916 and 27 February 1917 dated covers from London addressed to Ottoman Red Crescent Society enquiring British prisoner of war Sergeant Alfred Taylor of the Royal Flying Corps. Later one struck by 24 August Galata arrival cancellations and Galata censor cachets. Both with Ottoman Red Crescent DÉCÉDÉ / RETOUR bi-lingual labels and Décédé / Deceased cachets. Both with OPENED BY CENSOR P.W. 117 and P.W. 165 labels. He was captured in Kut al-Amara and died in captivity.

Four pho
Indian A



Today a large industrial city in Central Anatolia about 300km southeast of Ankara. Not much information available but believed to be used for internment camp, mostly for Russians on their way to Kırşehir from Caucasus Front via Sivas.



December 1916 (20 Teşrinisani 1336) dated photograph inscribed in Ottoman Turkish; *Half of the 3rd Company of Russian prisoners captured at different places and dates*. On middle *"Commander of the 3rd Russian Prisoners Company Lieutenant Mustafa Râci"* struck by believed to be the only recorded Rus Userâsî Kumandanlığı (Russian Prisoners Command) with date 20/9/1332 and number 32 inserted by hand negative seal.

INCOMING MAIL



1917 (17 January). Russian 3k postal stationery card additionally franked with 2k arms stamp to Russian PoW prisoner 3963 in Kayseri struck by boxed ДЦ БАКУ No.41 and Istanbul censor cachets. **This is the only prisoner of war correspondence recorded from Kayseri.**