

Diary One

5th April 1915 to the 15th September 1915

Page One

Australia to Egypt (Cairo)

A brief account of my personal experience while on active service proper dating from April 5th 1915

5th April 1915

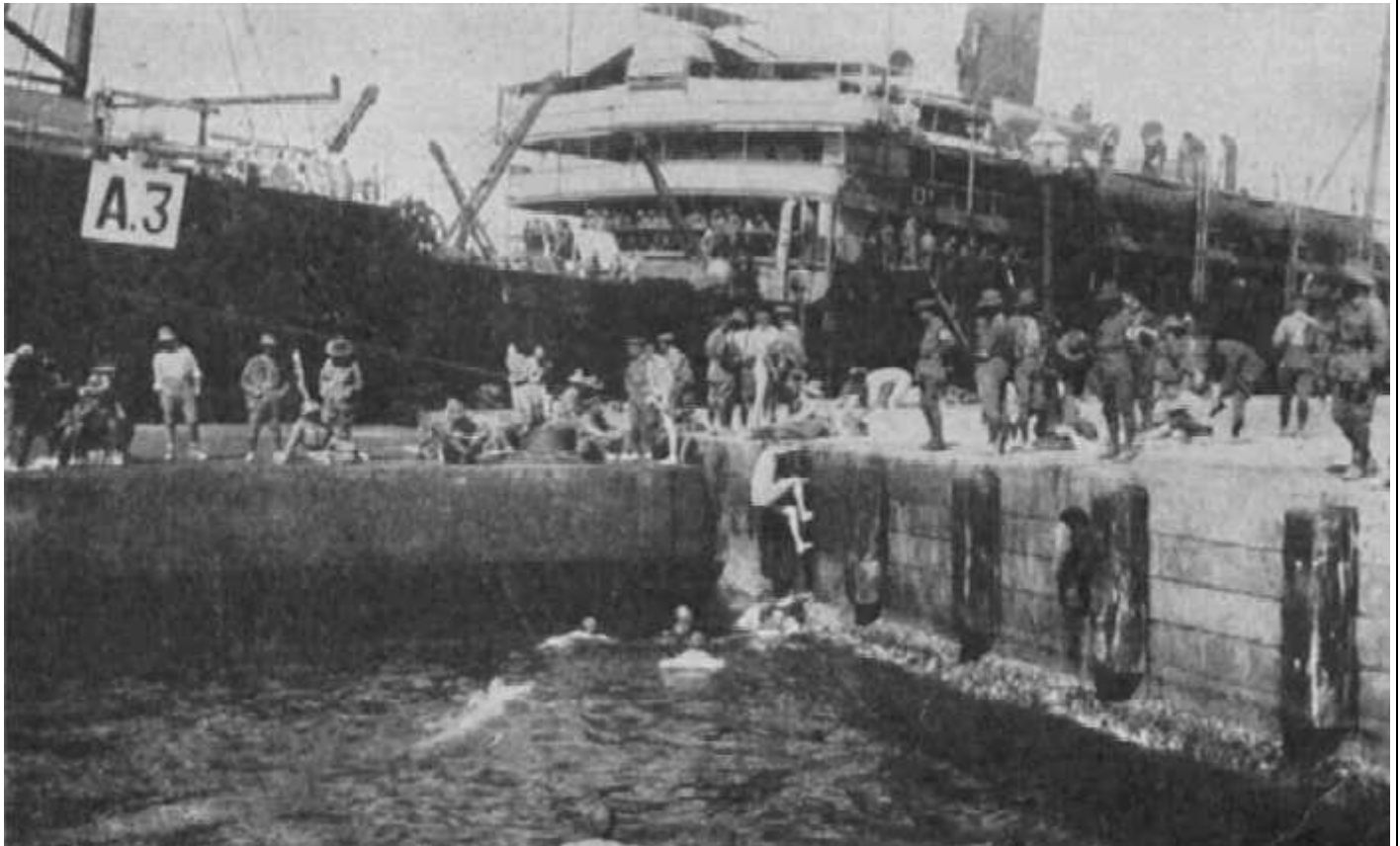
After having come from Australia per SS 'Argyleshire' and arriving in the 'Land of the Pharaohs' where rigorous training and tons of good fun and High Life generally were the rules of the road we got embarkation orders thank God! So here's to it and may our little flutter which we are about to have tend in some way to weight his balance against 'His most Satanic Majesty THE KAISER'. I was detailed to be in charge of 3 goods waggons in one of Cairo's many railway stations. Having got there, I started looking around for the necessary something to eat. Had a last stroll around the square. Posted a photo to cousin Annie in England. Had a last bath at the National (awfully tender memories of that place).

The devil alone knows when we'll get another.

7.15pm we started entraining. Had charge of 30 waggons. Loaded one truck in 25 minutes. Have developed into a real nigger driver. Got informed by the entraining officer that ours was the quickest he had seen. What dogs we must be. Goodbye Cairo.

0.45am slept in a truck with the gun stores.

Arrival at Alexandria



Australian troops cooling off by taking a swim at Alexandria (NW)

6th April 1915

Arrived in Alexandria 4.am Woke up somewhere about this morning by a nigger crawling all over me, mistook me for the carriage door mat I think. I knew it was a nigger by the beautiful perfume that pervaded the air when such creatures are at large, also by the yell he emitted when I soiled my right boot. I crawled out in the rain and saw to the unloading of the trucks. Had my first feed of Bully Beef and Biscuits. Gee but it's hard feed. I was on guard all day keeping inquisitive niggers from poking their noses into other peoples concerns, suits my present mood

splendidly. Slept in some goods shed on the wharf. Stone floor, ugh. Darn sight worse than sand.

7th April 1915

I woke up with an awfully stiff back. Had a wash in a horse trough. No extra charge for the oats and chaff which were floating about. Exercised horses most of the morning. One moke wanted to give an exhibition of Tango or shake hands with me, and succeeded in planting me one on the leg. Spell to in the afternoon and went into the city at night after having an argument with a cabbie. Just to show our independence. Had supper at a German Restaurant. They came off second best. Remarkable what you pick up nowadays. Norman had an 'accident' he usually does. Leave expired at 9.30. Woke up to the fact that it was nearly that when we observed the time, so made a night of it.

8th April 1915 (Thursday)

Nothing said about last night's jollo. Transformed into the N.C.O. of Police today. Nothing to do so accepted an invitation to dinner with Cairns from the skipper of the White Star Liner 'Canada'. Capt was also the skipper of the Mersey. Remember her in Sydney. Had a great time. Smoked some of his delicious cigars also consumed one or two Dewar's White Label too. Had a bath. Went into the city again at night after being relieved from duty. Marfeesh feluce so came home. Wrote home.

9th April 1915

Worked in the stables in the earlier part of the morning then started loading horses and guns. Got orders to get aboard early this afternoon. Got there and can't get back again. Great quarters here. Packed like sardines. On board with us are the B.H.Q. and the B.A.C. Up on deck most of the night. Find that our craft is named the SS 'Indian'. Can't leave anything Niggerish behind me of course. Every time I see those black angels I want to break the sixth commandment. Bunk at 12.

Voyage from Egypt (Alexandria) to Lemnos

10th April 1915

Left the wharf at 12 noon. Saw the last of Alexandria at 2 pm. Great city and absolutely Eastern in appearance. Splendid shipping accommodation. Contrary to expectations we went straight out of the harbour instead of anchoring in the stream for a day or so. Don't know where we're off to. Think it's the Dardanelles. Beautifully calm. Drew one months pay in advance. Wish I had leave ashore tonight!

11th April 1915

Had charge of the stable all day. Sea still smooth. Norman on sick list. Have suddenly been transformed into a nurse, making lemon drinks chloriodine doses. Bovril and gruel. Passed some island at 6 pm. Had a bath with a slight colouring of 'Phenol'. Guess the cause for taking such strict measures? Played washer woman gag tonight. Rotten hand at it though. Active service doesn't account for a lot of privileges.

Arrival at Lemnos Island



H.M.S. Queen Elizabeth used to support Anzac troops at Gallipoli (GW)

12th April 1915

Arrived at Lemnos. Anchored under torpedo protection at 5.30 pm. Splendid naval base. About 50 or 60 ships here now. Transports and warships passed the Askold, two French Monitors and several English warships, including the Queen whose band received us with 'It's a Long Way to Tip'. A first class battleship name unknown but flying the white ensign passed us a short time after we anchored. Splendid sight. Saw one cruiser, which from outward appearances has been in action. Just got an order 'Enemy's aeroplanes about, douse all lights' so it's bunk with a vengeance tonight.

13th April 1915

Found out that the unknown battleship of yesterday is the Queen Elizabeth, known generally throughout this Division as just plain 'Lizzie'. Believe she is to support us in our first scrap. Been around several of the fleet today with Lt Selmes etc. Brought a luxury in the form of three loaves of bread. Got it pretty rough coming home. Nelsonian days over again. Got wet through, but didn't mind that as it was a welcome change to that infernal sand. Mail came aboard today. Mine 'nonest'. Heard an amusing thing about Lizzie. She leaves here early in the morning and goes up to the Dardanelles tickles the Turks up a bit, and returns here in time for tea.

14th April 1915

Real NZ day after yesterday's squall. Norman OK again. Arrival of more troopships. Believe we are going to get particular 'Hell' when we land. Let 'em all come. All our 18 lb ammunition fused and ready packed with 1000 rounds per gun. Guess the Turks will think its Christmas or Guy Fawkes night when the eighteens start. Chas and I played 500 with Burnell and Challen tonight. It's a shame what we did to them. Chas and I always did play together and really I reckon we're 'hot stuff'. Got a present of one bottle of wine. Active service uncertainties again.

15th April 1915

Another NZ day today although a bit chilly. Feel it somewhat after being fairly well stewed in Australia and Egypt. Still awaiting the arrival of more troopships. Saw a British Dirigible today. Believe it is to work in conjunction with our forces for observation purposes. Considerable number of aeroplanes and hydroplanes here also. Rumoured that we leave here tomorrow night. Hope so. We're all itching to have a go, more so, because we were done out of that camel affair. On picquet

16th April 1915

Weather still fine. Went for another pull around several troopships today although was disappointed at not getting ashore. Was alongside our biggest transport, the Minnewaski only 15,000 tons. No word about our leaving as yet. A circular issued by General Birdwood says that our coming fight will be one of the hardest and greatest in the war. Hope so. Lizzie leaves here at 12 pm loaded with 15 inch shrapnel and our friends

will be wondering what on earth's up by this time tomorrow. Still waiting for mail.



Activity in Mudros Bay, Lemnos, with troopships in the background and French troops in the foreground.

17th April 1915

Tried to get ashore today. FAILED MISERABLY. Got official news of a scrap somewhere in Asia Minor where our troops routed the 25th Turkish Div. and a cavalry regiment. Some beggars have all the luck. Wish we could shift from here. Can't find out anything. Got a new 'possie' tonight. Slept under the guns. Had a pal come round after lights out, and bought two bottles of G.S. also one of port. Didn't do anything with them either.

18th April 1915

Still here and feeling desperate. Awfully funny to have the desire to slay someone. Got ashore today (Lemnos Is). Had a ripping swim but on the first plunge thought the north pole had shifted. Bought luxuries in the form of bread milk and cocoa. Got aboard again, and varied the programme by driving the port winch, Chas driving the starboard do. At tea tonight had a fine view of our aeroplanes in flight. More comfortable than watching Guillaux at Victoria Park. Just a minor diversion from feeding.

19th April 1915

Last night one of our troopships was chased by a German submarine. They fired three torpedoes at her, none of which took effect. Our troopships managed to get a 'wireless' through to the Queen and a few minutes afterwards three destroyers were going some for the scene of the fun. They didn't half fix things up either, only took quarter of an hour. Troopships and destroyers arrived back safe and sound. Been transferring horses over the side into punts. Great fun. Sealed orders came tonight. Something doing I fancy.

20th April 1915

Lemnos weather woke up and shows what it can do in the way of gales, not particularly warm either. Think the equator must have dropped south an extra few degrees. Nothing great doing today. Had a vaccination inspection. The M.O. had the colossal hide to tell me I had to be done again. Wish he had had the loan of my arm when I was done in Sydney. Anyhow, I'll see him in a much warmer place than this before a second injection eventuates. Done a bit more winch driving today. Really expert at driving such animals. On picquet tonight.

21st April 1915

A continuance of the gale. Raining like Old Nick. A storm in a tea cup at lunch today. Two individuals disputed our M.O.'s right to two certain daxies of tea and supported their argument by planting him a couple, one of which broke his nasal organ and a real silencer on the back of the head. Our fighting men immediately equalised the scene, both pugilists being handled in good old British way. Submarine AE2 passed our port quarter this evening. Beef tea, cards, a lecture by Sgt Olding the order of the evening.

22nd April 1915

Weather a bit better today. Got a great surprise last night. Mail came aboard. Rec one each from Lot and Bert, and some person brought down a bottle of port. Australian mail this morning, caught a few. Informed that our Battery has been chosen to land and get to it first. We must be dogs. Bought some bread and coffee from a bumboat tonight. Preparation for a little select supper tonight. Guests Sgt Gibson, Norman, Chas and myself. List of goods consumed to follow. Lecture by someone who didn't know what he was talking about.

23rd April 1915

Beano almost honest. Couldn't get any sandwiches and Norman dropped a bottle of claret, and of course bent it! Lovely day. Sgt Clowes, Grs Tanner and Brown left here today. Sgt C being detailed to go ashore and direct the shrapnel fire from the warships. Great excitement at present. Expecting sailing orders any minute. All units been detailed for landing. Kept beano up tonight.

24th April 1915

Issued with 50 rounds 303. Individual positions detailed for landing. Weighed anchor at 12 am. Grand sight, must have been 50 warships anchored in there. Escorted by two French subs, and Her Majesty 'Lizzie'. Passed quite close to the famous Triumph. Have several of her crew on board. Had a long yarn with two of them. Gee but they've seen something. Sea smooth as glass. Arrived at rendezvous at 5 pm. Expect to disembark tomorrow morning. Then the curtain goes up and the drama starts. All feeling fit as fiddles 'oout yer'.

25th April 1915

Anchor hoisted at 11.45 pm. Norman and I there to see it come up all right. Had a final beano, very satisfactory. Norman and I partook of supper again at 12.30. Went and done an hour's stoking in the stoke hold. Woke up at 5.30 by the roar of guns. Twelve battleships shelling Old Nick out of the forts and batteries of our friends. Range about 5 miles. Gunfire ripping, execution ditto. It's now 11.45 and they're still at it only a mile away from us. Had to up anchor and get out at about 10.30. The Turks had the hide to range on us sent over 11 6 inch shells altogether. One shell lobbed 100yds from the next boat to us (about 200yds away) and threw an immense column of water over her bows. A destroyer about 600yds away nearly stopped one. Thought she was hit, for she keeled over. But she's still going strong. Bombardment lasted until dark. Extra heavy between 5 and 6.30 pm. The Majestic was particularly warming things up. One fort was completely demolished. Haven't had a shot from there since 2 pm. All day long our infantry have been storming the sea front entrenchments. Chas and I took Challen and Burnell down again at night.