

STANLEY HINDE GARVIE

WAR DIARY WW1

As far as Cairo – diary of my experiences in connection with the 1st Brigade of the Imperial Forces which left the Outer Harbour South Australia on October 22nd 1914.

Private S. H. Garvie No. 50 MGS AIF

August 17th 1914 was examined for the 3rd Light Horse Regiment, passed and went into camp at Morphettville on August 19th and joined the Machine Gun Section under the command of Lieut. Smith. In September I passed the riding test and was sworn in to serve the King and Country for a term extending 4 months after peace is proclaimed or after being in camp for nine weeks at Morphettville during which time we were training hard in machine gun practice, riding and scouting.

We left camp for Outer Harbour on October 21st. We camped at Osbourne on the 21st and next morning we left at 7.30am for Outer Harbour where we embarked on the steamer Port Lincoln. We had a very busy day shipping horses and loading our kits and articles for use on the voyage – left South Australian shores at 4.45pm on the 22nd.

I went from 7.30am to 5.30pm without food owing to being pressed for time. Same night I was told off to do stable (unable to decipher word) for 24 hours during which time we were in a very hot place in the lower deck. Next day 23rd I was feeling very ill but was not sick. I did not notice much about the voyage 24th. Weather fairly rough. I was a little sea sick, sighted flying fish. October 25th very warm day. Exercised horses round the middle deck for 1 hour distance about 1-1/2 mile.

Oct 26th Sighted land on rising in the morning and put into Albany Harbour about 8 o'clock am. We drew up to the jetty and took in a supply of coal and water. We left again for the harbour at 5 o'clock pm. During the few hours at the jetty I sent 2 wires to SA and wrote several post cards. The steamer Katoomba was at the jetty at the time we were taking coal. They proceeded to Fremantle a about 4.30pm.

Oct 27th We started stable duties again and on the 28th and 29th we had fairly good weather. Oct. 30 we received the letters back which we wrote on the Monday and which were returned by the Postal officials.

Oct 31st There were altogether 36 troop ships in Albany Harbour and 5 battle ships. I received a welcome wire from home at 9.30pm.

Page 8 of the diary lists the following:

A27 Sutherlands

A28 Miltiades

H. N. New Zealand's Trannships

3 Wanganui

4 Tahiti

5 Ruapehu

6 Opari

7 Limerick

8 Star of India

9 Hawkes Bay

10 Arawa

11 Athenic

12 Wainuana

We had a pleasant day's journey towards Fremantle. We had church service in the afternoon, the service being conducted by Mr VineyLeut and adj. and was largely attended.

Nov 2nd Very rough weather. Half of the men succumb to sea sickness.

Nov 3rd Very rough weather. Only half the men down to meals, not allowed to exercise horses. Too rough to drill. Afternoon off. On at night. In charge of horses. Terrible night. Crockery broken in mess room. 3 horses got down had the devils own job to get one up. Boat tossing and rolling. Had no sleep all night.

Nov 4th Weather moderating.

Nov 5th Weather warming up. Distribution of identity discs. We are 5 days out from Albany. Colombo Niptimatton (?)

Nov 6th Heard of cruiser struck a mine. General consternation amongst boys. 10.30am rumour not true.

Nov. 7th General routine. Washing day. In the night boxing contests.

Nov. 8th Man buried from Euripides. West Aust. Soldier. Afternoon church service. From 3 o'clock vaccination and concert at night. Our escort cruiser passed down our lines and steamed away west to investigate interruptions in wireless. Monday 8th caught part of wireless from our cruiser Minotour (Minotaur?) "am beached and done for don't trouble about me". Great excitement with all on board all anxious to know the worst. Lights ordered out at 7 o'clock.

Tues. 10th Nov Got put into the hospital with German measles, feeling very crook. Wireless from the cruiser Sydney. The Sydney left our lines for Cocos Islands at 7am. At 9am she had sighted the enemy travelling at full speed. She was able to get within range in 20 minutes. At the time she signalled the chase was steaming north. At 10.25 am the Sydney was engaging the enemy briskly and at 10.30am the Emden had to beach herself to save herself from sinking. Her foremast and 3 funnels were down but the flag on the Emden was still flying. The Sydney still continued to shell her when they observed through their glasses that one of the ?man a warships on the Emden jumped off and swam around to the stern of the boat and took down the flag. It was after found out that the middle of the Emden was red hot and they could not walk on her decks so had to swim to get their flag down to surrender. Their loss was something like 150 killed and wounded. Sydney 's losses 2 killed 13 wounded. Sydney also captured the German coal boats travelling with the Emden. The German crew did great damage to wireless and cable station. Great cheering from the troops for the first Australian victory on the voyage. 2 men died on the Euripides and were buried at sea, also one on the Medici from fever and measles.

Wednesday pay day. Each man receiving one pound. Great feast at meal times, quite ?so the boys say but I had bread and milk in hospital. Am still feeling crook. Another man buried off the "ascanium" 10th infantry. Weather very muggy. Horses much disturbed now fairly done up. Glass showing 102 in the hold of the boat. Everyone working below naked or just with underpants on. Evening, oh how hot and different from dear old SA. Water here about three and half miles deep and flying fish by the score. Where were (? Unsure of words) 52 horses died today but we only lost 2 that goes to prove how we look after ours.

Nov. 12th Rained. Tropical rain. Cool winds and smooth seas. The cruiser Melbourne dropped back to the Japanese cruiser and then signalled goodbye to us all and left for Colombo for coal and water. From there she was to go out as scout somewhere unknown to us. The most popular man on the boat is Major Fulton. I am thinking tonight of the old folk and dear ones left behind. Goodnight.

Nov. 13th About 2 in the morning it rained with vigor, at 4.30am sighted lighthouse ahead, at 5.30 sighted land along the Ceylon coast. Met a lot of catamarans with coolies aboard fishing. The catamarans are like a little double boat with a sail. Looks very queer. Travelled about 70 miles along the coast and at 10 o'clock we anchored at Colombo. At 8am the Sydney and Empress of Asia passed us with German wounded and prisoners on board. How proud we were when we saw our gallant little Sydney safe in the harbour with her prize. Now Colombo, what a sight. Over 80 big boats in and around the big double breakwater. We are out about one and half miles anchored but we can plainly discern every big place. Oh how we wished to go ashore but strict orders are no landing until we reach England. It looks from here with the mountains behind it like a fairyland. Lawns and palms and shade house right down to the water's edge. Thousands of lights. Fireworks.

Nov. 16th Still ill in hospital. Expect to get out about Wednesday. Temperature down to 100. Tuesday New Zealand boats bury 2 of their men. We are heaving up anchor and getting underway. 11am, last sight of land before night.

Nov 18th Our only
(pages 21-24 missing from diary)

Page 25 ... big as a darning needle into our back and then injected 250,000,000 germs into us. The vaccination was bad enough. ? where near as bad as this, it is worse than murder in cold blood. The after effects were terrible, men were fainting and were carried away to the hospital where they took leave of their senses and had to be held down. We were able to sleep tonight.

Nov 24th We were all granted a day's holiday today owing to being too ill to work. You can just imagine getting about 2 inches of steel into your back what you would feel like. The doctor says he will not do any more of the men in the back but is going to do it in their arms – don't think I mean anywhere else. We sighted in the far distance an outline of the African coast. Very crook on retiring tonight, feeling like being back in my little feather bed.

Nov 25th Sighted land on being assisted up. Back gone to blazes on me. The Boss rousing like the devil about having no-one to help with the horses. Told him it was for their pleasure not ours that we had it done. Arrived at Aden tonight about 5 o'clock and as per usual we are lying well out in the harbour not allowed to land in case we may get hurt or forget to return. We sighted a shark about 14 feet long this evening close to our boat. In looking through our glasses we can outline the forts and military quarters which are very large. How we wish we could get ashore for a little look around. The Gulf here is very narrow namely the inlet to Aden and Red Sea. The cliffs are very steep and high and solid rock without growth of any kind about them. There is a signal station on the uppermost top of the cliff. The sunset tonight was what they term a real Arabian set which is blood red running into blue. Nothing like our sunsets in Adelaide. Something after the sun looks when there has been a red dust storm in the north.

My back is feeling pretty well tonight. Up to now I have omitted to say anything about the boat we are on the SS Port Lincoln. She is about 150 yards long and 35 feet wide and 35 feet deep. Our dining room has a measurement and has 11 tables on each side, numbers running odds on one side and evens on our side. There is a prize each week for the best-kept table and to the time of writing this we have taken each prize with the No. 2 & No. 4 table being the two machine guns and there is a lot of jealousy about it. They seat 14 men but one of ours has the old lucky number 13. The crew on board are very nice and seem a respectable lot of men.

In the evenings we have our hammocks over the tables while others spread theirs on the floor. These hammocks have to be taken down and rolled up and put in the big bins at the end of the mess room before 6.30am. Our white kitbags which contain just necessaries are put in racks over our tables while our black kit bags are kept in the hatch where on application we can get them once a week. The cook house and bakehouse and butchers shop is in the middle of the boat and all meals have to be drawn and carried down here by the mess orderlies. The sergeants have a little place boarded in so as to have their meals more in private as we are not quite up to them as most of them in private life are bottle gatherers and farmhands. So you can imagine that they would not like to mix too much with the common folk. One of them this morning wrote young Bagot's name up for guard and spelled it Bgot and Garby. There are two lockers in the mess room No. 1 & No. 2. Near No. 2 is the detention room where they keep the soldier prisoners and just at the top of the detentions room steps is a dry canteen where you can buy odds and ends. On No. 2 hatch they have an organ for church services and for concert practice but on the evenings of the concerts they allow the men to carry down the piano down from the officers' quarters for use. They hold boxing contests on Saturday nights on the Hatch (No. 2), on Sunday church services and Tuesday and Thursday band practice. All our rifles are packed around our mess room walls, our saddlery is packed down near the detention room – the place in general is well-lighted up with electric lights which are turned out every night at 9.15pm. At one end of the mess is two bathrooms and the other end has a store room and 2 drinking water tanks. The water now is very bad as it is getting low down in the big storage tanks. You can smell the bad air escaping from the big storage tanks through the pipes. The officer of the troops and the officers of the boat have their quarters in the middle top deck. The crew their quarters are right in the front and the hospital is quartered right at the stern of the boat. The ship has 18 life boats on her carrying 35 men in each not including crew that man them. The wireless station is on the top deck and has a guard placed over it by the military authorities night and day and only the captain and the operators are allowed in the room. There are 72 horses stalled on the top deck the middle deck. Below there are 200 and below that again there are 48 each horse having a separate stall and separate feed box all being water (sic) with a bucket. All the horses are tied with head stalls and two side chains fastened to the side poles of stalls. The poor brutes never have a chance to lie down so you can imagine how they feel.

Nov 26th Up at 5.45am feeling a bit better in my back. Had to go down to stables at 6.30am and on coming up on deck after feeding and watering, we again had a chance to look around the harbour. It is a narrow neck to gain entrance, the distance being about 8 miles. From each peak there is a British fort and between the right hand side one and the searchlight which is about 4 miles there are 6 more forts and a signalling station. The lighthouse keepers gain admission to the mainland by means of a very long trestle bridge which spans a deep valley, underneath being the deep blue sea. At 7am weighed anchor and struck off for Port Said which we expect to reach in about 5 days. All day we have been in sight of land, which to all appearances seems sandy barren country there being no growth on it at all. Just after leaving Aden one of the boys asked me to look at what he thought was large white stones scattered in hundred about the beach and on looking through the glasses we discovered a man with camels and the white stones turned out to be dozens of small houses built on sand which is exactly like the beach, white as snow. I do not know how these poor beggars get a living at all as they say that they only get 3 inches of rain in 5 years. Fancy only 3/5 of an inch of rain a year. On the right of this village appeared a large white temple. It was a strange sight to see in such a place. We have been able to see the outline of the Arabian coast all day and on the other side the African coastline came in sight about dinner time. Both sides consist of cliffs and sand. It is like looking at the Mt Lofty hills from Adelaide if they were without growth and were only stone and rocks. We past (sic) one island on our right side called the Perem Island and the country on that was the same as the other mentioned. The sunset tonight was again beautiful so much so that it could not be described with pencil. The day has been extremely hot and this evening we enter the Red Sea. We are all travelling tonight with the lights low which denotes more danger ahead – caution. Must now go and draw my hammock and to bye bye and so goodnight.

Nov 27th Up at 5.45am went to stables and on coming up on deck we looked around and sighted on our right hand side 12 bear (sic) desolate rocky islands known as the 12 disciples. After passing there we sighted and passed another island with 1 lighthouse on it. We were unable to find out anything about the latter island. The steamers that took the Indian troops to England are passing us on the backward journey 2 & 3 every day. They are much smaller than ours. The heat today and tonight is just about unbearable. Everyone of us are in any kind of tempers, especially me, as you know, I would like to be at the old Central Market tonight Friday. I had my vaccination examined tonight and passed as satisfactory. The war news we get on board is very scanty. We have to guess a lot to make it look well on our side to keep our hearts up. No more news tonight so I will say goodnight once more. We are well in the Red Sea now.

Nov 28th Up again 5.45am. The weather is extremely hot down in the stables and my word it deserves the bun. At dinner time today it was announced to us that we would disembark at a place called Cairo just past Port Said and take up quarters there and go from there to the Front. The men did not take it too kindly as we all expected to see England. They are now detailing our duties we have to do at the Front, which with the heat is anything but pleasant but as we enlisted to fight we have no room for complaint. Must trust in God and do as he thinks fit. Well must again say goodnight to all.

Nov 29th Up again 5.50am. Down to stables. No land in sight. The water a lot rougher than it has been for some days. The weather very cool. Had church service this afternoon and well-attended. Tonight there is a concert to be held but do not expect to be able to attend it as they have just issued us with our new blankets and oil sheets and the boys are busy marking them. Only our section has been issued tonight. Expect to land about Tuesday. No more news today so will again say goodnight to all.

Nov 30th Up again 5.45am. Stables then breakfast. We sight the land each side of us into the entrance of the Suez Canal. The land is very barren (sic) looking and it is a very narrow passage, about 20 miles wide. Very cold and bleak day. Very rough sea.

Nov 31st Up again 5.45am. Down to stables. Could hardly sleep for the cold. Still very rough sea and land very close, still barren (sic) looking country. No-one allowed on the front deck of the boat whilst going through the Suez Canal. Got paid wages today, one pound. Another horse died and was thrown overboard last night. We expect to meet trouble going through the canal. All the rifles are in readiness and a guard placed on watch. They are getting everything ready for unloading on landing at Cairo.

Dec 1st Gale still blowing. Line of transport reaches in single file about 16 miles. Sea fairly rough and weather very cold.

Dec 2nd Anchored at Pt Suez. Plenty of coolies coming alongside of our boat selling fruit, cigarettes and other articles. They are very shrewd people, beat you for your socks. For instance, if they had an article for sale they would start at 5/- and you could beat them down to about 9d or 1/- and that would be more than its value. The Indian 2nd contingent came up alongside of us and we gave them a great cheer. They responded and ask in loud voices are we downhearted and the boys on our boat said No. No. No. We sailed from Suez at 2.30pm. Today the Suez Canal is about 200 yards wide. My word it is a wonderful piece of work 90 miles of stone wall on each side. All along the banks are placed troops protecting the canal. My word Suez is a very pretty place. We saw plenty of camels and donkeys and all sorts of things. I will be able to tell a lot if it is my lot to get back. The weather is nice today. We had 6 natives on board with the engineer that was fixing up the searchlight and one of the chaps chased one with the kangaroo. He nearly died with fright. No more news tonight.

Dec 3rd On rising this morning we were anchored in Port Said, the other end of the Suez Canal. It is the busiest port I have ever seen. Motor boats, rowing boats and all sorts and sizes – Gun boats, Torpedo destroyers, cruisers. We had the pleasure of seeing 3 Hydroplanes and airoplanes (sic). They were beautiful. My word Australia is a long way behind the times. I just received the pleasure of a letter from home sweet home and was nearly struck dumb at the news it contained, first about young Peters whom I hope to meet and settle this score with and second the very sad

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