

Harold Booker

Private
970
5th Bn., Australian Infantry, A.I.F.

who died age 23, between
8 –12 May 1915.

Born: 29 February 1892 at Cheltenham, Victoria
Enlisted: 19 August 1914, went into training at Broadmeadows
Embarked: 21 October 1914 on the "Orvieto" bound for Egypt
Landed at Anzac Cove: 25 April 1915 at 7:00am as part of 2nd Infantry Brigade, 5th Bn.
Moved to Cape Helles: 5 May 1915
Died in battle at Cape Helles between 8-12 May 1915

**This is his diary
Transcribed as written**

19/8/1914

Went into camp at Broadmeadows

August 19th 1914

7,000 men in camp. Attached to H Co, 5th Batt as Co Sig. Very enjoyable camp. All sorts and conditions of men in camp. Plenty of emigrants, evidently anxious for a cheap trip home. May make big mistake. A & H, C, WS & JMc visited me on first Sunday. Very good of Andy who brought too many gifts.

3 Sept

Still at B training more solid now. Have had no leave yet. Very wet weather lately nothing but mud and slush. Somebody shook my hat and pencil. Gone but not forgotten. Fine weather. Had a swim in the creek, enjoyed it immensely. Wish for leave to play football on Sat – no luck.

Sunday Sept 6/14

2pm Tram!!!! – Do you remember?

30th Sept

Orders to have all kits packed today for embarkation – Just a rehearsal I think. Outpost work till 10pm last night – jolly cold. Beautiful day, would be great at Mentone no chance though. 6 weeks in camp today. Quite resigned to Broad. Now – no wish to leave it (?)

21st October

Embarked Orvieto, 3pm Beautiful boat, look forward to good trip. Sea very smooth, like a mill pond through the Rip.

24th Oct Saturday

Well in the Bight sea beginning to get up. Many of the fellows sick, have escaped. The food is splendid but the accommodation very limited. We are below the waterline. Have slept on deck every night so far. Saw a school of whales also albatrosses following the boat. Putting our watches back about ½ hour each day. HMS Melbourne passes us yesterday at full speed. We are doing 12 knots. Will be glad to see land again. Finished “Kipps” this morning. Have been on boat deck reading most of the afternoon. Henley Day in Melb, also M.Valley Cup. Very short of reading matter here. Performed the feat of coming down two flights of stairs this morning with porridge and meat dishes. Will soon be an expert at this rate. We are getting as fat as – more like a holiday trip at present. Sea much rougher 299 knots last 24 hours. Time beginning to hang feel the lack of exercise, my only trouble. Received letter on Thursday (22nd) morning. Most unexpected, all the more welcome!!! Visited the Marconi Room much impressed with the wonderful invention.

Sunday 25th Oct

Weather still good. Attended HC. This morning. Church parade on boat deck. Looking forward to visiting the shore again. Expect to reach Albany tomorrow morning. 290 knots slightly less than previous 24 hours.

Monday 26 October

Arrived at Albany early morning. Beautiful little town. Would very much like to land – no hope though. The town nestles in between two hills and appears to spread out along the sides of these hills. Was raining when we entered the harbour. Long lines of steamers in the harbour. A most wonderful sight. Will never forget.

Sunday 1 November – Our Fleet –

1. Hymettus	15. Star of England
2. Geelong	16. Star of Victoria
3. Orvieto (flagship)	17. Port Lincoln
4. Pera	18. Wiltshire
5. Omrah	19. Afric
6. Clan McQuaradle	20. Hororata
7. Medic	21. Morea
8. Argyleshire	22. Rangitara
9. Shropshire	23. Suffolk
10. Karoo	24. Benalla
11. Ascanius	25. Anglo Egyptian
12. Saldanha	26. Armidale
13. Katuna	27. Southern
14. Euripides	28. Milteades

I have not yet obtained a list of the NZ boats. What an imposing sight!! They steam in three lines, and I don't think I'll ever see anything like it again. Have been in Albany all the week, coaling – and did not go ashore. Each night we see the warships steaming out to the heads. Grim black, ugly looking devils they are, emitting huge clouds of black smoke, they appear to slide along, in great contrast to the colors of the transports. A Japanese cruiser is also here with the Minatour, Sydney and Melbourne. Some of the troops went ashore – alas not us. Inoculated against typhoid caused some swelling in the arms, some of the fellows absolutely laid out. Left Albany 6am this morning – formed into line outside the bay, we are now steaming in three lines with about ½ mile between each ship (either side). The scene baffles description – it's a beautiful sunny day, we are leading and as far to the rear as one can see – all ships – in our van and on our flanks are the black devils – the cruisers. Passed the Katoomba on her way to Melbourne!!!! Wrote letters during the week, do not know whether they were sent but believe they are being detained for some time. Derby Day yesterday what won? Wooraki? (They say Carlita). Church Parade this morning. Still reading a lot although books are still scarce. Am wondering what is happening at home. We are nearing the end of Australia we will soon have the last glimpse for some time – but can still see the dear old land. Would like to visit Albany at some future date. Should think it would be an ideal harbour for a fleet, so well protected. Food still good although it appears to be deteriorating slightly hope it will be only temporary.

Sunday 8th November

Another week gone by. Weather rough at beginning of week but much better during the latter part of the week in fact it has been jolly hot. On Tuesday (Cup Day) we were again inoculated and what with the rough sea and bad arms we were a very miserable looking crowd. All drill was cancelled and we took things easy. Was not bad enough to miss a meal (half of Coy did) although had a splitting headache and a stiff arm for two days. Got the news by wireless on Tuesday night about 7.30 that Kingsburge, Sir Hwinton, Mounbria were placed in the Cup (must have been an outsider). Have seen plenty of flying fish the last week, curious things about 6 inches long my first view of them. We are going rather slowly only doing 10 knots on the best days, very often much less. The "Osterley" passed us on Wednesday evening bound for Colombo – will she have any letters for us, seems a long time since I heard from my friends. The "Minotour" left us this morning for good. I believe, supposed to be going back to the China station. We have heard of three British warships being sunk off Valparaiso perhaps that is the reason she is recalled. She steamed down our line so close to us that we could see the "tars" on her she was cleared

away, she looked very businesslike indeed. We are supposed to pass the Cocos Islands tonight and pick up a French transport and cruiser, so far we have only the Melbourne, Sydney and the jap cruiser as escorts, so things must be regarded as pretty good. Last night had the sensation of my life, an alarm of collision we were below at the time and every light in the ship was extinguished we sat in the dark for about ¼ of an hour penned up like rats, the only sound being the creak of the watertight compartments closing. It was eerie to say the least of it one could imagine what might happen in the case of real collision. When we were ordered on decks to our station – there was not a sign of a ship anywhere so the alarm must have been simultaneous throughout the fleet. Nothing but blackness everywhere until suddenly lights appeared from everywhere as if by magic. Was a most impressive sight. The days are rather short it being dark by 7 o'clock and no lights are shown on deck at all now so we go to bed in the dark. There's no twilight at all here. Sleeping on deck on the rough night (Cup night) a wave broke over us and our blankets were drenched, but we stopped there although spray was continuously driving in our faces. Wasn't exactly pleasant. Went to HC this morning and had service on the promenade deck at 10.15. A splendid sermon by Capt Dexter. Our hours are from 9 to 11.30am and 2 to 3.30pm in the afternoon. Boxing physical drill and signalling most of the time. Reading matter rather scarce. I do about 4 hours of it every day nothing else to do. Will be glad to go ashore again. Wonder what's happening in Cheltenham today!!! The band help greatly to liven things up although owing to the illness of a man (appendicitis) they have not been playing during the week until today. Very hot today, until the last hour when it suddenly changed and now we are getting a driving rain. It's marvellous how quickly the weather changes here. Just got hold of the Australasian (Oct 24) and Bulletin (Oct 15) am reading them as if they were the last issues. Becoming quite reconciled to the absence of papers. Guess this hot weather will try some of us – it seems just as hot in the night as in the day. The ships look splendid in the moonlight, you can see them for a mile or so behind us, floating on the silver colored sea. It's beautiful beyond description I never get tired of watching them if it wasn't for the serious business at the end this would be a holiday trip, although I believe other troop ships are not having such a good time as ourselves. This is a topnotcher – the "Orvieto", Capt Dexter's sermon this morning was splendid he was completely broken up at the finish. One of the finest sermons I've ever heard.

Monday 9th November

We have had some glorious news. One of our escorts the "Sydney" has engaged and settled the "Embden". Our fleet had been barely moving this morning. We saw the Sydney had disappeared the "Melbourne" followed but they were only away about two hours – in fact not out of sight. At 11.30 we got news that the "Embden" had to be beached in order to avoid sinking. Everyone is jubilant, and the bugles blew "No Parade" this afternoon so we are celebrating the occasion with a half holiday. The Melbourne people will be glad to hear the news, we are very proud to have settled the "Embden". She has beached on the Cocos Islands we believe. Weather still very hot, undress is the order of the day only a singlet and a pair of pants are worn now, even they seem superfluous.

Sunday 15th November

We are in sight of land once more. Needless to say no one is sorry. This week has been a very dull one since the news of the victory over the "Embden". The "Empress of Asia" a huge liner (painted grey) passed us on her way to Cocos Is. For the German prisoners. On Friday we had a tremendous rainstorm, we washed our clothes and had a bath on the boat deck, I never saw such rain before. However the weather still remains as hot as h.... We saw land at daybreak on Sunday, the sea was dotted with native boats. "Catamarans" I believe is the native name. They are built of two logs of wood lashed together and hollowed out and just a square piece of cloth for a sail. They appear to be able to stand

any sea. We anchored outside the breakwater at Colombo about 2.30pm. The breakwater projects out into the sea for fully a mile and inside were ships of all nations. Colombo is the prettiest place I've ever seen, there are many magnificent buildings and the place appears to be a blaze of color. Coconut trees as far as the eye can see, dotted here and there with red roofed houses. The natives dress in many colors (or no dress at all some of them) which makes the place have such a gay appearance. The general for Europeans is white. There is a promenade along the shore, and by the aid of my telescope we could see the people taking the air in the evening. It's jolly rotten to be kept here when land's so near, no one is allowed off the boat. At night the harbour is a blaze of light. The town is also brightly illuminated, and it indeed beautiful. Several launches came out to our ship during the day, they are all manned by natives. I can appreciate the scenery in "Kismet" now. The natives wear a skirt (?) no two are alike in color and they argue the point over everything. I guess they know a few swear words.

Monday 16th November

Still in Colombo. I'd love to go ashore but there's nothing doing. There's one Russian a Jap, several English and our own warships in the harbour so it's a huge fleet now. The Russian boat has 5 funnels the Ascov (?) is her name, I believe she was one of the ships that escaped from Port Arthur and now she is side by side with the Jap. It's very hot today and the greenery of the shore is refreshing to the eye. Watched the natives diving for coins, they are very clever. It's amusing to hear their chant.

Tuesday 17th Nov

Left Colombo at 11 am. Would like to visit Colombo some future date. Received some of the prisoners of the Embden on board (50 of them). The deck of the Embden was completely ripped up and she is a total wreck so they tell us, 121 killed. The Sydney fired 600 rounds and the Embden 1200 many of the Embden's shells did not explode, so less damage was done. One of her guns and some of crew were blown overboard and were in the water over 8 hours before being rescued by the Sydney. Her steering gear was smashed and the aft deck caught fire and a sailor had to dive overboard and swim to her stern and climb up there when they wanted to lower her flag. I believe it was like hell on her so awful was the carnage. They were literally blown to pieces.

Thursday 19th Nov

Vaccinated this morning, try to scheme but nothing doing. Saw the largest school of porpoises I've ever seen they leaped clean out of the water, turning somersaults and all kinds of capers in the air, different to ones in our waters. Weather still hot. Averaging about 10 knots. Only 1 month to go. Thank God.

Sunday 22nd Nov

Did not go Church parade today our Coy was on guard so I got out of it. Yesterday morning a collision occurred between the Ascanuis and Shropshire, but no damage was done I believe. This morning the "Hampshirsa" a big cruiser steamed within 100 yards of us she lowered a boat and took on our commander who is to attend a Court of Inquiry – about the collision. Yesterday I was picked to play for the Signallers Cricket Team. Each Coy plays the other for the Championship of the ship. We played "A" Coy yesterday, and will beat them easily, I think. We made 17 and they made 5. I got 4 wickets for 0 – best I've ever done. It is hard to score runs owing to nets all round but you bowl as fast as you like and also hit as hard. The ball is a hard rope, bound together it is good exercise, and I enjoyed the game immensely. Plenty of barracking too! The weather is still hot but there is a new moon and the scene at night is glorious, beyond description. Embden prisoners get too many liberties and are too well treated in my opinion also the opinion of many others.

Passed a liner on Saturday morning, perhaps she was bound for Australia. We are averaging over 10 knots now speeding up a little.

Wednesday 25 Nov

We left the rest of the fleet yesterday afternoon and went ahead. Reached Aden at 7.30 this morning, do not think much of the place most dreary hole I've ever seen. The town is well fortified and is built at the foot of a high range of hills, one peak being 1700 feet high. It does not add beauty to the place owing to the fact that the hills are bare of all vegetation nothing, but bare rock and sand. On the other side of the harbour as far as the eye can see is all desert. There are some nice buildings in the town which we can most plainly see as we are anchored less than a mile from shore. The Harbour is big enough to accommodate a big fleet and appears to have a good depth of water. Native boats in scores are selling tobacco and cigarettes (1/- per 100 the latter) but they won't allow them near our troopship for what reason I don't know as they are allowed near all the other troopships. We are coaling and it's amusing to hear the natives arguing, they stop work to fight and argue every few minutes if they are not watched.

Thursday 26th Nov

Saw the *Ascanius*, all iron or steel plates in her bows are buckled and crumpled up like wood, where she collided with the *Shropshire* very lucky no further damage was done. Left Aden at 6 o'clock this morning and we are now well in to the Red Sea, can see Africa on one side and Asia on the other, it's nothing but sandy desert though, and it's as hot as – ever it's been yet.

Saturday 28th Nov

Startling news!!! We have just been told that we are to disembark and finish our training in Egypt and proceed from there to the front. The climate should suit us better than England so perhaps it's better after all. This boat has left the fleet and is going full speed ahead – to what port we don't know yet. Still hot, though there is a strong wind and although we are out of sight of land it's laden with particles of sand. Food has been rotten for the last three weeks will be glad to get on shore and enjoy a good clean meal. It's worse than the food at B'ws which is saying much!

Monday 20th Nov

We arrived at Pt. Suez at 9.30 am this morning. Very cold wind in latter portion of Red Sea. Saw Mt. Sinai (8500 feet high). Suez is a nice town, some splendid buildings the roads are also planted with trees. Commenced our trip through the Canal at 2.30pm. It is the most marvellous scene I have yet witnessed. At present the Canal is patrolled by native troops in charge of white officers and everywhere are entrenchments. On either side of the canal as far as the eye can see is sand hills, some of them being an immense height. At intervals there are native settlements and groups of palms. There is only a few feet to spare either side of the vessel the banks being made of rock and sand. The boat passes right along a big avenue and we were given a big reception by the inhabitants. There is a telegraph line alongside the canal what dreary work it must be repairing and looking after it.

Tuesday 1st December

Arrived at Pt Said 8 o'clock this morning, the greater portion of our journey through the Canal being done in the dark. Heavily guarded right through by soldiers. The sunsets here are magnificent. Pt Said is a wonderful town all nationalities in the world here. The Vacuum Oil Co. has some huge strange tanks at the entrance to the canal. Fine fleet of English and French warships here, the Frenchman giving us a tremendous reception. Anchored right alongside town. Very fast at coaling here. Have not seen their equals.

Wednesday 2nd December

Left Pt Said this afternoon. All the other troops have arrived here. Will never forget the scene when we left. All bands playing, the French being most enthusiastic of all. The cheering must have been heard all over Pt. Said. Got rid of German prisoners including Kaiser's nephew. They'll have a harder time than they got with us. Splendid statue at the entrance to Pt Said in honor of Lesseps engineering of the Suez. Built on a huge breakwater. It's worth it to see these sights. Weather getting colder. Dark at 5.30pm. Saw a waterplane on the French warship.
Received letter first news from home.

Sunday 3rd Dec

Arrived Alexandria daybreak. Fooled around on the boat all day. 9pm Entrained then at 9.30 in 3rd class dox boxes. Reached Cairo at 3.00am. Unloaded all baggage then on to electric tram and after an hours ride reached the pyramids at 5.30 which is the terminus of the tram. Very tired no sleep. Laid down at 9.30am and slept till 4 in the afternoon. Our camp is situated in the desert not a sign of vegetation. The pyramids are only a quarter of an hour's walk over the sand hills. We are not getting tents, all our things are laid down in the sand, its just one continuous bivouac. Reveille at 7am. We have been living on dry bread and tea lately its better than nothing. I'm quite satisfied. The nights are bitterly cold there is also a very heavy dew which wets through the blankets. We only do about 4 hours work per day owing to the hard going on the sand. We are getting 25% leave at present which is good. Went to Cairo the first night. There are some magnificent buildings and the Nile is the finest river I have ever seen. Is over ½ mile in width it's magnificent. All nationalities in Cairo find a lot of trouble in using English money, but am picking it up. The nights here are glorious, its moonlight now and we see the top of the pyramid from the camp the view is wonderful. Our things are covered in sand, its inches deep everywhere. However it's good training. They are also a large number of English Territorials stationed in Cairo, the place is alive with soldiers. This is the land of tips, "bucksheesh" everywhere.

Sunday 13th Dec

About reconciled to the desert. Food very bad bread and tea – not much of that either – our chief meal. Work also solid. Heavy route marches through the sand. Rained heavily two nights got wet – cold in consequence. Have just got tents so will be more comfortable. Church parade this morning route march of 5 miles in the sand afterwards. Sand everywhere, food, clothing and person. The old ruins near the Pyramids are wonderful. Huge blocks of granite weighting tons placed in all positions. Camp viewed from the sandhills around resembles canvas townships. Nearing Christmas. How are they spending it at home? Reveille altered to 6.15am!!

Wednesday 23rd Dec

Two days from Christmas. No excitement here, does not seem like Xmas. Anyway after reading the English papers we received here one does not feel very much rejoicing. We are now doing 6 hours solid work per day in the sand. Troops getting very fit. Below the name and address of a student I met in Cairo –

We have promised to write to him when I return to Australia and let him know how we got on.

Sunday 20th Dec was Proclamation Day in Cairo. Big review. English flags are now flying everywhere in Cairo. Had letter from Ruby dated October 25th. Yesterday climbed the biggest pyramid, 450 feet high and is very solid, but the view was glorious, I think equal to anything I've seen. One can follow the course of the Nile and countless small streams and canals running from it over some of the most fertile land in the world. On the other hand

one can see, miles and miles of sand the Sahara Desert, and the camp lies below like a small square divided into partitions like a draught board. One could sit for hours and be continually seeing fresh objects of interest. On Sunday last we went through a native village chiefly notable for its dirt and evil smells. Ugh!! One Batt of troops who trained here in Egypt went to the front and all excepting 28 are wiped out. Spent two days in Cairo unloading transports. Made big raids on biscuits, raisins, dried fruits, tinned meats, O.T etc. Food very bad here. Visited Kasir-el-Nil barracks where "Terriers" are training but they are within miles of our fellows.

Tuesday 29th Dec

Very quiet Xmas. Had dinner in town at night. Boxing Day work same as usual. Broke camp and went to Cairo for dinner. Special course of instruction for Signallers at the Sphinx. Miss a bivouac in consequence for which I am truly thankful. Posted SP to R on Sat 26th.

Sunday 10th Jan

Received mail on Thursday 4 letters, 2 papers. Much pleasure in consequence. Very bad weather, dust storms. All night work 3 times per week. Review by Sir George Reed. Presented with tin of chocolate for which am truly thankful. F. Co. and H. Co. combined now known as D. Co. Much better to my idea. Plum pudding also presented to us by some English friends. Much appreciated by us. Many thanks. Address of friend to call upon in Paris – if we ever get there.

Sunday 17th Jan

Received all back mail this week. Are now getting letters more regularly. Big route march on Friday, did over 10 miles. Also a night march, getting used to them now. Visited Cairo Museum, very interesting, ancient Egyptians were very clever craftsman. Their sculpture is marvellous also beaten gold work. Weather cold and dusty.

Sunday 24th Jan

Hard week. Route march 11 miles on Saturday through native villages, never such filth before, they live in the lowest depth of civilization. Weather good. Musketry training during week. Visited mosques in Cairo, hundreds of years old. The furnishings are splendid, the marble work being superb.

Sunday 21st Feb

Things very quite here. Turkish invasion seems to have died out. Influenza two weeks, better now. Vaccinated again owing to outbreak in camp. One day's holiday each week now. Very good!! Visited Citadel and native bazaars – Kismet again. Are we going to leave here?

Tuesday 2 March

I think we are leaving at last. One brigade already gone. Received SP from R for birthday. Went to All Saints, Cairo, fine church, many interesting tablets erected by English Regiments in Egypt to fallen comrades, some date back to Tel-el-Kibir in 1882. Also one in memory of Gordon of Khartoum. The church is in the Diocese of Jerusalem. Very interesting. Also received on 24th Feb. most important letter.?

26th March

Still here. Nothing happening. Two bivouacs this week already, also plenty of route marches so the time is well occupied. Food absolutely rotten.

Easter Sunday 4th April

Left Mena Embarked on "Novian" next day. Tramp steamer. Very sick. No accommodation whatever.

16th April

Arrived Island of Lemnos 9th. Anchored near "Queen Elizabeth" – the huge battleship. Seaplanes and submarines also here. Recovered from sea sickness. Great to see the green field again. Splendid view of ice clad peak in the distance. Mail from home. Very welcome. Extremely wet weather, but finer now. Cold nights.

Sunday 19th April

Church parade. Transport Novian. Had swim in the bay (first in 6 months) most enjoyable. Water fresh.

Friday 23rd April

Visited Lemnos Island. Very refreshing to wander over green country again. Quaint old village, clean though, natives (Greeks) keen as usual in bargaining.

Saturday 24th April

Left Lemnos for Dardanelles. Soon to be in the thick of it now.

Wednesday 28th April

Landed in Dardanelles Sunday (25th). Heavy work. Most inspiring sight. Am still alive for which I thank God from the bottom of my heart. Water plentiful also food at present. Cold night, miss the blankets but am glad to lie down anywhere. No wash for four days, am an awful sight torn and tattered clothing. Just realising what a terrible thing was is, far too horrible to describe. Am proud to be an Australian. Shrapnel for three days am beginning to get used to it. Very adept at "digging in" now! English navy wonderful also the aeroplane corp. Shall I make many more entries here.

Thursday 29 April

Rotten night no overcoat wet to the skin. Things better today, change of clothing and shave, rather a painful operation shaving. The shrapnel not so bad, hardly any. Some lucky escape, bullet cut a piece out of sweater also two cut a hole in my water proof sheet without touching me. These are typical escapes. Glad to see the boys gradually getting together again.

Friday 30th April

Roll call today, very sad muster, many pals gone. Very tired about 12 hours sleep since Saturday. Out at 4 am this morning, freezing with cold. We are now being relieved for spell which we badly need. Had bathe in the sea, very refreshing. Longing for a sleep. Germans up to all kinds of dodges, using our uniforms, bugles, false orders, etc. Shrapnel still going slightly.

Saturday 1st May

Resting. Very heavy shrapnel this morning. Had swim again, great. Rations good. Everything well now. End of first week in Europe. How are all in Australia? Weather glorious but freezing nights.

Sunday 2nd May

Things quiet, although roused at 3am. Heavy bombardment further along shore. Message of congratulations from Sir Ronald Ferguson.

Tuesday 4th May

No time for writing yesterday. Hard day. Trench digging all night tired as a "dawg". Heavy firing all night. Getting quite expert at cooking, concocting stews and other messy looking "haggis" continually. But they taste good and the billy tea dirty and strong is excellent. Ross Smith wounded. May he recover quickly.

Wednesday 5th May

Firing line all night, about 3 hours sleep. Embarked at 2am on T.B.D. "Basilisk" for another destination. Arrived at 6am. Tremendous artillery attack on forts. Fine country somewhat like our own. More shrapnel still "digging in". Very tired and footsore. Had bath later and am feeling more fit for the task on front. 5 mile march before breakfast. Would now qualify for a first class "navvy".

Friday 5th May

Very cold night but had best sleep for many a long day. Also another wash this morning. Very extravagant!!! Cooked very fine breakfast this morning. Some (3) good pals with me. Very interesting forts here particularly the destroyed ones.

Saturday 8th May

Had a good night in our "dugout" as were lucky and found a pile of sacks. A fine view of Asia Minor and Dardanelles from adjacent hills. French soldiers very showy in their dress rather conspicuous though.