

Year 6. Student Resource 2.

Extracts from Lieutenant Colonel Frederick Forrest's diary.

Colonel Forrest enlisted into the 1st Division of the AIF in Tasmania in August 1914, and was transferred to the 3rd Field Artillery Brigade in late 1914. His journey began in Tasmania but when his transport ship **HMAT** Geelong joined the convoys from Albany and Perth, out at sea past Fremantle, his experiences mirror the West Australian AIF on the *Ascanius* and *Medic*.

As you are reading to determine the route of the troop carries, make a list of the words in red. Write out clear definitions for each word.

Monday, 19th October, 1914

Left Pontville Camp [Tasmania] 9.30 a.m. **Embarked** on transport A.2. S.S. 'Geelong'. Completed **embarkation** 5 p.m.

Tuesday, 20th October, 1914.

Great excitement prevailing. Ship sails at 3 p.m. Great crowds present at departure. Passed an excellent night on board. Weather beautiful.

Wednesday, 21st October, 1914.

Weather still continues fine. Spirits of troops excellent. Inspection of quarters and routine are the order of the day. Troops gradually settling down to ship quarters.

Thursday, 22nd October, 1914

Reveille 6 a.m. weather still fine, sea smooth as a millpond. Ship stood to for a few hours during the night owing to fog. Distance travelled up to noon 257m. sea sickness disappearing. All **corps** exercised. Ship [numbers] 1,250 all ranks. During afternoon fitting of life belts and boat stations ... Passed through a large school of whales this morning, caused a great deal of excitement amongst the troops.

Monday, 26th October 1914.

Quite a change in the weather. Heavy rain and high seas are the order of the day....

At 7 a.m. we entered **King George's Sound** and as we steamed into the bay all the vessels who had arrived before us loomed into view and it was a sight to behold. 23 large ocean going vessels converted into transport [ships] lying at anchor in the bay. During the day two warships and 4 additional transports arrived.

Wednesday, 28th October 1914.

Still lying in the sound awaiting turn to enter harbour and **coal up**. One case of **typhoid** developed on board. Patient sent off to Albany Hospital. Quite a deal of [annoyance] exists amongst the troops owing to the fact that all letters sent off yesterday have been held up for **ensorship**. A general order has been issued by the **G.O.C.** that no letters are to be posted, only postcards with no indication of our whereabouts to be sent.

The New Zealanders arrived in the sound this morning. They look well fitted up and the accommodation appears to be far better than our ships.

Friday, 30th October, 1914.

Completed coaling and moved out ... at 8 a.m. We were unable to go ashore. Albany appears to be a very pretty little place although quiet. **Inoculation** for typhoid was commenced on board today.

Tuesday, 3rd November, 1914.

We ran into very dirty weather during the night and it was not long before waves were washing aboard and things generally were rolling about...

The HMAT "Medic" and the HMAT "Ascanius" took up their station in our Division today. We picked them up some 150 miles out from Fremantle.

Friday, 6th November, 1914.

We are nearing the tropics. The weather beginning to get unusually hot and muggy. Great excitement prevails this morning- quite a scare. "The Emden" German cruiser reported to be in the vicinity.

Monday, 9th November 1914.

Great excitement intermingled with joy and sorrow prevailed today. At 7 a.m. the H.M.A.S. "Sydney" steamed away at full speed towards the west and at 10 a.m. the "Melbourne" and the T.M.S "Ibuka" a Japanese cruiser, hoisted their battle flags and flew through the water to the west. It was evident that something was doing [going on].

At 11 a.m. a wireless message was received from "Sydney" to say that she had engaged the German cruiser "Emden" and had damaged her to such an extent that she [was stranded] and was then in pursuit of her casualties. News was received later to say that the "Melbourne" had 2 killed and 13 wounded. German casualties were not given. This is the first real fight that the Australian Navy has been engaged in and of course we are all very proud of the "Sydney's" achievement.

The "Euripides" [transport ship] signalled up today that she was burying another man who had died [on board] during the day. This casts gloom over all of us.

Sunday, 15th November, 1914.

Arrived at Colombo at 1.30 p.m. The harbour full of ships and war boats. The Russian warship H.T.M.S. "Askfold" came out and guarded our port side. The "Sydney" arrived with the German wounded. A number were taken into the Colombo Hospital.

Wednesday, 25th November, 1914.

Came in sight of the Arabian coast during the afternoon and reached Aden at 5 p.m.

Aden is the most godforsaken hole that I have yet seen. Nothing but barren rock backed by sandy desert.... Ship boats have gone ashore for stores "Hurrah".

Thursday, 26th November, 1914.

Anchors were weighed at 6 a.m. and a start made for Port Said. Tonight we are sailing through the Red Sea with all lights out. Heat is still intense.

Saturday, 28th November, 1914.

Great excitement prevails. A wireless has just come through to say that we (the Aust. Division.) will disembark at Alexandria and proceed to Cairo and complete our training... It is thought that we will eventually advance against the Turks.

Tuesday, 1st December, 1914.

Dropped anchor off Suez Canal at 8 p.m

Wednesday, 2nd December, 1914.

The Gulf of Suez presents a very impressive sight. As the Dawn broke this a.m. a fleet of vessels are observed coming over the horizon. When they anchored alongside of us we found them to be Indian transports and taking British and native troops to the Front. Suez is a most interesting place. The desert stretches for miles on either side. We enter the canal at 3.15 p.m. It is a wonderful piece of engineering...

Friday, 4th December 1914.

Still lying at anchor off Port Said waiting berthing accommodation at Alexandria where we are to disembark.

Wednesday, 8th December 1914.

Joy at last. Orders received for our ship to move in. Weighed anchor 9 p.m.

Thursday, 9th December, 1914.

Arrived Alexandria 1 p.m. Started to unload. Obtained leave as a favour to visit the city. Much impressed with the sights, especially methods of business. Open cafes everywhere...

Friday, 10th December, 1914.

We rose at sunrise and wonders met us everywhere. To our great surprise we discovered we had slept the night under the leeward [sheltered side] of the Great Gizah Pyramid with pyramids of a lesser note and the Sphinx within a stone's throw. The country surrounding is a vast desert of sand ... We had another interesting day shifting and pitching camp. We have to date about 25,000 men in this camp and it is expected that the number will reach 80,000 before the end of the month.

Thursday, 16th December, 1914.

Guns arrived in camp. Everything now ready to start work. This has been the most interesting day of the whole trip so far. At 3.30 p.m. myself and Lt. A.P. Crisp left camp to do the pyramids and sphinx. After selecting a suitable guide we started for the Gazallos Tombs, passing on our way the excavations being carried out at the foot of the Gizah Pyramid.

Monday, 21st December, 1914.

Started to work the horses in harness. Lecture at night.

Saturday, 2nd January, 1915.

Still another hard day's work.

There is a gap in Forrest's diary until 27 January

Saturday, 27th February, 1915.

Great excitement. General order just issued warning the whole Division to be in readiness to move at short notice. We are expecting our **marching orders** very shortly.

Tuesday, 16th March, 1915.

A busy day. Brigade drill. Moving brigade over rough ground. Excellent training. Major Parker, 8th Battery, taken to hospital.

Wednesday, 17th March, 1915.

Death of Major Frank Parker **D.S.O.** reported at 9 p.m. This sad event has cast a gloom over the whole Brigade. He was a good soldier, a thorough gentleman and a thoughtful comrade.

7th April, 1915.

Completed embarking [from Alexandria] and sailed at 1.15 p.m. for somewhere under sealed orders. The whole of the Australian and New Zealand Divisions all embarking here. Sealed order broken when out at sea. Destination, Gallipoli, Turkey, from the landing maps issued.

10th April, 1915.

Passed through many islands. Lemnos our **rendezvous** at 4 p.m. Passed through minefields into harbour [Mudros] at 6 p.m. Lemnos is a Greek island taken over by the British. It is an elongated shaped island and is very pretty. Greek farms studded the foreshores and hills. An ideal harbour well protected.

16th April, 1915.

Still lying in the Port of Mudros. Went ashore during the morning and spent an hour in one of the many villages on the island. Had landing exercises during the afternoon.

19th April, 1915.

Transferring horses into barges and landing them for exercises ashore. Paid a visit to Transport A.11 "Ascanius" and A.18 "Arkantian". A.11 contains the Headquarters for Army Corps and Australian Division.

Tuesday, 20th April, 1915.

All in high **glee**. Orders received for a move this afternoon. All preparations made for landing. I am included in first party to leave.

LATER: Departure postponed for 24 hours. Weather conditions bad.

23rd, April, 1915.

Rumour of a move 11 a.m. 2 p.m. weigh anchor. Great jubilation. Move out of Bay. Much disappointment - anchor outside.

A wonderful sight. Warships, destroyers, submarines and airships moving around and above us. Three large hospital ships anchored in the roadstead ready to move. They are all painted white with a large green band around them. This evening they are encircled with a row of green lights.

24th, April 1915.

Things are moving rapidly. A number of transports with infantry aboard have gone. During the morning the remainder of the fleet (Troopers) came out. 2 p.m. all warships departed preceded by submarines... Message received from Ian Hamilton, G.O.C. This is going to be one of the biggest moments in history. Nearly 500,000 troops afloat bound for one place.

25th April, 1915.

*What a memorable day. At 1 a.m. we steamed out of Port Mudros for Anafarta Bay at which place we reached at 5 a.m. The warships had preceded us and had landed 3rd Infantry Brigade. The bombardment of the coast from the Dardanelles to the bay was tremendous. About 20 ships belching forth. All shore **batteries** were apparently silenced. Close in to discharge. Saw Infantry attacking hills... At about 9 a.m. a destroyer came alongside and ordered us to close in and informed us that Col. McClagan O/C 3rd Infantry Bde. had captured 3 Krupp [German made] Guns. A great cheer went up.*

At 9.30 a.m. the enemy's shore guns got our range. First shell struck torpedo boat 50 yards from us, just under the waterline. Next shell a few yards from us and the next two just over our bow. They had got the range and things looked very bleak for us. We received orders to get out of range... It was a narrow shave.

A.11 lost several of her boats.

*All anxious to get ashore and help the infantry. We are the first artillery to go ashore. Enemy's battery causing trouble to our Infantry. Ships' guns cannot locate them. Bombardment tremendous. Our **Infantry** suffering terribly.*

6th August, 1915.

Bombardment still in progress. Our Infantry attacked and captured Lone Pine trenches. Our losses fairly heavy. Bombs and machine guns was the cause of all the trouble. Portion of Ks Army - the 13th and 16th Divs. landed at Suvla Bay. Landing successful.

Subsequent movements very shaky. They suffered very heavy losses during first 3 days. Had the misfortune to be sent away to hospital at Mudros. A few days rest and decent food soon fixed me up. Returned to Anzac on 19th August.

27th August, 1915.

Major Bessell Brown took over temporary command of Brigade, vice Major Hughes to 9th Brigade. Enemy again very quiet.

14th October, 1915.

Great jubilation prevails amongst the lads. A canteen (dry goods only) has been established on one of the adjacent islands for the use of the troops here. A chance of decent food looms up very largely.

Received word from Detail Camp, Alexandria, that my horse "Patch" died on 28th September. My best friend gone.

13th December, 1915.

Orders issued for the evacuation of Anzac. The whole force was to be withdrawn during the following 6 nights. Another party consisting of guns and men from our Brigade were sent off during the night.

19th December, 1915.

The remainder of the Force was withdrawn without casualties. The guns left to cover last parties were blown up as soon as Infantry were clear of firing line.

The arrangements made for withdrawal were perfect. Not a hitch occurring throughout. All tracks from firing line to beach were clearly marked to enable the Infantry to retire safely on the last night. The enemy was not aware that we had gone until some 24 hours after the last party got away.

A large quantity of store, tents, ammunition and wagons had to be left behind. The success of the movement depended on keeping the enemy ignorant of our intentions and this was only possible by leaving everything appear as if nothing unusual was happening. The enemy's aeroplanes were very active throughout the operation and were kept off by our own planes.

Information can be found on Major Frank Parker whose death was mentioned on 17th March 1915 at the following website.

see https://www.oldhale.com/archives/memorial_grove/ww1_western_front.phtml

Forrest's complete diary from 1914 to 1917 can be downloaded from this website:

<http://www.amosa.org.au/schools/mhp/diaries/War%20diary%20-Frederick%20Forrest.pdf>