

Copy of manuscript - Diary of voyage to Egypt 1914-15

Originally Handwritten by John Jackson Dunbar.

Enlisted Dec. 12th 1914 and sailed on Dec. 16th 1914. Left Newcastle about 7.30pm on Friday night and arrived in Brisbane 24 hrs later. Met a few soldiers on the station and then proceeded to Enoggera Camp. The two men were Sgt. Choab and Cpl Garbutt. The first night in camp slept in Sgt Wilkinsons tent who afterwards became my bosom pal. Another sgt in the tent who didn't receive me too kindly. In the morning, had a shower about half a mile from the camp near the YMCA. That evening, Sunday, I received a small booklet which I carried all through the campaign and brought back home with me. On the same day I rode Col. Benns pony (Kitbags) to Pinkenbar and back. Next morning had to go through a riding test by Sgt Maj. Doolan of the R.A.G.A. Then on Tuesday we proceeded to Pinkenbar and camped just on the edge of the stream alongside the boat.

Embarked our horses and all our baggage and left Pinkenbar Wharf at 7.30 am on December 16th just before the train from Brisbane had time to meet us and many were disappointed at not seeing us off. Had a very calm trip to Sydney and arrived at 7 am on the 18th. Lay in the stream all day until next morning then we drew up along side at Milsons Point. There we took on board a number of Light Horsemen and horses belonging to the 6th and 7th Light horse Regt. Left for Melbourne at 3.45pm. Father and Mother just in time to see me off. Two horses died on the trip from Sydney to Melbourne. Arrived at Melbourne about 5pm on the 21st and stayed about 24 hours and embarked a mixed force. Saw Sgt Scott of Wallsend and Lieut. Gardiner going aboard the SS Ulysses. Took two men for our unit Cpl Field and Cpl...

22nd Left for Albany about 4.30 pm. I was made Troop Deck Sgt. for our Corps. On Wed. 23rd we were in the Bight.

24th Our routine for the day was early morning parade - physical drill - breakfast - Stretcher drill. Afternoon dismissed. Christmas eve.

25th Christmas Day. Bright and fine sun shining gloriously. Church parade 9 am. Afternoon tea every day at 4 pm then dinner at 6.30 pm.

26th. Sgt Snow made ships Sgt Major (sic). 32 sergeants in the mess. On the 27th went into the hospital for duty.

28th. Time 8.25 entering Albany. There were a number of other troopers here. Received a letter here and reported one home.

1914
in margin

Dec 31st. Left Albany for an unknown destination at 9.30am. Saw the submarine A.E.2 in the harbour. There were 18 ships in two lines. The names being as follows - Flagship, Ulysses, (Phalz, German), Ayrshire, Hobart (German), Constadt (German), Berrima, Themistocles, Port Macquarie, Vestalia (German), Ceramic, Suevic, Persic, Knight of the Garter (NZ), Borda (Note: this is the ship that the writer is on), Willochra (NZ), Monarch Prince (NZ), Ajana and another German I didn't know the name.

Jan 1st 1915 Awakened about 5.30am to go to hospital. A man died (Acreman) he was buried at sea at 12 noon. All the troops being massed on deck and the burial service read by Major Windeyer and the last post sounded. We lost two horses the same day.

2nd Lost another horse.

3rd. Sunday. Parade 6.30 as usual. R.C. Church parade 7.30. Others 9.00am. Vaccinated.

4th. No water available. Orderly Sargt. for the day.

Coming into the tropics and getting very hot. Nothing unusual. Issued with limejuice for the first time on Jan 8.

9th Crossed the line. Father Neptune got busy. I was the 2nd man ducked. We had a concert at night.

10th Inoculated for the 3rd time.

12th Went down below and did an hours stoking.

13th Arrived at Colombo. A very fine sight. Boats of all descriptions - very funny sight. Katamarangs (sic) are the native boats. Natives very frightened of dogs. Roll call 10 men missing. At night time harbour very pretty, reminds me of Sydney.

14th Rose 6 am. At 8 am got ready to go ashore with Capt Buchanan and 4 other sergts for requirements. Saw hundreds of rickshaws. Went to several stores. Browns, Colombo stores and Clinic Stores. Went to the General Post Office and changed a sovereign into silver. Went into a kind of bazaar and had a lemon squash. Saw some Sepoys on guard at Government House. Went round the forts. They are terrible thieves and ask about 4 times the price of every article. There is a Japanese hospital on a steamer near us. I bought a hammer for the farrier and returned to the ship about 11 am. Didn't have time to see many of the sights. What I did see were great. We left Colombo at 1.30 pm and lay outside for a

while. Lay there till 9.30 next morning and a steamer brought some leftsbehind out to us. Had a scare at night supposed to be by the mis-interpretation of a signal message.

Jan 20. Saw an operation performed.

Jan 21. Col. Bean got orders to go to Themistocles. A lot of sickness aboard.

Sports in the afternoon. In tug-of-war team.

Jan 23rd Saturday. Arrived in Aden. Very well fortified. The cliffs are very high and beautiful. Left again the same afternoon.

Jan 24th Going through the Straits of Bab el-Mandeb church parade at 7 am for RCs. 9 am for Protestants. Orderly sergt for unit. In the Red Sea. Passed the Twelve Apostles, also Jabel Tier.

Jan 25th Had a bit of a change in the routine. Done stretcher drill instead of physical drill. Orderly sgt. for the day.

Jan 26th Stretcher drill in the morning, then done bandaging after breakfast. In the afternoon a lecture on asepsis and antisepsis by Capt. Buchanan.

Jan 27th Getting well on towards the end of our journey now. Full dress parade at 2 pm and kit inspection.

Jan 28th Reveille 6 am. Unit supplying duties. Arrived Suez 7.30 am. All kinds of traders here. Arabs and Egyptians etc. selling dates and figs and biscuits etc.

Jan 29th Going through the Suez Canal. At the entrance was the battleship Ocean. Passed the Minerva Irresistible further up. Saw the Indians digging trenches right near the Suez and all the way along the bank were fortifications. There were New Zealanders, Baluchis 126th. Australians and other Indian regiments there. Chaff and oats were stacked on the bridge for protection from bullets of enemy. Anchored for the night in the bitter Lake Timsah. The AMS Triumph and the French battleship Bouret also in the Canal.

Jan 30th Going up the Canal passed HMS Swiftsure. Very beautiful scenery. Saw an armoured train at Kantara and arrived at Port Said at 4 pm.

Jan 31st. Left Port Said at ~~12~~¹ am in the morning.

Feb 1st. Arrived in Alexandria in the morning and began to unload stores. All the horses were taken into a paddock on the side of the wharf and entrained into horseboxes. All the stores were unloaded and packed onto the train then we all set sail for Cairo. A few men were left behind for duty. Sgt. Hammond and some were taken to hospital with measles and mumps. We arrived in Cairo about 10 pm and then had to unload everything. There were A.S.C. waggons there waiting to take all our baggage. Then we had to walk all the way to Maadi a distance of 8 miles and lead the horses. However we arrived early in the morning and just lay down to rest when reveille sounded. We gradually got straightened up and in a few days were all ready for work. The horses couldn't be used for a month after their sea trip. Then we began to ride them bareback and exercise them over the plains and have races to see who had the best horses etc. When all the horse were fit, we had manouvres as far down as Helonan about 8 miles down.

On the road to Helonan we pass a Coptic church on the banks of the Nile which had been wrecked about three times by the Mahomedans. The Nile café is also on the banks of the Nile and when it floods once a year, it comes right up to the foot of it. Further around is the Egyptian arsenal which was used as the Turkish prison. Several times I had to take prisoners from here to the Red Crescent Hospital in Cairo. The next village is Tura, where all the convicts are kept in a big prison and the police guard it with fixed bayonets and walk round the top of the wall. There is also a sugar mill and quarries all down the road. A cement factory also. Helonan is famous for its sulphur springs and being the health resort of the ancient Egyptian kings. There are many beautiful hotels and an observatory at Helonan. From here you can take the boat that crosses the Nile to the village of Bedrechen and then go by donkey to the famous Sakkara.

At Sakkara, are the famous Temples of Ti, Thor, the Serapeum or the Temple of the 14 Bulls, The Step Pyramid, the oldest in Egypt. I have been in all of these temples. On the walls are paintings 4000 yrs old. From here you go to the Great Pyramids of Mena. Cheops the largest is about 480 feet high. I have been halfway up the outside and right up in the Kings and Queens Chambers inside. Then we came to the Sphinx and the temple below the Sphinx. At Sakkara are two enormous statues of Ramesis, one is limestone and the other is granite. The limestone statue has a shed built over it to protect it. There are always exploration partys unearthing something of note. In Cairo, there are numerous things to see. The citadel is the famous stronghold full of soldiers, then Kan-el Nil barracks, then Abbasia barracks one of the biggest in the world. The Zoological Gardens at Giza, Gezireh Gardens, Esbekieh Gardens. The houseboats on the Nile, the Nrouski bazaars where the goldbeaters and weavers are seen at work, the Rag gate, the Walls of

Cairo, The Aquaduct built by Julius Caesar, the Sultans Palace, The famous Shepherds Hotel and Continental. The railway station etc. Then Heliopolis is a fine city. The city of the Sun sometimes called the Aerodrome Camp was here and Zeitoun Camp close by. Running from Cairo to Heliopolis are an electric train and tram. One thing that strikes you is the fog horn they use instead of whistles. It is like a reed with a tin trumpet on the end and sounds like a toy balloon. There are churches of every denomination here. All Saints is the big English church and St Andrews is the Presbyterian. There are several Greek Orthodox and Roman Catholic about. At a place called St Georges where most of the Christian churches are, is the English burial ground and where hundreds of soldiers are buried. The Coptic Churches are the oldest Christian churches known and are supposed to to be the followers of St Mark. Every year on the 25th April the English people used to cover all the graves of the soldiers with flowers.

I helped to carry some of the first wounded from Gallipoli from the hospital train of the Red Crescent Society to our motor ambulances. In all the churches are brass and marble tablets to soldiers who were killed in previous wars in Egypt. The habits of the people were very peculiar and one has to get used to them. They scramble all over the streets and sleep anywhere yet I never saw an accident happen and motor cars and trains and garries are everywhere. Cairo was supposed to be built on the model of a second Paris and it is very Parisian in every way.

The main street is called "Shareh Kamel". The name of the street where the English and Presbyterian churches are is called Chareh Boulac, and the place where the Australian head Quarters were was called Shareh Nubar Pasha. Then Shareh Kasr-el-Nil led to the barracks. I remember the Egyptian Reservists being called up and the riot that took place in front of Kledives Palace on the Midan or Square. All the British troops and Australians in Cairo were called out to quell the disturbance. The Australians had a large picquet stationed in Kasr-el-Nil barracks on the banks of the Nile. When I first saw Kasr-el-Nil it had a large football ground in the foreground nearest the town and no buildings except the barracks themselves. When I left, the whole place was buildings and no football ground remained. A soldier could always get a cheap feed here in the barracks when he didn't want to go into town. The police barracks called Bab-el-Hadid is right opposite the railway station where the "red caps" stay. The Red Caps were the British Mounted Military Police or the MMPs known by the beautiful red cap they used to wear and the chain epaulettes on their shoulders. The town used to be a moving mass of soldiers at one time and the police and picquets had all they could do to preserve order. During my stay in Cairo I saw two riots.

About the end of February 1916 we left Maadi and went on to the Suez Canal at Serapeum owing to an expected attack. All the Infantry Divisions were concentrated here and at Ferry's Post. Serapeum is about halfway between the two lakes. Ferry's Post is on the other side of the Canal about 2 miles from Ismailia. Ismailia is a fine place having been laid out to be the chief landing place for travellers to Egypt but it was never used as such. From Serapeum we used to swim in the Canal every day.

Jan 1st, 1916. From Maadi I went to Army Ordnance Depot to draw clothing for the men who had returned from Gallipoli. I left at 8 am and arrived back in camp at 5 pm. Had lunch in Kasr-el-Nil barracks. The ordnance had a very busy day fitting out the 2nd Light Horse Brigade. I rode Capt Pitchers horse today and in the evening, I sat in the operating tent writing letters.

Jan 2nd. Sunday morning. Church parade 9.45 am in the Recreation tent built by the people of Maadi. Had a busy day issuing clothing etc. to the men. In the evening went to the artillery to try and get in. Met several fellows I knew in the Field Artillery Band. At night I listened to the F.A. band at the Bungalow Hospital.

Jan 3rd. Into town again for a medical Pannier, all ours having been lost on the Peninsular. I took Jimmesan, Short and Ratcliffe with me. A strange thing for Egypt - it rained nearly all day.

Jan 4th Rained all night and the cooks had trouble getting the fires going. Went to Heliopolis to Base Med. Store. The roads were very muddy and reminded me of Newcastle in wet weather. Arrived back in camp at 6.45pm.

Jan 5th I was Orderly Sgt. for the day. Went to the Base Office at Kasr-el-Nil with Sgt. Guthrie. Met Capt. Long an old Major in Newcastle at one time. Had dinner in the Pyramids Café and a cup of tea in the Soldiers Club in the Esbekieh Gardens. In the garden they every kind of tree and some I took particular notice of were Royal Palm Trees. They grow very high. Got back to camp 2.15pm train. At night we had some music in the sergeants tent. Wrote a letter to Jack Hand, No 4 Training Batt. Zeitoun.

Jan 6th. Medical stores again. Weather very cold at night. Had to report to Major Croll who was sick in the Bungalow Hospital.

Jan 7th Went to Frank Ratcliffes for a box for W.O. Phillips. Purchased a forge for 230 pt at Aquilina Freres. I then went to the Government

workshop for a wheel. Went a short cut through some very narrow streets with Sgt. Bowman and Cpl. Proctor.

Jan 8th. Went into Kasr-el-Nil in a motor ambulance to see if some stores were ready and rang up from the Devons O.R. to send 2 G.S. wagons. Got some panniers and loaded in a 7th Limber. Rode Sgt Hammonds horse (Danger) which shied a couple of times at the railway gates.

Jan 9th Fairly busy giving out belts to men. In the afternoon, Cavanagh, Phillips, Thompson and I went to the Barrage in a motor car. Had dinner at St. James Hotel. Then went to the pictures and returned to camp by the last last train. Killed a dog near the Cairo Railway Station bridge with the motor car.

Jan 10th. Mark Wilson and I went to get 111 ground sheets left at Ordnance the day before on a light wagon. There was a very thick fog and we couldn't see 50 yards ahead and we were saturated with dew. Cashed a cheque at the Anglo Egyptian Bank.

Jan 11. Got some gear for Lieut. Lambert (dentist) attached to our unit. Also Hobb and Southgate.

Jan 12th Saw Lieut. Hookway in charge of a picquet in Cairo.

Jan 13 Went to Abbassia to the Red Barracks co/- US Stores. Drew Breeches D.S. in lieu of M.S. Went to the British Saddlery and Kasr-el-Nil to draw clothing and Hospital requirements. Saw a most beautiful funeral of some high Greek officials wife.

Jan 14th Put my Gladstone bag in Corks for safekeeping which remained there till I came home in November 1918.

Jan 15th Three men transferred to other units. Dunne, Linton, Maconachie. No. 1 A.G.H. First day I haven't been to town for weeks.

Jan 16th. Church Parade. In the afternoon went to town co/- Sgts Hammond and Cavanagh. New Zealand band playing in the Gardens. Met Ted Haywood opposite Shepherds Hotel.

Jan 17th Abbassia again. Had a touch of sore eyes and had some drops put in them. Bought a pair of goggles.

Jan 18th Big route march to Helonan.

Jan 19th To Kasr-el-Nil with Col. Croll.

Jan 20th By motor car to Cairo for tents, sent wagon ahead. Hoon driver. Never got them. Waited for Col. outside the Savoy Hotel. Inquired after butter a/c at the Al Hayat dairy instead of the Hygenic which was at Abbassia.

Jan 21st Drew lanterns and took 4 men to Base Office.

Jan 22nd Had a day in camp. Made out a list of shortages.

Jan 23rd Ordnance Sgt. At night went to the Recreation Tent and heard a fine anecdote about a little boy giving an officer a cup of cold water before the American Civil War.

Jan 24th -25th Nothing of importance except a heavy rain storm.

