William Hurford Hutchins notebook diary

2007.013.1.1

Pocket notebook with burgundy faux leather paper over light-weight boards and decorative print flyleaves; rectangular cutout on front cover, possibly for a pencil loop or band closure; sewn signatures of 186 lined paper pages, with a top binding.

14 x 8.7 x 1.7 cm

Paper covers are worn on all corners and the front and back covers are separating from the flyleaves. Pages 140-141 are detached from the top binding.

Entries written entirely in pencil.

Pages have been numbered by archivist.

Sample page:



[Page 1]

Rifle No. 19620

Regimental No. 6/483

Name: William Hurford Hutchins

[---]th South Canterbury Regiment Company

Address: Waimataitai, Timaru, New Zealand

Left N.Z. on October 16th, 1914

8751 [R---t]

[Page 2]

Diary of a Mess Orderly

October 14th, 1914

At half past three we left the wharf for the [---]. We had a great send off. Cheered the cruisers in the harbor. We had tinned meat for tea, but a lot of the boys were too merry to eat as they had to take a load of New Zealand beer under the waist coats. Eight o’clock finds them very busy on board writing their last letters they believe as we are told that the last mail goes ashore tomorrow. I have just sent two postcards to the “best girl in New Zealand” so now I will turn in to bed.

[Page 3 blank]

[Page 4]

October 15th, 1914

Curry for breakfast. Hardly any meat but the coffee was the best we have had on board and the porridge was very good. After breakfast muster parade lasted up till dinner. For dinner we had roast mutton, beans, potatoes, stewed figs, and tea, but the mutton was pretty tough and there was not enough milk in the tea, but it is no good growling as the cooks only laugh. After dinner I wrote one letter to my lady and one to my parents. I received some cakes from them that I ought to have got a week ago. They were broken to pieces but the crumbs will eat. For tea we had bread, butter, jam with tea but still no difference in the tea of course. Our table had cold mutton saved from dinner as us orderlies always think of the inner man. The Maunganui has just left the wharf and the latest is that we are leaving at six in the morning, Friday.

[Page 5 blank]

[Page 6]

October 16th, 1914

Woke up this morning and heard the [---] pulling up the anchor. Had a wash and stood on deck with Private Faithfull and watched the cruisers and transports clear Wellington. It was a great sigh to see so many boats in a line. Everybody on board was pleased they were off. For breakfast we had porridge, stew, coffee, but the coffee was not quite so bad this morning, but I wish they would put more milk in it. [20] of the boys got no breakfast as they would not leave the deck to come down. I have just had a good shave from the military barber as my razor wants a [---]. For dinner we had soup, meat, potatoes, rice but no tea and being a calm sea, all the boys were there. The four cruisers are [Page 7] sailing in a circle round our ship but standing well out but we feel very safe. For tea we had for the men, bread, butter, jam, cheese, and tea. The tea was very good tonight. Us orderlies had tinned meat for sure. After we had washed up, we went on deck and seen the last point of New Zealand fade away. Farewell spit for how long I wonder. We are sailing about nine knots so it will be about five days before we see land again. If the sea is as calm as now, it will be a very good trip. I am waiting for a black draught, so I am tight under the vest.

[Page 8]

Oct 17

I was up at five-thirty this morning. Had a wash and went on deck. It was raining pretty thick and there was a big swell on and our boat was rolling a bit. Instead of twenty-four men being at our table, we only had twelve and some of them did not stay very long. We had porridge, stew, and coffee. The coffee was not bad. After clearing up, I went on deck and was bit sick. I sat down until dinner time. For dinner we had roast mutton, peas, potatoes, but I was not feeling fit for dinner. I was feeling very ill. For tea we had tinned neat, bread and jam, but I could not [eat] any. I went to bed very early as I wanted sleep.

[Page 9 blank]

[Page 10]

Oct 18

For breakfast I had two sausages, two slices of bread and a cup of tea, but I had to eat it on deck as the smell underneath was too much for me. The sea was pretty rough this morning, but it is not so bad now. For dinner we had stewed rabbit and plum pudding, but I was too sick to eat any, but I ate some pineapple. I managed to eat some meat for tea but could not drink anything as I think drinking makes me seasick. I was very sick before going to bed, but I was not the only one on the boat sick on the [---]. There was not a man fit for duty at three yesterday.

[Page 11 blank]

[Page 12]

Oct 19

I feel a lot better this morning, only terribly empty. I think I will be able to eat a good breakfast. I had porridge, stew and a cup of coffee for breakfast and I feel a lot better. But, of course, the sea is very smooth today. Just the ordinary ocean [---] on. I had a good dinner of boiled mutton, beans and potatoes and felt a good deal better, but I might chat you, far from being well. I sat up on deck this afternoon and watched a couple of whales. They were not far from our boat. I had bread and onion for tea but I did not feel like eating too much before going to bed.

[Page 13 blank]

[Page 14]

Oct 20th

I was up early this morning owing to the steamer’s whistle blowing and goings on deck. See one of the cruisers turning a [coastal] boat off our back. I had a good breakfast of curry and porridge. I am beginning to eat a treat, again but I suppose the next rough sea will upset things again. For dinner I had roast mutton and potatoes and enjoyed it very much. We are getting our bayonets sharpened this afternoon. May we never use them, I say. I have written three letters ready to post in Hobart where we expect to arrive tomorrow. I had tinned fish for tea, bought by d of course, as there was only bread and jam for tea.

[Page 15 blank]

[Page 16]

Oct 21st

Went on deck this morning at quarter to six and seen Tasmania in the distance. For breakfast we had stew again and the coffee was very crook again. But the boys did not take much notice as they were excited at seeing land. We are just passing the lighthouse at the entrance now, and the coast looks fine. For dinner I had roast mutton, potatoes, soup and peas, and enjoyed it fine. We are anchored out in the stream but I think we are going on shore tomorrow morning for a two-hours march, so they say. For tea we had cold roast beef and very bad tea, but we are getting used to that now. We are just moving over to the wharf for water and coal.

[Page 17]

[Entry appears to be a child’s scribble: “My My My”]

[Page 18]

Oct 22nd

We had stew again for breakfast and the coffee was just as usual. But, after breakfast we had a two-hours march round Hobart and the people went mad. It was just like leaving home again. They showered apples and bananas on us in good [style]. I received my first letter from home today and had to hurry the answer as the mail closed at twelve. For dinner we had roast meat, potatoes and bean soup instead of tea. I enjoyed dinner very much. We left the stream at teatime for heaven knows where, but I am pleased to be off again. For tea we had bread, jam and cheese. The tea was good tonight I might mention. I think we are in for a rough night.

[Page 19 blank]

[Page 20 blank]

Oct 23rd

For breakfast we had the usual stew, porridge and coffee, but the coffee was no better than usual. We are having a good run from Hobart. I hope the sea keeps like this all the way. For dinner we had roast mutton, potatoes and soup. Of course, we do not get tea for dinner. They think soup is as good as tea, but myself, I never take soup. We had to do pack drill this afternoon for breaking ranks at Hobart when we got the apples from the people. Of course, the boys were wild and were going to strike, but it would not work. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and cake that the ladies of South Canterbury gave us. It was very nice, I can tell you. Quite a change from the ordinary.

[Page 21]

[Entry appears to be a child’s scribble: “M My”]

[Page 22]

Oct 24th

For breakfast we had chops and steak and coffee. The chops were very good, the steak tough and the coffee bad. One chop only for man but I enjoyed the one I had. We are having a good run today. The sea is very calm so they gave the boys rifle practice this morning, towing a target, and the lads done some good shooting, dismantling the target. For dinner we had roast mutton, soup and potatoes, peas, but the peas were not cooked. They were very hard. We are getting life belt parade this afternoon, for why is a mystery. We do not get a minute to ourselves. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and cheese. The tea was very nice. I had to buy a few tins of milk [text faded and indecipherable].

[Page 23 blank]

[Page 24]

Oct 25th

Second Sunday at sea and having a good passage in the Austal Bight. For breakfast we had stew, porridge and coffee. The coffee was no better than usual, but I put milk in mine, so it is not so bad. We are running into a head sea and it is a bit rough. It if gets much worse, there will be a bit more seasickness. For dinner we had stewed rabbit, potatoes, soup and pudding. The pudding, by thunder, was like rubber and as heavy as bad. Oh for a Sunday’s dinner at home and tea at my lady’s place; it would be grand. For tea we had German sausage and cold roast beef, bread, butter and jam, and the tea was very good tonight. It is raining a little and there is a pretty heavy swell on, but it is a hard sea.

[Page 25 blank]

[Page 26]

Oct 26th

For breakfast we had porridge, sausages and coffee. The porridge was lumpy, the sausages sour, and the coffee very thick, but I enjoyed the meal very much. The cruiser ahead took after a boat this morning, but it was a false alarm. We are getting a very hot day and a very smooth sea but we are a long way south of Australia so as to keep off of the usual trade route. For dinner we had roast mutton, beans, potatoes and soup. A very good dinner. We have a funeral parade this afternoon as one of the boys on the ship behind us is to be buried. All the boats stopped for about half an hour. Our band played the [Page 27] “Dead March” and the parson read the burial service and off we went again. I heard the chap’s name was Sergeant Signaler Gilchrist. He was from [Dunedin]. For tea we had cold meat, tea and bread, butter and jam. The tea was much better than usual. I have just found a letter that I thought I had posted in Hobart to my parents and lady.

[Page 28]

Oct 27th

For breakfast we had porridge, stew and coffee. The coffee was just as usual. We are in a head sea and it is a bit misty overhead, but we are getting a fine trip. For dinner we had corned beef and carrots, and it was lovely. They say we will be in port tomorrow. I will be pleased, too. I am just going to write to my people and the best girl in this world. For tea we had tinned fish given to us by the people of N.Z. and it was very nice. We played a [Euchre] match tonight and our table won one set.

[Page 29 blank]

[Page 30]

Oct 28th

We had porridge, stew, tea for breakfast. Of course, the stew was mostly fat. We sighted land early this morning, but we will not get in until two o’clock. But we are excited at going in. For dinner we had roast mutton and potatoes and stewed apples, and they were very nice. All the boys enjoyed them. We arrived in port about two-thirty and seen the Australian transports. There are twenty-eight of them, but some of the boats have hardly any men on them, but they gave us a great [hearing] I can tell you. I wrote several letters to my people and the best girl in the world, but I had to hurry as there was only a few minutes to spare. [Page 31] For tea we had cold meat, tinned fish and cheese left over from last night. Most of the crowd went for a short walk but I did not. I just bought a few views of Albany. I will send them away if I get a chance tomorrow or else I will post them from Colombo. We are leaving the wharf at daylight tomorrow morning, so they say, for [Freemantle], but I hardly think so, although there is no room at the wharf here for more than two boats at a time. And, if they all want water, it will take too long to get water on all of them.

[Page 32]

Oct 29th

Timaru A and P show.

We left the wharf at five o’clock this morning for the stream. There is twenty-eight Australian boats here. For breakfast we had porridge, chops, steak and coffee. The coffee was as usual. For dinner we had roast mutton, beans, potatoes, and soup, and I enjoyed dinner. We had no parades this afternoon, so I wrote a few letters to my people and lady love. This will, most likely, be the last mail from here. For tea we had cold meat, jam, bread and tea. The tea was good only. We have just heard of the threatened trouble in South Africa. I should not be surprised if we do not finish up by going there as it looks pretty bad over there. [Page 33] I just remembered that this is the date of the South Canterbury A and P show. Last year, I was spending the time at the best girl’s place and today I am on the HM NZ [---] [---henic] in Albany. I wish it was Timaru, but they say everything comes to those who wait. I hope those days will come again. We are having a musical evening in the Mess Room tonight, but the singing is pretty crook, I might state, and it is very hot down here.

[Page 34]

Oct 30th

For breakfast we had porridge, stew, coffee. The blessed coffee was as thick as the stew, only there was no meat in it. We had to dress for inspection this morning as the General comes on board to have a look round. This pencil is getting very short and I can’t buy another on the boat, so I don’t know how this diary is going to get on. For dinner we had roast meat and potatoes. I enjoyed the beef. This afternoon, we had a boxing tournament for our platoon. I was judge and there was some good bouts. For tea we had tinned meat, bread, butter and tea. The tinned meat I am quite sick of by now. It is mostly corned beef.

[Page 35 blank]

[Page 36]

Oct 31, 1914

For breakfast we had porridge, stew, coffee, but I just say the coffee is no better. They might learn how to make it before we get to England. We all have to get vaccinated against typhus fever. I am getting tomorrow, I think, but it is for a good purpose as I would sooner be done than have typhoid fever. I have to do a bit of washing today and write a few letters. We had roast meat and potatoes for dinner, and I had a tin of pineapple, and I enjoyed dinner very well. Some of the boys growled about the meal, but some of them would growl if they had the Empire Hotel to tucker at. So, I [Page 37] don’t take any notice of them. For tea we had cold meat, bread, butter, jam and tea, but the tea was not too good. I think they make the tea in the same boiler as they use for soup at dinnertime as we get no tea for dinner and it is greasy at teatime. There is a great deal of talk tonight about leaving hear tomorrow. I am sick of this place. I wisah they would take us back to New Zealand. It is raining pretty thick tonight and, by thunder, it can rain some over here.

[Page 38]

November 1st Sunday

When I got on deck this morning, I seen the Australian ships moving out, but it was fully ten o’clock before we left. So, you see there was a lot of ships. I can’t let you know how many as we are not allowed to say as this may fall into other hands. I will just say there was a lot. For breakfast we had porridge, sausages and good coffee, so we were lucky at having something nice to drink. The sight of all these ships is wonderful. I would like all the people of Timaru to see this sight. It will never be seen again I am sure, and I certainly [Page 39] hope that New Zealand’s sons will have to leave their shores no more for war. I was vaccinated at two o’clock today, or, I should say, inoculated with typhoid germs as a safeguard against fever. It was just like freezing a tooth to start with. We had German sausage for tea and bread, butter, jam and bad [underscored] tea. My arm is pretty stiff, and I feel a pain under my arm pit, but they say it will be better tomorrow. Anyhow, we have to be done again in ten days’ time, but it will be better than a bullet I bet.

[Page 40]

November 2nd, 1914

I slept on deck last night, but it came on to rain about four o’clock this morning, so I had to run for it. We had porridge and stew and coffee for breakfast. But the porridge was full of salt, so we left it alone. The coffee was not too bad. We are having a pretty hot day today and I have an awful headache. But that is through my arm, which is pretty sore, today. For dinner we had roast meat, beans and cold water. It was very good of them to give us water instead of greasy soup. The sea is very calm, and I am going to do some washing and hang it out to dry. [Page 41] I have done my washing. I boiled my overalls and I can tell you they are just the thing. For tea we had cold meat, cheese, pickles and tea and I could not eat anything as my head was too bad and I felt pretty sick and feverish. But I will be all right tomorrow. I hope everybody thought we were going to [Freemantle] but I think it is a thing of the past. I firmly believe we going to Colombo.

[Page 42]

Nov 3rd

The sea is a bit choppy this morning and it is blowing, so everything points towards us having a big sea this afternoon. For breakfast we had porridge, stew and coffee but the blessed coffee was deadly. My arm and head is fine today but my mate is crook now. He was done yesterday and Sergeant [D---] is pretty crook. But it is only for two days. We had roast meat, potatoes and tea for dinner. The meat was pretty tough. I must not forget to mention that we had prunes as well, but they could have been washed better. I was not luck enough to see the school of flying fish [Page 43] that most of the boys seen after dinner. I was very sick just now. I think it was seasickness as the sea is very rough this afternoon and you can hardly see some of the boats at times. It started to rain about three o’clock and I had some clothes very near dry. But I left them out thinking that the fresh water would do them good. For tea we had cold meat, bread, jam and cheese and tea. The tea was very good, too. Some of the Australian boats are tossing something awful. They don’t look as if they have a very big load on as our boats are very good.

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Nov 4th

The sea is very calm today, thank heavens, am not a very good sailor. For breakfast we had porridge, stew and coffee but the coffee was as usual. Oh, for a cup of home tea for breakfast. After breakfast I went up to the canteen to buy a bottle of lemonade and found out that someone had taken my purse out of my pocket last night, so I did not get the lemonade. This ship is full of thieves. Someone will be caught at it some of these days. For dinner we had roast meat, peas and tea and it was a lovely dinner. We had plenty of meat and I have saved [Page 45] a leg of mutton and a small piece of beef for tea, so you can see we get plenty of meat. I am going to write a lot of letters today to friends in Timaru. We are having rifle shooting on No. 11 today and some of the boys are doing good shooting. Of course, shooting at a target that is a hundred yards behind the ship, especially if the ship is tossing, take some hitting. For tea we had cold meat, bread, butter, jam and tea. I had a small piece of cold beef, but I did not touch the jam as it was very sickly. I have got twelve Xmas cards ready to post and a letter to the best girl in the world.

[Page 46]

November 5th

Went on deck this morning at six o’clock. It was a lovely morning but very hot. The sea was very smooth and I hope it will be like this until we get to Colombo. For breakfast we had porridge, chops and coffee. The porridge I do not eat as it is too hot for that now, but the chops were lovely. We had a rifle inspection this morning and my clean rifle was commended. They tell us to take exercise, but there is no room. I wish I could as I am just as fat as I can possibly be, but a few weeks training will take that off. We are getting no wireless news now, so we don’t know how the war [Page 47] is getting on. It is just ten past ten by ship’s time and my little wristwatch is just two o’clock by Timaru time, so we are four hours behind Wellington. My head is better now and I do not feel my arm sore at all. For dinner we had roast mutton, cabbage and potatoes and tea. The tea was nice and the cabbage was lovely. That was the second lot of cabbage since I left home. We had cabbage once at camp. The HMS Melbourne took after a strange boat today, but I think she was all right. For tea we had tined fish and tea, but the fish was crook and we had to sling it away. [Page 48] The strange steamer that the Melbourne went after turned out to be a P and O liner. She was the [Ostery], the big mail boat. The Melbourne made her come in with us and she passed our boat quite close. She had a lot of passengers on board. I bet they will not forget the sight of an [evening] looking up the line of ships—looks like looking up the street of a city—all the lights on the masts. I don’t suppose they will let the mail boat away until we get to Colombo.

[Page 49 blank]

[Page 50]

November 6th/11/14

I slept up on deck last night and it was lovely. For breakfast we had a stew, porridge and coffee, but the coffee was as usual. We are doing our shooting test this morning at a quarter past ten. It is just ten o’clock now by the ship’s time and twenty-five past two by Wellington. I seen a few more flying fish today. They flew about fifty yards before falling. For dinner we had roast neat, potatoes and water. I had a feed of honey that the Blenheim boys gave me. I know a lot of them on the boat. We have just had a lecture from the Colonel on sanitation and cleanliness and making chums of one another, but [Page 51] I would think twice before making friends with some of the rummies on this boat. I got a nasty cut on the thumb drying a knife. I had to go to the doctor and get it dressed and they made me shoot with it and of course away it started to bleed again; but it is not much and will soon be better. For tea we had bread, butter, cheese and jam and tea. My mate and I had honey. We enjoyed tea very much. We are getting lovely hot weather. I am up at five every morning and have a cold bath. It is decent; of course, it is saltwater. The only fault is that soap will not lather, but it makes us feel fresh.

[Page 52]

November 7/11/14

I slept on deck last night as it is simply an oven down below. There was a nice breeze blowing and it was very nice looking up at the stars and thinking of the past. For breakfast we had stew, porridge and coffee. That same old coffee, for sure if it got better, we would all faint. It is a blessed shame that they can’t give us something decent to drink of a morning as I think that the first meal ought to be washed down with something nice. I often think of the tea I had at my lady’s place. Oh, for a cup now. [Page 53] I had my name taken this morning for wearing deck shoes as we are supposed to be bare footed. But I am always hitting my toes. For dinner we had beans, roast meat, potatoes and tea. The tea and meat both were nice, but the beans and potatoes were not. The potatoes had the blight badly. They had a rifle inspection again today as some of the other companies have swapped rifles and left some very crook ones. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and cheese and very nice tea for a wonder. We are playing a crib match between the different companies tonight.

[Page 54]

Sunday Nov 8/11/14

Up early this morning again as I could not sleep. It was so hot, even sleeping up on deck. For breakfast we had steak and chops and coffee. I enjoyed breakfast very much. The [Monatura] steamed through our lines again this morning and away she went at full speed to the back of us. She was very soon out of sight and has been away for a couple of hours now, so there might be something doing soon. For dinner we had boiled mutton, potatoes and plum pudding, but I never ate any of it. [Page 55] I can tell you I don’t know how the boys eat it. I am sure it is as heavy as lead. The [Monatura] has not returned yet and it is now three o’clock. They said she went to the Cocoa Islands to see if the Emden was there. There might be something doing. We heard of the loss of the Good Hope and the other one, but that will be paid back with interest added. For tea we had [b---n] and bread, butter, jam and tea. The tea was good tonight. I am off for a bath now. I bathe twice daily.

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November 9th 11/14

The [Monatura] is not back yet and the Japanese cruiser went away this morning just before breakfast. One of the signalers told us that the Emden and a Turkish boat were fifty miles behind us yesterday. For breakfast we had porridge, stew, coffee, but the coffee was very crook. The heat is awful today and we will be getting about a fortnight of this before we start to run into cold weather. I have just finished shaving and getting blackheads our of my face, but I can’t get them out as well as someone I know in Timaru. There are a lot of the boys down with measles. I expect they will go through the ship. [Page 57] For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes and tea. But we do not enjoy our dinner as it is too hot. We have just got news that one of our escorts has sunk the Emden and is now chasing the coal boat. If they catch her, they will bring her with us. It is a good job the Emden is out of the way as she was doing a lot of damage to the cargo traffic. The flying fish are very thick here, but they are not a great size. The crew of the boat tell us that we will see big ones in three- or four-days’ time. For tea we had we had bread, butter, jam and tea. The tea was fine, too. Us boys had a tin of fruit for our tea—apricots—they were decent.

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Nov 10/11/14

For breakfast we had porridge, stew, the same sort of coffee. The weather is just as hot as ever, but we get a bit of a sea breeze and I can tell you we want it pretty bad. We expect to cross the line tomorrow and if we are going to Colombo, we will be there next Monday. For dinner we had roast meat, peas and potatoes and lime juice and I enjoyed dinner very much. I heard that one of the boys off one of our boats fell overboard, but he was saved. They lowered a boat and picked him up. We seen the boat stop behind but they tell us very little on board. [Page 59] The sweat is dropping off of my forehead as I am writing this, and it is five o’clock. On board ship one would think it would be cool. It is a quarter past eleven in New Zealand and I am sure it is not as hot as it is here. Oh, for Timaru weather and lots of other things. For tea we had bread, cheese, butter and jam. The butter I mentioned is poured onto the bread. It is as hard as ice when we get it every morning, but by dinnertime it is oil, and the cheese melts, so no wonder I sweat. I have never perspired as much when I was butchering as I am now.

[Pag 60]

November 11/11/14

I slept on deck last night and about four o’clock this morning it rained. At top the thunder was deadly. I have never heard thunder as loud before and the rain was none of New Zealand’s sort, but down it came in sack fulls. My bed was as wet as a dish cloth. For breakfast we had [---] stew and the same old coffee. The porridge was lumpy. It had lumps in it as big as any hen’s egg without the word of a lie. We have just heard that the Sydney will be with us this afternoon with prisoners and wounded. She torpedoed the Emden at two thousand yard and [Page 61] the Emden ran aground to save herself from sinking, and the Sydney approached her to try and save life when the Emden fired and damaged the bow and put a hole in one of the Sydney’s funnels. The Sydney then had some target practice and left the natives of the Cocoa Islands some fire wood. We hear there is only forty Germans left. There was two killed and eleven hurt on the Sydney. For dinner we had roast meat and potatoes and stewed figs. A very nice dinner. For drink we had juice. For tea we had bread, butter and jam and tea, but I did not eat any as I was not hungry. We have heard more yarns. Someone said we were going to India. I hope not.

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Nov 12

I did not sleep on deck last night as some of the crew told us about the season. He said we would get rain every night and he was right. I had a lovely sleep and I can tell you I wanted it as I had my arm inoculated again yesterday afternoon, so I am done with that. It is pretty sore today but not half as bad as last time. I wonder what they are going to do to us next time. I have heard, but I can’t tell you here, but it is not dangerous. We put another horse overboard today. The poor [beggars] want to lay down. I expect they will put then off for a fortnight at [Page 63] the next port. The Melbourne and the big Jap went off this morning. I think there is something about it does not make us uneasy as we still have plenty left to care for us. I would like to tell you how many, but I can’t. For dinner we had roast meat, beans and potatoes and lime juice. The beans were not nice, but I enjoyed the meat. This afternoon the big armoured liner Empress of India, a sister ship to the Empress of Iceland, passed us. She is scouting. For tea we had bread, butter, jam, one apple and tea. The apple was nice but it was not big enough, of course, but we can’t expect a [---] load.

[Page 64]

13 Nov

For breakfast we had the usual porridge, stew and coffee, but I am disgust3ed with the coffee. I am out on parade with the boys again and I like the change, I can tell you. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and lime juice. I enjoyed dinner very much. What a time we had. In the afternoon, Father Neptune came on board. Of course, we were all ducked, but it was all taken in good part. Our officers took the lead. For tea we had bread, jam, butter and tea, but I was not eating as I think a fellow ought to miss a meal sometimes. [Page 65] We left the other ships behind as we are short of water so there is thirteen of us boats ahead of the rest of the boats and we expect to be in Colombo on Sunday night. It does not look too fine, so I sleep below tonight. We have just heard that they are going to read our letters, so I will only write short ones and keep the bundle I have ready.

[Page 66]

Nov 14 Saturday

For breakfast we had the usual porridge, stew and coffee. We are well ahead of the Australian boats this morning. They say we have to be out of the harbour before the Australian boats get there. For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes and apples. A very good dinner, too. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and tea, but it is too hot to eat anything. We are travelling at full speed. It is quite a change from what we are used to, of course. We are anxious to see land again, but tomorrow morning ought to do, I think.

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Sunday Nov 15/11/14

I went on deck this morning and seen land just in sight. Of course, there were a great crowd on deck all excited. For surf it is just a fortnight since we left Albany and seen no land. For breakfast we had chops and steak and that coffee again. We arrived in port at a quarter to ten. There is a lot of steamers here and five cruisers—Russian, Jap, English. We had church parade and you should have seen the boats with the natives in, when the band started to play and some of the boys threw sixpences and [threepences] into [Page 68] the water and these chaps in the boats would dive for them and get them every time. They could not get pennies as the water was too dirty. The Sydney and the Empress of Asia brought the prisoners and wounded from the Emden. We were not allowed to cheer in respect of the wounded. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes, and pudding and lime juice. They are taking us ashore this afternoon, thirty at a time. I did not worry about getting today; I will get tomorrow as I think every one of us will get on shore for a wee while. The Melbourne and a Russian cruiser with five funnels left here just now. The Russian [Page 69] boat was very big. I should think she is a battleship. This place seems to be all business now. It is a sight worth seeing—all of the boats in the [---] and the harbour rip full of shipping. What amuses me is the [curious] boats there are here—one sail only—and from the boat we can see palm trees and [---] a real oriental town; but there is a lovely big harbour; the only thing, there is no wharf here, just a few short [j---s]. I have been trying to catch butterflies and cannot manage it. Some of them are very pretty. I wish my lady love was here to see the sight.

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Nov 16/11/14

For breakfast we had the usual: porridge, stew and bad coffee. I was told I could go on shore today, but I did not get to as the boat put to sea at four o’clock this afternoon. This morning I watched the natives diving for tins of meat the boys threw over. It is great how they get things up from the bottom. For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes and lime juice. I had a good meal. The peas were very nice. One of the Australian boats ran into the wharf just in front of our boat. She was going out and missed the entrance. She hit the corner pretty hard, buckled her bow a bit, so they took [Page 71] her back again in case she is damaged much. Our officers would not let anyone go on shore after three o’clock, but I did not mind much as they say it is a dirty show. I do not know how long we are going to stay here. I hope not long. We have just heard of the death of Lord Roberts. Every ship is flying flags half mast for our great hero. For tea we had bread and ‘oil’, jam and greasy tea. By Jove, I am really sick of this blessed food. We often see cases half full of oranges that have gone rotten, thrown overboard, of course. [Page 72] Sooner than seeing the men eating apples and oranges, they let them rot and throw them over the side. It is pretty hard, as the South Canterbury people sent plenty of stuff for us boys, but we have got noting yet to speak of. The officers get fowl, eggs, bacon, fruit, chocolate, cakes, ox tongue and plenty of other dainties—but not us, you bet. I am sure the person who gets this book will look with scorn on the ones responsible for the stuff we get to eat. If we get our money cashed, they make us take coupons so as our money will go back to the ship.

[Page 73]

Nov 17/11/14

For breakfast we had the usual: porridge, stew and bad coffee. We left here this morning for the next port, wherever that is. I am pleased to as we are going into cold weather again. They said it was winter in Colombo. I would not like to be here in summer. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and lime juice. Pretty good dinner. Today, some of the Australian boats are left behind, but they will catch us up before long. They are charging us one and six for a small box [Page 74] of figs. It is awful. A tin of cherries or apples costs one and six. Really, that is the dizzy limit. We had a lecture in first aid today and the doctor told us some useful hints for wounds, but I hope we do not have to put them to the test. For tea we had bread, butter, cheese, jam and very crook tea, but I bought a bottle of lemonade just for a bit of a change as I am getting real sick of the tea and coffee. We are getting lovely weather. The heat is just as bad as ever, but we usually get a shower of rain every night and it cools the air decent.

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Nov 18

For breakfast we had the usual porridge, stew, all fat and bad coffee. I am getting sick of the sea now. I wish we were off the boat, of course. If we got good food it would be fine, but stew every morning is a bit too hot. For dinner we had roast meat, peas and potatoes. I enjoyed dinner very much. We had two parades today, one for exercise. For tea we had tinned meat, bread, butter, jam and weak tea. I bought a small bottle of tomato sauce for a shilling.

[Page 76]

Nov 18/11/14

For breakfast we had porridge, sausages, and bad coffee. The bread was very sour. There was a great row about it this morning. The baker said it was the hot weather. We had rifle inspection this morning and the saltwater is playing the [duce] with them. They are very rusty. Our platoon is on guard duty tonight and all day tomorrow. That is the worst job on the boat in hot weather. We are getting pretty good weather and a very good sea. Of course, it is very hot still but in a fortnight’s time we will begin to tell winter, I suppose. [Page 77] For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes, lime juice, but the lime juice was not very nice. It had a very musty taste through the heat I expect. We had a pretty heavy shower this afternoon and it cleared the air nicely. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and tea and the tea was very nice tonight. I go on guard from ten until two in the morning at the magazine hatch. I do not mind the job at all as one does not get lonely—there are always someone about.

[Page 78]

Nov 19

For breakfast we had porridge, stew, a crook coffee. The bread was nice and fresh this morning. Quite a change from yesterday. For dinner we had roast meat, beans and potatoes and lime juice. The meat was nice, but we are on very bad potatoes. They are blighty. My head is bad. I really thought I was going mad, but Jack Binley massaged it with his hands, and I went to sleep. When I woke up, I was a good deal better. I have found that if a person rubs my head gently, I very soon lose a bad headache. My [Page 79] young lady used to cure my headaches this way. For tea we had tinned meat, pickles, bread, butter, jam and tea. The tea was not bad tonight. The Australian boats that we left at Colombo have just caught up to us, but I hear four of our boats are going ahead tomorrow morning early for the next port and I hope they will soon get there. I am sick of being on the sea, although we are getting a lovely passage. There is hardly a ripple on the ocean, but it is lovely.

[Page 80]

Nov 20 Saturday

For breakfast we had porridge, stew and coffee, but the blessed stew is awful. I am real sick of eating the greasy stuff. There is no meat in it at all. It is simply the flaps of mutton. We are well out of sight of the other boats now. There are only five boats and our boat in this lot. I suppose we will be at Aden about Monday. We are just off rifle parade. It is now half past ten in the morning. At dear old Timaru it is ten to seven at night. The town will be pretty [Page 81] busy now I am sure. We have just heard that one of the Australian boats ran into the one in front of her last night. Of course, I don’t know if it is right or not. For tea we had bread, butter, jam, tea and cake. The boys went mad getting cake on Saturday. I expect they will make bread and butter do tomorrow night. I only wish I was in Timaru for tomorrow’s tea. I would give tea a big shake up, I bet. The Jap cruiser [Ibuki] is very close to us tonight but there is not any danger here. We are too close to the canal.

[Page 82]

Nov 21 Sunday

For breakfast we had porridge, chops and coffee. The chops run one a man and my luck was to get one nearly all bone. But the little bit of meat that was on it was very nice. The coffee I do not drink now am quite sick of the blessed stuff. We had church parade and a short service for Lord Roberts. Most of us boys look forward to church parade of a Sunday. It is quite a change from everyday life. We are getting lovely weather still and this part of the sea is nothing but jelly fish. They are very pretty. Some of them are all colours. There is one sort, a pretty red in the centre and blue round the edge. They are [Page 83] not a great size but they look so pretty in the sea. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and plum pudding they called it. Of course, I refused it. The meat and potatoes was not too bad but there you are, enough said. For tea we had German sausage, bread, butter, jam and tea, and for a wonder, tea was very good. We expect to see some islands tomorrow and if we are calling at Aden, they say we will be there on Tuesday night. I believe we are coaling there.

[Page 84]

Nov 22

For breakfast we had the usual porridge, stew and bad coffee. But, I must say that it was thickened stew this morning and a little more meat. The Australian boats caught up last night so that makes fourteen of us transports. The rest are slow boats and they are not in sight yet. But I suppose we will see them at the next port of call. We have a parade this morning at nine o’clock without rifles for a wonder. Our parade was saluting officers as they thought we were very much behind in saluting. [Page 85] For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes and very nice lime juice and, I can tell you, the drink was the best part of the meal. The land we passed this morning was the coast of Africa. We passed between the [---] Islands and the mainland. We had rifle parade this afternoon for an hour, but that is all rot on the boat, but they don’t like to see us idle no matter how hot it is. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and tea. I enjoyed the meal very much. I have only written two letters from the next port—one to the best girl in the world and one to my parents. I don’t suppose they will ever get them.

[Page 86]

Nov 24

Fancy just another month and we will have Xmas on us. I wonder what we will be doing then, but time will tell. For breakfast we had porridge, stew and bad coffee and on top of that I had liver pills. We are now in the Gulf of Aden. We ought to see land tonight. The sea is calmer than what it is in harbour and the place is alive with dolphins and porpoises. There are great shoals of them here. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and cold water as they thought we have had enough lime juice. We had to scrub out our bunks today with [Joy’s] fluid. We do it every [Page 87] week. As I write this, we can just see land right ahead so I suppose we will soon get there now. The [tripe] will begin to get interesting after we leave Aden. They are not travelling very fast as they do not intend to reach port until early in the morning. For tea we had bread, butter, cheese and jam. The jam was Australian jam and it is far better than the New Zealand jam. The tea was not bad, but I have had better on this boat. The boys are growling about the food. The officers say they will see into the matter.

[Page 88]

Nov 25

I was up early this morning and found we were just entering port and it was a dismal looking port. Great high hills on one side and the Arabian desert on the other. There are a few big barracks here as it is a English coaling station. They tell me there are not many people here. The few there are here have to [condition] the saltwater as it only rains here perhaps once inn every six months. Of course, there is no such thing as grass here. A real poverty-stricken place. I would not like to have to live here. I must tell you that we are not here by [Page 89] ourselves as we got a [great expedition from about eight steamers] that was here and it turned out that they had on board the [English Territorials] going out to India. When we told them we came from N.Z., they went mad. For breakfast we had porridge, sausages and the same old coffee. I was one of a part of twelve to sweep down our boat deck, just half an hour’s work. For dinner we had roast meat, peas, stewed apples and warm water. There is a hard job for anyone trying to get cold water. It gets hot in the tanks. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and tea and the tea was better tonight than it has been.

[Page 90]

Xmas 1 month today

Nov 25

We left Aden at daylight and we have passed several vessels since we left port. For breakfast we had porridge, stew and poor coffee. We heard, after breakfast, that the Sydney had captured twelve [---] with 6000 prisoners in the Persian Gulf and she only left us yesterday morning, so we can’t be very far from the fun. I have heard that the N.Z. Infantry are going to join the [greater] army to fight the Turks, but I don’t want to meet the Turks as they are very savage. They take no prisoners. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and tea. I enjoyed dinner today. [Page 91] We passed ‘Hell’s Gate’ this afternoon. It is the [---] of the Red Sea—well fortified of course. We had a parade this afternoon and our platoon was told off for guard at six tonight until six tomorrow night. The Australian boats are well behind now. I think they must have a lot of slow boats or surely they would not get so far behind. For tea we had bread, butter, jam and tea. Some of the tables had tinned meat, but us boys thought we would have a change. We are getting too much meat and it is so hot, meat is no good.

[Page 92]

Nov 26

All last night we travelled in darkness just as a precaution against any fire from the land as all on one side of the Red Sea belongs to the Turks. But the Melbourne shelled all the ports, so you see we are pretty safe. We have passed a good few ships in the night. I see a few as I was on guard on deck from ten until two this morning. When I come off guard, the people in N.Z. were going to work, at dinnertime nearly. For breakfast we had porridge, steak, onions, that’s a fact, and very good coffee. I wonder what was the matter. The boys went [Page 93] mad for sure. The latest yarn is that the news of the N.Z. election cane through last night. I wonder if that is right. For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes and lime juice. A very nice dinner. One of our escorts captured a Turkish boat this afternoon loaded with food and ammunition for the Turks, so we were on a win. We seen the Hampshire catch her. For tea we had bread, butter, cheese and jam. The tea we had tonight was awful. I could hardly drink it. I finished guard at six o’clock and will not get it again for a week. Some of the boys don’t like it, but I do not mind at all.

[Page 94]

Nov 27

For breakfast we had porridge, stew and bad coffee again. We have passed several boats today. We caught up to two transports going our way with Imperial men from India on board. They pulled in with our boats so you can image what a sight. Forty-three boats would [line] in two rows half a mile apart. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and tea or dishwater, I should say. The beans and potatoes were very crook. We heard that just one ton of cake was thrown overboard last night because it went mildew for the want of eating. Fancy not giving us that cake before it [Page 95] went bad. This is supposed to be a fact. The men that look after the stores told us that what would the people of N.Z. say to that if it was known. The Australian flagship and our flagship went ahead today. I don’t know what for. They are out of sight now. For tea we had bread, butter, jam, stewed apples and tea. The stewed apples were a surprise. They were very nice, too. I suppose they gave us those to square us up with the cake we did not get. We were told there would be no more leave at any port we call on nowl.

[Page 96]

Nov 28 Sunday

I woke up this morning and found there was a lovely wind blowing. It is the coldest wind we have had since leaving N.Z. I hope it keeps like this until we get out of the Red Sea. For breakfast we had porridge, sausages and bad coffee. The sausages were the best we have had so far. We had a church parade at half past ten this morning on the boat deck and the mounted men are showing their horses on the next deck. Fancy showing horses on Sunday. They must be in a hurry to shoe them. There were two fights this morning in the mounted men’s mess room. [Page 97] We are getting a pretty choppy sea today. It is the roughest we have had since crossing the line. For dinner we had roast beef, peas, potatoes, tea and plum pudding, but the pudding was terribly heavy. It was good stuff wasted. The Australian and our flagships left us this afternoon. They have gone ahead of us for some reason or other. For tea we had tinned brain, bread, jam and tea. The [b---n] was very nice, too. There is a bit of sea running tonight. Of course, we are close to land, so we must expect a bit of a swell off the shore.

[Page 98]

Nov 30

For breakfast we had porridge, stew and the same sort of coffee as we usually get. We are very close to land this morning, but we are a long way off the canal yet. In fact, we will not get to the Suez until tomorrow morning early. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes and tea. The potatoes were very bad today and the beans were very hard. We heard this afternoon that we are not going to Egypt as it was only a rumour that Italy had declared war with England. If it had of been right, we could not have got home [Page 99] to England as we could not have got through the Mediterranean Sea as Italy has a good navy. We are not getting any drill today for a while. I don’t know, unless they thought we done enough work yesterday. It has been pretty chilly today, but it is a lovely change from the hot stuff we have had. For tea we had bread, jam and tea. The tea was very crook. We are playing cards tonight—Five Hundred. It passes away the time of an evening. Tomorrow night we play the mounteds in a cricket tournament.

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Nov 30 [Dec 1st]

I went on deck this morning and seen Port Suez in the distance. One side of us is rugged hills and the Arabian side is all desert. For breakfast we had porridge, stew and the same old coffee. We cut breakfast short as we wanted to get on deck to see the sights and I can tell you there looks to be some fine buildings here. There was a lot of natives come out to our boats selling fruit and dates, twelve oranges for a shilling and a good few dates for sixpence and fair-size boxes of Turkish Delight for sixpence—the real stuff. We took on board the searchlights for going through the canal. [Page 101] For dinner we had roast meat, peas, potatoes and soup. The meat and peas were very good but the potatoes were very bad. [We’re] up the canal a good way but we are going very slow. There are a lot of dredges at work up this way. The weather is far cooler up here than it was at sea but, of course, we are running into winter all the time now. We have passed a lot of camels. They look terribly thin. I have seen no green feed. As far as the eye can reach is sand. I would never live in a place like this. For tea we had bread, butter, cheese, tea and rice and figs. They were very nice, too. I had a large plateful.

[Page 102]

Dec 2nd

We arrived at Port Said at half past two this morning. After a lovely trip through the canal, we passed a torpedo destroyer in the canal. The port is full of Men of War and we seen one French battleship with aeroplanes. My word, it is a lovely place. For breakfast we had the usual porridge, chops and very good coffee, for a wonder. The natives here are only half dressed and the women help the men load coal on the boats. It is the most immoral town in the world, I hear, and I think it must be right, too. There is a lovely, sandy beach here. [It] beats Timaru’s Caroline Bay by miles and there are some [Page 103] lovely buildings along the sea front. For dinner we had roast meat, beans, potatoes, [and] tea, but the beans were hard. We left port at two o’clock this afternoon and the French Blue Jackets went mad. They gave us a wonderful send off from here. They say we are going to Alexandria. It is all eighteen hour’s run if all goes well. For tea we had bread, butter, cheese and tea, but the tea we had was just the same as [per usual].

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Dec 3

We arrived at Alexandria at daylight this morning. It was quite a surprise to us as we thought that it would take us until Saturday morning. For breakfast we had porridge, stew, [and] coffee, but the coffee was awful. This is a great port for shipping. There are about twelve German boats here that were captured at the beginning of the war. Fruit is very cheap here but the natives can deal better than at Port Said, but they all have the same ugly faces. [Page 105] We were told that we were to leave the boat straight away. There was a rush to get ready and we left for Cairo at eight o’clock at night, arriving at Cairo at four o’clock in the morning, so you see we had a long journey. But about twelve of us were lucky as there were no room in the trucks so they put us in a First Class carriage with the officers, so we were on a win. We have only had one feed since our breakfast, but we had plenty of fruit.

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Dec 4

We arrived at Cairo at four o’clock this morning. [Then] we waited for six hours and they took us up a branch line to a place called Zeitoun. Then we marched up two miles to a sandy place to our camp. They gave us coffee and native bread and cheese. The bread is nice and the cocoa was lovely. Of course, we were hungry as we had no food. This is a big city, I can tell you. There are some lovely buildings here with beautiful gardens round the houses; oranges growing everywhere you look. [Page 107] We were sent down to the station to see that the natives did not steal any stuff. They are just getting some breakfast ready for us and I can tell you, we want it, too, as we are pretty hungry. There are a great crowd of natives here working. They only get a shilling a day and they do as much work as any white men. There is always some well-educated chap in charge of them to keep them working or else they would clear out and do a sleep. They are pretty good on that.

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Dec 5

For breakfast down here at the station we had bread, tinned beef and tea. There was no butter, in fact, we do not get butter now. If we want butter, we have to pay for it and we get no sugar or milk. So you see, we are getting pretty badly treated. Well, we had our breakfast, [then we got the natives going] loading up their donkey burros to take the stuff up to the camp. Well, each of us twenty-five boys lead charge of six of these burros and we [Page 109] had to see they did not stop of steal stuff. For dinner we had bread, cheese, meat and tea. We had a spell for a while then walked up to the camp again—about two miles—so by the time we finished at three in the morning, we were pretty worn out. This place is a suburb of Cairo, but it is a city in itself. The name of the place is Zeitoun. For tea we had the same as dinner, then we had supper and a feed at three [Page 110] o’clock this morning, then we had three hours sleep and up again to start work. It is wonderful how these mules and little Arab horses stand the work. They have to do pulling through the sand. We were sent up to the camp at two o’clock in the afternoon and twenty-five more were sent down there. When we arrive at the camp, it was all bustle, but we were exempt from all parades and allowed to go down to Cairo at the evening, so we all had a wash. There is [Page 111] plenty of water here, for a wonder, then we caught a tram for town. The first thing that we noticed in the city was the filthy places the natives have and the immoral houses that are here is deadly. In fact, as we were walking down the streets, the women run [and] pull on your arm to lead you away. Then, in the better class of houses, the women lean out of the windows and make eyes at, but by thunder, these shows ought to be burnt out of existence.

[Page 112]

Dec 6

We got back to camp at nine o’clock last night. I was full up of Cairo and the sights of that dirty hole for it is nothing else. For breakfast this morning we had tea, bread, cheese. We had church parade this morning standing out on the dry sand for a hot day. It’s very hot but we will have to get used to it. The tommies here are hard cases. There are thousands of soldiers here. I picked up two very nice chaps last night and they showed me round the gardens and the best part of the city. I met a [Page 113] very decent Frenchman last night and he told me to leave the native beer and all women alone. I told him I wanted to get back to N.Z. and I would do as he said. Of course, I have not seen much of the city yet, but I will go into Heliopolis and Cairo three nights a week while we get leave, as they have some lovely parks here. But, half the natives are not in favour of us fellows being here. Of course, they think we are there to interfere with their religion and keep order.

[Page 114]

Dec 7

For breakfast we had cheese, dry bread, tinned meat and tea. Then we had two hours attack practice on the desert sand and what with ant bites and sore eyes with the sand, I am just about done up. For dinner we had potatoes, cabbage stew and dry bread, so you see we had a good dinner. But, being cooked out in the open, it was half-full of sand. But we will have to get used to that. I can hardly see out of my eyes, they are affected with the sand blight. But the doctor says, in a couple of days, they will be all right. [Page 115] We are still on dry bread and jam and cheese, so you see they are treating us pretty right, aren’t they? There are twenty-five thousand tommies here now, so you see we have a pretty big camp. We have plenty of drill and desert-marching of a day. When we get back of a day, we are dead beat and as black as your range. The natives came out on donkeys and camels selling oranges to us. They do a fine trade, I can tell you.

[Page 116]

Dec 8

We were up at half past five this morning and had our biggest march. We go back at teatime and as the N.Z. mail goes at six in the morning, we have not got much time to write home. We put in some fine work today. The tommies told us we done fine and they were surprised at our drill and marching. They only carry forty-three pounds and we carry seventy-three. They wonder how we do it but I [Page 117] am sure that we will keep our end up with them any time. They admire our mounted men. They wish they had some horses like them. Theirs are a very poor lot, but it is hard to get good horses for the army in England. They are a fine lot of chaps—the East Hampshire regiment they belong to. They are always over at our lines. They like our company the best. I don’t know why.

[Page 118]

Dec 9

For breakfast we had bread, jam and coffee and very little jam at that. We left camp at half past eight and we marched about three miles out in the desert and started close order drill. Of course, every hour we had ten minutes spell, but we were kept going pretty solid until twelve o’clock when we marched back to camp for dinner. We arrived at camp at two o’clock and had stew, potatoes, tea, bread and jam and enjoyed dinner very much, as I was very hungry. We are getting used to the rough food and [Page 119] sand but so much walking about is making the sand hard. It does not blow about so much. Last night there were twenty of us sent down to Zeitoun as town guards and four of us had to bring up two of the [Otago] boys for being drunk and stealing a tray from the native pubs. But we did not trouble with them. Of course, we must not let them try to be funny. It is a crime to hit a native and a soldier is warned against hitting a native here.

[Page 120]

Dec 10

They had us out at half past five this morning for breakfast after being out on [---] duty last night. And, we had for breakfast one square inch of ham, bread, butter, porridge [and] coffee—a wonderfully good breakfast. At half past eight we were on parade, but we were told that we could stay in camp all day as us few were out last night. So, we watched the rest of the boys go out on the desert again for more drill. I have posted some letters to New Zealand and we are [Page 121] expecting a New Zealand mail someday. I wish it would come soon as I am homesick, I think. They tell us it is pay day tomorrow. We have about four pounds to draw tomorrow—back pay of course. We have a wet canteen for our company on the ground and they have the best English beer for three pence a pint. We are only allowed two pints a day. The most of the boys are downtown tonight, but I would not go as I do not like the city at all as I think the place is no good for a New Zealander. It is awful.

[Page 122]

Dec 11

For breakfast we had tea, porridge, ham, bread and [underscored] butter. They are giving us butter now. At half eight we went on parade and were marched out to the desert where we were instructed in trenching and defending the trenches from attack under Sergt. Major Edmonds. He is the best nan in this camp at instructing an army. Of course he had twenty-five years in the army and seen service three times, so we can rely on him, you see. We got back to camp at two o’clock for dinner and had stew, potatoes and boiled rice and tea. I enjoyed dinner very [Page 123] much, but when a fellow is hungry, he will eat anything and enjoy it. At half past three we were out on parade again for inspection drill as there is a big parade on tomorrow. I think General Maxwell is inspecting us. He is in charge of the British forces in Egypt. We finished at half past four and I had tea. We had bread, jam, cheese and biscuits and tea. So, you see, we had a pretty solid day of it today, [one] way or another. But we are starting to get fit again now. Our mail did not arrive today.

[Page 124]

Dec 12

We were up at half past five this morning and after having a wash, we had breakfast which consisted of porridge, coffee, bread and butter.
After breakfast we went on parade and were marched out to the desert for an inspection. All of the infantry companies from New Zealand were there and it was a fine sight to see so many troops in mass formation. Then we were marched back to camp. We have only been in a few minutes and we are now waiting for a good dinner. It is just a quarter to twelve here and half past nine tonight in N.Z. [Page 125] We had stew, potatoes and tea, bread and butter for dinner. Then we got word that we were to have rifle inspection at half past two and that kept us busy until three o’clock. Then we were told we could have a half holiday. Most of the boys went downtown straight away, but I stayed and caught a train for Cairo. It cost one penny. I bought some silk and postcards for to send to New Zealand, and I arrived back at camp at nine o’clock.

[Page 126]

Dec 13

We were up at half past five this morning, had a bath, and then we lined up for breakfast. We had porridge, bacon, coffee and bread and sand. At ten we were marched up for church parade. All the companies were there, and the parson gave a sermon on immorality and other things. It was a lovely parade. In enjoyed it very well. For dinner we had stew, potatoes, cabbage, tea and rice, and sand for sure, but the grit helps to digest the food. We had a holiday this afternoon. Some of the boys went out to the [Page 127] pyramids but I stayed in camp to write letters to New Zealand. I had a good sleep and woke up at teatime, but we only had bread, butter and tea and the usual amount of sand. Some of the tommies came over to our lines last night for a bit of a yarn. They are hard cases, too, but a good lot of chaps. They only get three bob a week, poor beggars, and very little tucker. We often give them cheese and biscuits. They think we are treated like [Swedes].

[Page 128]

Dec 14

Up at half past five this morning and had breakfast at half past seven. We had porridge, bread, butter, cheese and tea. Then we had cut tucker and take on the next parade at half past eight. Then we were marched out in the desert about five miles where we had a lot of drill and trench digging until half past twelve when we were marched back to camp for tent inspection and rifle inspection. So you see, we were kept busy today. We had tea at six o’clock and we [Page 129] had stew, potatoes and rice with raisins in, and tea. I enjoyed tea as I was hungry after the heavy day we had. We expected our pay today, but we never got it as the paymaster did not get back with it. But they said we were going to be paid tomorrow afternoon. I went over to the tommies lines tonight for a yarn and had a good night’s yarn. I have just got back and the lights out are just gone so I must out the candle.

[Page 130]

Dec 15

We were up at half past five this morning and I have paraded sick, as I was not feeling well. I had diarrhea pretty bad, so I was told by the doctor not to leave camp at all. For breakfast we had porridge, bacon, bread, butter [and] coffee. We got better coffee here than what we had on the boat, I am pleased to say. Our tent came down on top of us at four o’clock this morning. It was very foggy all night and the tent was wet and, the rope being tight, the pole made a hole through the top. We are getting fixed up with a new tent today sometime. [Page 131] I am keeping J. Mason company. He has been in camp four days ill with his throat. For dinner we had bread, butter, cheese and water. There were only the sick in camp for dinner as the rest of the boys went out in the desert for a march. The boys got back to camp at half past one and we all had to fall in and show our kits—everything we owned. There were some great sights among our belongings. Stuff we bought since coming here we hid, of course. For tea we had stew, potatoes, bread, butter and jam, but the stew was very sandy.

[Page 132]

Dec 16

We were up at half past five this morning and on parade at eight o’clock. For breakfast we had bacon, bread, butter, porridge and coffee. I enjoyed the porridge very much. I forgot to mention that I was engaged to the best girl in the world three years yesterday, the 15th of December. It came into my mind last night after I had filled yesterday’s report. We left camp at nine o’clock for the desert and put in a lot of work re-trenching outpost work, etc. under Sergt. Major Edmonds. For dinner out there [Page 133] we had bread, butt3er, cheese and cold water. We left there at half past twelve for camp and it was three before we got here as the boys could not walk fast. My feet were all blistered. For tea we had stew, potatoes, rice and tea. I enjoyed tea as I was pretty hungry. I went down to Heliopolis buy some postcards to send to N.Z. I got some fine cards, too. I heard there were six of our boys killed in a motor car accident tonight. I do not know if this is true or not.

[Page 134]

Dec 17

We were up at five this morning half an hour earlier than usual and I attended the doctor with my feet. He would not let me go out with the boys today. For breakfast we had porridge, coffee, bread and jam. Jack Mason is still in camp ill but he is a lot better than he was, but the doctor will not let him go out yet. The boys went away with picks and shovels. I think they are out for the day. I have got a lot of writing to do today and I am going to start straight away. [Page 135] For dinner Jack Mason and I had fish and cakes bought out of the canteen. The boys got back at half past three. They are all done up. They had a very long walk. The most of them in our tent has blisters on their heels now. For tea we had stew, potatoes, rice and tea, but the stew was sandy and the potatoes were hard. Altogether it was a very poor tea. We are sick of things here. Some of the boys went downtown, but I am stopping about the camp as my feet are not too good. I am staying in camp tomorrow.

[Page 136]

Dec 18

We were up at half past five this morning and paraded to the doctor at six. He told me to stay in camp today. For breakfast we had porridge and that was burnt, hard biscuits and butter. Bread is running short in our camp. The boys left camp at eight o’clock for another jaunt into the desert. They will have a colder walk today as it is very foggy and cold. I seen in this morning’s paper an account of the German’s bombarding the towns in England. They are rotters. No wonder us boys want to get a smack at them. They are only butchers of defenseless [Page 137] women and little children. For dinner we had bread, butter, jam, cheese and tea. We bought a tin of salmon as well and it was very nice. The boys got back about half past one. They did not go so far out today as they did yesterday, but the poor beggars have to go on guard duty tonight. I am out of that, I am pleased to say. We had a medical inspection for our teeth today. I passed all right as the teeth I have of my own are sound. For tea we had stew, porridge and rice and tea. The stew was nice. The potatoes were hard, the rice burnt, and the tea smokey.

[Page 137]

Dec 19

We were up at half past five this morning but there was no parade until eleven o’clock they said, so we had breakfast which consisted of porridge, coffee, bread and butter. After we had breakfast, we were called out in the parade grounds and were given a rifle drill with cartridges. At half past eleven we were marched five milers to the Abbassia rifle range where we are engaged in shooting. We had our dinner on the range. What we brought with us only, bread and butter [Page 138] and our water bottles full of water that was hot when we drank it. But the natives were on the range selling oranges, five for a little [---]. There was some sixty odd of New Zealanders sent home today. Some were diseased and other for refusing to be inoculated. There were two from our company ‘too good a James’. We finished shooting at half past five and it was just a quarter to seven when we got back to camp for tea. But we had a good tea—stew, potatoes, burnt rice and tea. I had a bath and then we went to bed as I was very tired.

[Page 140]

Dec 20

The reveille went at half past five this morning, but we did not get up until half past six. We had a day in. For breakfast we had bread, butter, coffee and porridge. There were a lot of our boys went to Cairo today to celebrate the hoisting of the Union Jack. We had to stay in camp, held in readiness just in case there was any trouble. We had church parade this morning but there were only about five hundred men there. It was a good sermon. I enjoyed it very much. We were marched back and had our photos [Page 141, detached but laid in] taken but I do not think they will be any good. The blessed camera did not seem any good. We have to go downtown this afternoon on picquet duty, but I do not think there will be any trouble at all. For dinner we had stew, potatoes, bread, butter and tea. We went downtown to Cairo of course and I am writing this in the train on our way back to camp at half past eleven at night. We sent several of the boys home early in the evening but we were kept walking all the time so we have done plenty for one day.

[Page 142]

Dec 21

We were up at six o’clock this morning and had breakfast. For breakfast we had porridge, bread, butter and coffee. We went on parade at half past eight and we done a lot of marching just for fun and at eleven we were marched to the rifle range again and we got there at half past twelve. We went a shorter way today. We had dinner there. I bought some tomatoes and they were very nice, I can tell you. We were shooting all the afternoon and it was just half past four [Page 143] o’clock when we were back at camp for tea and we had stew, potatoes, bread, butter and tea. I was very hungry. We are all very tired tonight but still there were some of the boys gone to Cairo, but I am busy writing home. I do not worry about going to town of a night. It is not good walking after a big day’s work. It is very hard walking on the sand, I can tell you.

[Page 144]

Dec 22

We were up at six o’clock this morning and had breakfast at half past seven. We had porridge, bread, butter, jam and coffee. We went out on marching parade as we are going to Cairo tomorrow for inspection, it is about six miles march from here so I expect, by the time we are finished, we will have marched fifteen miles. We are leaving here at eleven o’clock for the rifle range again today. I think we will finish our shooting practice today. I hope so, anyhow. I posted nine letters this morning to New Zealand and the [Page 145] post office is full of letters. All of our mail is not delivered yet so I may get a few more letters before I am finished. We left here at eleven as usual for the range and we were shooting all the afternoon and we got back at six o’clock for tea—stew, potatoes, bread and butter and tea. We are all supposed to march through Cairo tomorrow, but all my toes are blistered so I can’t march twenty miles I am sure. I would like to go as there will be some sights to see. I bet there is. A mail leaves for N.Z. on Thursday so I can write a few more letters.

[Page 146]

Dec 23

We were up at half past five this morning and had our breakfast which consisted of porridge, bread, butter and coffee. We had a tent inspection at half past eight for about ten minutes, then the boys fell in for their march through Cairo. I stayed at camp as my feet were very bad. I had to go to the doctor twice about them. I was afraid that the dye out of my socks had poisoned them, but it was not so. They were all right but the boys that were sick had to clean up the lines. For dinner [Page 147] we had cold bread, butter [and] water. The boys returned to camp at three o’clock. They were absolutely done up but they were cheered all the way. For tea we had stew, potatoes, bread, butter [and] tea but the stew was scorched a bit. We were told that we would get stew every morning after this and I can tell you we were all pleased at the news, as bread and butter is not much to march on, is it? We were not allowed out tonight, so I wrote a few letters and done a little reading to pass away the time.

[Page 148]

Dec 24

We were up at half past five again and out on parade for one hour. Then we had for breakfast porridge, stew, bread, butter, coffee; and the stew got a terrible hiding, I can tell you. We were marched up to the rifle range again and done a lot more shooting. Then we returned to camp and our Colonel told us he would give us a full holiday tomorrow. Of course, for dinner we had what we call a full marching dinner: bread, butter and water. For tea we had stew, potatoes, bread, [Page 149] butter [and] tea. We went into Cairo at night and I and J. Mason went through the largest drapery shop in Egypt. There is no shop in N.Z. compared to this one. There are hundreds of employees there and they show us everything in the place. I did not stop long in the city as my feet were too good for walking, so I returned to camp and had a good rest before turning in to be where I am writing this. Tomorrow is Xmas day and I wish I was in New Zealand [at] home.

[Page 150]

Dec 25

Three years today I spent [Ch Ch] At Mr. Eastwood’s place. We were up at half past five this morning and for breakfast we had stew, porridge, bread, butter and coffee. We have a holiday today and I am going out to the pyramids in half an hour time. The boys in our tent went out to the pyramids and the zoo today and I can tell you we had a lovely time and seen some wonderful sights. The tombs and sphinx are worth seeing. We met the Australian boys our there and some of them showed us [Page 151] round. We left there and went to the zoo where we spent two hours. I was surprised at the size of the place. There is a great collection of birds and animals there but we did not see half of what there is in the place. The New Zealand contingent from England arrived here last night and I hear that Charlie Elsome is among them. He is coming over today so I will see him. They are camped away from us about two miles. I was on guard all night tonight.

[Page 152]

Dec 26

I was up all night on guard and the guard tents are full of sore heads this morning as we got a lot of drunks last night. But, they will get off light as this is the end of the year you know. We got the cable from the Mayoress of Timaru wishing us the season’s greetings. We were pleased to see we were not forgotten. The English boat brought the New Zealand boys over tonight. I expect Charlie Elsome will be among them. He will be surprised to see me. [Page 153] I was told off for good as my feet are very crook and I like the job of helping the cooks. We get better food. The boys went shooting for our company, I am pleased to say, as it was a long walk every day and they were always in a hurry. We have had the usual food today. I am getting sick of writing it down in this book. There is hardly any of the boys in camp today.

[Page 154]

Dec 27

I was up at five o’clock this morning as I had to get to the cook shop early. For breakfast we gave the boys stew and coffee and porridge. They had church parade and I peeled spuds and onions for dinner. For dinner we had boiled beef, potatoes, cabbage and plum pudding. Charlie Elsome came over to see me. He was looking fine and he wished to be remembered to my people. I did not have much time to yap as it was right on twelve o’clock. [Page 155] We had our weekly medical inspection this afternoon and after we had washed up I had a shave and done a bit of writing. I had a bit of a sleep for about an hour but I did not sleep long as I had to help get tea ready for the boys. There is a [---] of the Egyptian government wanting us fellows for a turn of three years for his army. But I will not take it, only there is only one thing that will make me serve here, but that is m business.

[Page 156]

Dec 28

I was up at five o’clock this morning and we cooked porridge, stew, and gave the lads coffee. They left here at nine o’clock for the usu al marching out in the desert. We got tea ready for them at five o’clock. We boiled joints cabbage, potatoes and gave them tea. There is nothing to write about now as I am in camp all the time and I only see what is going on about the cook house and I can tell you there is plenty of fun. We always have steak or chops for our dinner and we [Page 157] make a few scones some days. But it is very awkward cooking out in the open, especially if there is a wind blowing as the food gets full of sand and most of the wood is quite wet. I found time to read about five letters that I received from New Zealand. There were fifty-five bags of mail from New Zealand, so you can guess that the rush for letters is pretty big. There is one of the cooks going to get the sack from our company for being always drunk and I was told I would get his job.

[Page 158]

Dec 29

For breakfast we had porridge, stew, coffee. For dinner, tea. We went out camping today and we are to be out all night. But I will not be very cold, I think. There is nothing to write about so I will just put ditto on our food bill as we always have porridge, stew and coffee for breakfast, and we cook a hot dinner at five o’clock. So, you see there is no use of one writing that.

[Page 159 blank]

[Page 160]

Dec 30

General Goodley visited the camp today but there was no parade for him. We put in a fine time out at the desert last night. We run out of water and had to send the water cart away for water and, coming home, I fell off the lumber wagon. It was like a gun carriage and very awkward to ride on and the driver was going some and we went over a big stone. The result was I fell off [Page 161] the wagon. But, as it was a fall on sand, I was not hurt at all.

[Page 162]

Dec 31

Today was spent in camp. Nothing of any importance and the same meals.

[Page 163]

Mr. R. Johnson [Jun.]

130 Rockdale Rd.

Todmorden

Yorkshire

England

[Page 164]

Jan 1/1/15 New Year’s Day

I received two PC [postcards] from my lady and one from home wishing [me] the season’s greetings. There was a holiday in camp for the boys but we had to stop and get the food cooked for the sick and wounded as we call them.

[Page 165]

Jan 3/1/15

I had a holiday today and I went to the zoo. I enjoyed it fine as it was a lovely day.

[Page 166]

Jan 4/1/15

The same old work again today but the boys are getting more marching to do.

[Page 167]

Jan 5/1/15

I was put on as cook so I will be getting seven and six a day after this I expect until we leave camp.

[Page 168]

Jan 6

Nothing.

[Page 169]

Feb 4/2/15

Under heavy shell fire from the Turks at Ismailia. Shrapnel.

Feb 5th, 6, 7, 8

Returned to Zeitoun.

[Page 170]

May 8

We are leaving the trenches where we camped last night. [---] has just been wounded. We advanced about two and a half miles and reached the head of the [---] about half past nine and we are now waiting for the word to advance. We advanced about ten o’clock and I jumped into one trench and hurt my knee a bit but farrier on and reached the firing line. I went out to carry in a wounded [Munster] and fell backwards and have hurt myself I think.

[Page 171]

H. Scott

25 Bridge St.

Colne

Lancashire

England

Attack on the Dardan 25 April [G---]

Attack at [S--- B---]

5 May 1915

Hospital 18 May 1915

One Sargol tablet after every meal three times a day [‘Busts’].

Higginson’s syringe

[Page 172]

Arrived at [Intarfa] Hospital on May 18/5/15 and left there on Aug 12/8/15 for St. David’s Hospital to wait for a boat for New Zealand. We are living in tents here and I am afraid we will not like this place here at all. But as there are a lot of wounded coming to the other hospitals. We will have to put up with being under canvas. I have met W. Hall Jones and have some photos for his father.

[Page 173]

Mrs. J. Burford

40 Springfield Rd.

Greenhill

Harrow on the Hill

Middlesex

England

[Page 174 – possibly a child’s writing]

M. J. Burford

Burf

[Page 175-184 blank]

[Page 185]

oz

½ ground cupids

½ oz balsam of campania

½ oz sweet nitre

½ oz potash

½ oz best Arabic gum

Dash of peppermint in 8oz bottle

[Page 186]

[G---t] mixture

6’ Pepsi

6’ Potash Mix first

6’ Nitre

1/- santal oil

Shake three hours.

Two teaspoons to one tablespoon water.

24 grains of sulph of zinc

6 oz of boiling water

Let get cold.

[End of entries]