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SINKING OF THE BALLARAT

FULL STORY OF THE DISASTER

HOW THE TROOPS BEHAVED.

A "STORY OF WHICH AUSTRALIANS MAY WELL BE PROUD."

(United Service Message.)

London, Saturday.

The story of the sinking of the trans port Ballarat is one of which Australians may well be proud. Our lads paraded like the British soldiers on the Birkenhead, happily without the loss of life which attended the sinking of the historic transport. All were saved from the Ballarat.

The men had arranged extensive celebrations for Anzac Day, commencing with a memorial service at 2.30 p.m. They were beginning to muster, fully dressed, at 2.5 o'clock, when a torpedo was seen on the port side. The "look out" in the stern telephoned to the bridge. The great vessel was swung around quickly. Another two seconds and the torpedo would have missed, but a dull thud, followed by a rending sound told that it had struck.

Tho vessel quickly settled down by the stern. It was soon discovered that one of the propellers had been torn off, and a gaping hole had been left. No one saw the submarine. A few of the men say that they saw a periscope 500 yards away, but it was not seen from the bridge.

The Ballarat's troops was practically all Victorian reinforcements for the 2nd and 4th Brigades. Colonel McVea, of the Victorian Scottish, says the troops had done boat station drill until they reduced the time

required to launch the boats to four minutes.

The voyage had been uneventful and slow, owing to the reduction of thc steamer's speed in consequence of the use of bad coal. Whilst steaming with all lights out at night, the Ballarat had a great beacon flame nine feet above the funnel owing to the quality of the coal. The men who were on board ascribe the loss of the vessel to the fact that she was unable to call for good coal.

While embarking in the boats, the men remained most cheerful. One of the officers told the company, "You may smoke on this parade, boys." Many had their cigarettes. The men carried away the battalion pets, including squirrels, dogs, puppies, and parrots. When all were afloat in the boats, "Australia will be there" was sung in unison by many boatloads.

After a few minutes, the engineer reported that he was able to go ahead with the remaining damaged propeller. The boats were re-called and the men went on board again. There was a call for volunteers to go into the stoke hold. Hundreds volunteered, including the whole of the Railway Unit. Forty men were selected, but were not sent below because the water gained rapid ly. The vessel seemed to be steadily settling down, and the engine-room was flooded.

The men were reformed at their stations and were ordered to go on board two of the trawlers which had come rapidly from all directions. The transhipment was completed of all the troops and some of the crew by 4.10 pm. Fully 80 per cent, of the men were without their kit. Many were in dungarees, others were coatless and hatless, some had shoes on, a few men from hospitals were in pyjamas.

During the whole time the only nurses aboard. Sisters Tatlow (of Victoria), and Lord of Tasmania), who had been great favorites, had shown conspicuous courage in visiting the companies and tying on lifebelts, a work in which Chaplains Goller (Presbyterian), Buckley (Anglican), and Ryan (Roman Catholic), were also employed.

A hundred men photographed the sinking ship and the final parade. The officers did not allow the men to break their ranks to get their valuables.

Great cheers were given when the patrol moved away. The men transhipped down rope ladders and ropes. The only injury was to a private, who sustained a broken shoulder from some flying metal when the torpedo struck the vessel.

The men were landed late at night and early in the morning. They were hospitably treated, and were sent to Salisbury Plain on Thursday.

When the ship sank after midnight, the only living things aboard were cats and puppies, which afterwards swam round a tug.

A correspondent at Plymouth, telling of the disaster, states the shock of the torpedo was felt all over the ship, which was badly holed. The wireless operator sent out messages, and a number of vessels quickly responded. The Ballarat was taken in tow, but sank before she could be beached. The captain and first officer remained on board , to the last. The ships papers and military papers were saved. Some of the soldiers, tired of awaiting their turns to enter the boats, resumed interrupted games of cards, and played ragtime music on the piano. A lieutenant re-lates that a group was playing "two up" with pennies. At the first, warn-ing some rushed to the side. The thrower, however, calmly examined the coins and exclaimed, "Here, never mind the ship. I've got two heads." In his farewell to the troops, the col-onel said, 'Boys, you have behaved like

true Australians, and I'm proud of you.' There were numerous individual instances of bravery. An Australian, on his own initiative, climbed over the bows, which were 40ft. in the air and

slid down a rope fastened to the rafts. Another descended a rope and rescued a mascot squirrel from the water. Batches of men arrived at Salisbury Plain throughout the night. General Sir Newton Moore provided hot meals and the trainees subscribed money for other comforts