

Lieutenant Earl Haddon Simpson Chapman

Rod Martin



Twenty year-old Haddon Chapman (as he preferred to be called) obviously had the military in his blood. He enlisted as a second lieutenant in Pompey Elliott's 58 militia Battalion in 1912 and then obtained a commission in the newly formed 7 Australian Infantry Battalion, also commanded by Pompey, shortly after war broke out in August 1914. Hailing from 30 Lincoln Road in Essendon, Haddon was a clerk by trade during the day, but probably a soldier at nights and weekends. When he embarked with his comrades at Port Melbourne on 19 October 1914 he was, like most others in this the earliest cohort of the AIF, in all probability very excited to be sailing off to fight for a noble and just cause.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

Troops on board HMAT *Hororata*, 19 October 1914

PB0448

(AWM PB0448)

The ship sailed across the Great Australian Bight to Albany on the southern coast of Western Australia, where it joined other vessels from all parts of the continent as well as New Zealand and became part of the first convoy of Australian troops sent off to war.



Albany today, showing the mooring spots of the convoy ships
(Rod Martin)

Ostensibly on the way to Europe via Egypt, the troops were informed as they drew close to the Red Sea that they were to stay in Egypt to be part of a new offensive in the eastern Mediterranean. The British government, spurred on by First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, had decided to attack German ally Turkey, capture Constantinople and the Dardanelles, and open the way to the Black Sea, whence they could supply their ally, Russia.

On 6 December 7 Battalion, comprising thirty-two officers and 991 other ranks (including one stowaway!), arrived in Cairo and moved to the nearby camp at Mena, close to the Pyramids.



7 Battalion men disembarking at
Alexandria, December 1914
(AWM H15574)

In February 1915, the battalion was ordered to move to Ismailia on the Suez Canal. There was a fear that the Turks based in Palestine would attempt to capture the canal, so the troops of the AIF were sent to occupy defensive trenches there.

How long the battalion stayed at Ismailia we do not know, as no war diary for March 1915 survived. However, we do know that it was back at Mena by the start of April, and Haddon had been promoted to first lieutenant in the field. 1130 members moved to Alexandria on 5 April and embarked for the Greek island of Lemnos. There they trained until 24 April (there are no diary entries between 5 and 24 April) when they embarked and sailed for the Gallipoli Peninsula.

7 Battalion and 2 Brigade, of which it was part, were scheduled to be towed ashore to the left of 3 Brigade, which was the first unit to go in on 25 April. The landing spot was to be a point between a promontory called Gaba Tepe and the so-called 'Fisherman's Hut', about a mile to the north. 2 Brigade was to land to the left of 3 Brigade. At least, that was the plan. However, things quickly began to go awry. The towed boats of 3 Brigade were caught in a current and carried north. When 7 Battalion's ship, the *Galeka*, reached its designated spot, the expected tow boats had not arrived. As the ship came under fire from a cannon on Gaba Tepe, the captain ordered Pompey to put his men in the ship's lifeboats without further ado and get the men to row them ashore - a distance of almost 1 200 metres. D Company, Haddon's unit, was in the first four boats sent off.



7 Battalion landing spot, Anzac Cove

(AWM P00229.001)

Although they had been trained to row while at Lemnos, the men did not expect to have to row so far - and under a hail of bullets and shrapnel shells. A number of them were wounded or killed before they had even reached the shore. Moreover, theirs and 3 Brigade's boats drifted together into what is now known as Anzac Cove. As a result, when the troops did get out of their boats, they were mixed up, different units supposedly having different targets. Graeme Davison tells us that D Company, mostly made up of Essendon men, was supposed to land on a sandy beach near the Fisherman's Hut. Instead, it faced the steep ridges and ravines of the spot called Ari Burnu, and the withering fire of the Turkish defenders. All mixed together, the men of 2 and 3 Brigades headed for the nearby slopes and then scrambled upwards, aiming for the first ridge.

And they did amazingly well on that first day, capturing spots on three successive and increasingly higher ridges before the sun set. However, the fourth ridge, the highest of all, remained in Turkish hands - and was never captured during the eight-month campaign.

The battalion's war diary for 25 April notes that, after an attempted head count, the approximate number of casualties was 400 killed, wounded or missing. This was the greatest number of casualties suffered by any of the battalions. And D Company suffered most of all. Pompey wrote a few days later that only about half of the Essendon boys were left and only a little over a hundred of the recruits he had initially gathered together at the Broadmeadows training camp. The 'poor old 7th Battalion', as he described it, was decimated.

Among the wounded on that first day were Pompey and Haddon. Pompey was hit in the ankle at about 9.30 am and had to go to the temporary dressing station after giving orders regarding the supply of ammunition and contacting the brigade commander to inform him of the injury. What happened to Haddon we do not know. He may not have even made it out of the boat unscathed. All we know is that he was wounded and evacuated offshore to the hospital ship *Seeam Choon*.

His wound was obviously very serious, as he died on the ship some time between 27 and 30 April.



First 7 Battalion dressing station, Gallipoli 25 April 1915
(AWM H15233)

Haddon was buried at sea. Because he had no known grave, his details were recorded on the Lone Pine Memorial after the war. Pompey wrote of him that, 'Lieutenant Chapman was all that an officer could be, and his loss will be greatly felt by us.'



Lone Pine Memorial 1936

(AWM P02768.007)

Haddon's mother was granted a pension of thirteen pounds per annum.

Sources

Australian War Memorial

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