

# COTTERILL LETTERS



**Photo 1. Headstone of grave of Eric Cotterill at Quinn's Post Cemetery, Gallipoli  
Row D Grave 6**

*Source: [discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au](http://discoveringanzacs.naa.gov.au)*

**Transcribed by David Garred Jones**

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This compilation arose out of a wider study into the movements, actions and stories of the “Originals” of the 13<sup>th</sup> Australian Infantry Battalion in World War 1. Part of that work involved reviewing the hundreds of diaries and thousands of letters that had been donated to the various State libraries and the Australian War Memorial. Much of this first-hand material is now available on-line, and in some cases has been transcribed by the skilled and dedicated staff of those institutions. Amongst that wealth of material are the letters of Second Lieutenant Eric Roland Cotterill of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion. They encapsulate the thoughts and feelings of a man who joined early in 1914 as a private, was rapidly promoted to sergeant, took part in the landing at Gallipoli on 25<sup>th</sup> April 1915, and was killed in action at Quinn’s Post 2 weeks later.

The Australian War Memorial (“AWM”) made photostat copies of the letters in 1928. The photostats have been digitised and posted on line under the accession code RCDIG0000222. I am deeply grateful to the AWM for making this valuable historical archive so readily accessible. Unfortunately the photostats are quite difficult to read, which is probably why they have not been transcribed before. Consequently the transcription includes many “?” signifying an unreadable word. The AWM notes that “The location of the originals is unknown”.

To help illustrate the narrative, I have included some relevant images from the AWM and other sources, all of which are acknowledged in the captions to the photos. I have also added, in italics, the locations from where each letter was written (if not already included in the original letter). These have been sourced by reviewing the relevant war diaries of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, also available online at the AWM website.

Eric was fairly spartan in his use of punctuation, so I have added some punctuation where necessary to help in understanding his narrative. Occasionally some mis-spellings occur, and these have also been corrected

A few maps, drawn by me, have been added to clarify the locations and details of the actions described in Eric’s letters. The maps archived by the Imperial War Museums in England have been digitised by me, and registered to the World Geodetic System (“WGS84”) used by Global Positioning Satellite (“GPS”) mapping and MapInfo software. Although reasonably accurate, my maps should not be relied upon for navigation as they are designed for illustration only.

Common abbreviations used in the narrative and captions include:

AAMC	Australian Army Medical Corps
ABDB	Australian Divisional Base Depot
AGH	Australian General Hospital
AIF	Australian Infantry Force
AWM	Australian War Memorial
CO	Commanding Officer
GOC	General Officer Commanding (very senior ranks, eg Army General)
HMAT	His Majesty’s Australian Transport
HMT	His Majesty’s Transport
HS	Hospital Ship

NAA	National Archives of Australia
NLA	National Library of Australia
NLNZ	National Library of New Zealand
OC	Officer Commanding (used for senior ranks, eg Lieut-Colonel)
SLNSW	State Library of New South Wales
SLQ	State Library of Queensland
SLSA	State Library of South Australia
SLV	State Library of Victoria

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## INTRODUCTION

Eric Roland Cotterill, Service Number 365, was born at Paddington, New South Wales on 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan 1892 to parents George Townsend Cotterill and Dorothea (“Dora”) Gifford Cotterill (born Browne). Eric was the fourth of 5 sons and 4 daughters in the family. George Cotterill was an Inspector of Schools and consequently the family moved frequently, the children being born variously in Orange, Morpeth, Patricks Plains, and Merewether before the last 4 were born in Paddington, Sydney. Eric grew up in the Sydney suburbs attending Paddington and Stanmore Superior Schools and afterwards completed a three-year course of secondary education at Fort Street High School. He served three years as a naval cadet, and two years in the Naval Reserves.

When war broke out in Aug 1914, Eric was living in Young with his parents, working as a warehouseman. A few weeks later Eric travelled to Sydney to enlist on 21<sup>st</sup> Sep 1914, aged 22, and took the oath at Rosehill Camp 4 days later. He was 179 cm (5’10½”) tall, weighed 61 kg (9 stone 9 lbs) with an expanded chest measurement of 91 cm (36”), with a sallow complexion, brown eyes and dark brown hair. Eric gave his religious affiliation as Methodist, as did his younger brother Robert on enlistment in 1917, in contrast to their oldest brother William who signed up in Jan 1915 as Church of England.

Eric was assigned to “D” Company of the 13<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion as a private, training at Rosehill, then Liverpool, before the battalion moved to Broadmeadows north of Melbourne for consolidation as part of Colonel John Monash’s 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade. There Eric was promoted to sergeant. The brigade departed Melbourne with the second AIF convoy on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1914, the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade HQ and the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> Battalions being assigned to HMAT ULYSSES.



Disembarking in Alexandria on 1<sup>st</sup> Feb 1915, the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade underwent further training in the desert at Aerodrome Camp, Heliopolis, northeast of Cairo. On arrival, in the reorganisation of the AIF battalions, “B” and “D” companies merged to form the new “B” Company with Eric as Platoon Sergeant for No.8 Platoon. On 12<sup>th</sup> Apr 1915 the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion boarded a rusty old tramp steamer, the SS ASCOT, and travelled to Lemnos Island, being stuck on board in the harbour until departing for Gallipoli on 24<sup>th</sup> April. Landing late in the evening of 25<sup>th</sup> April, the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion fought their way up Monash Valley to take up a position on Pope’s Hill.

**Photo 2. Sergeant Eric Cotterill in Egypt, Feb 1915**

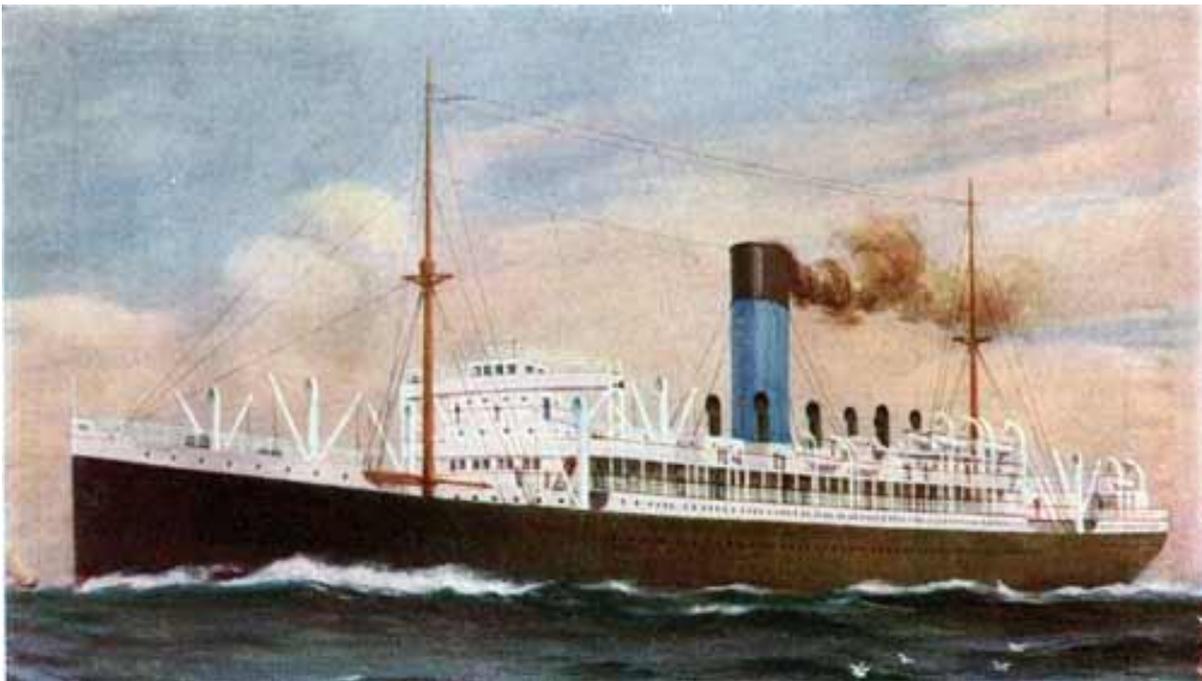
*Source: Cotterill family papers*

Eric distinguished himself in battle and in leadership, this being recognised by a field commission as second lieutenant on 8<sup>th</sup> May 1915. The following night, “D” Company was sent to support the defenders of Quinn’s Post in an attack on the Chessboard. Eric was killed in action, his body being recovered by his platoon and buried at Quinn’s Post Cemetery.

## AT SEA

The eastern Australian elements of the second convoy sailed from Melbourne on 22<sup>nd</sup> Dec 1914, arriving in the port of Albany, Western Australia, on 28<sup>th</sup> Dec. Fourteen Australian troop transports were joined by three New Zealand transports carrying the second reinforcements for the NZ Expeditionary Force. The Navy was confident that the action by HMAS SYDNEY, which resulted in the destruction of the German raider EMDEN, had cleared the Indian Ocean of any threat from the German Navy. The only protection provided to the second convoy was the submarine AE2, which was taken in tow by His Majesty's Australian Troopship ("HMAT") BERRIMA. The former passenger liner BERRIMA had also been equipped with guns as an "auxiliary cruiser". The convoy departed Albany on 31<sup>st</sup> Dec.

The lead ship of the second convoy was HMAT ULYSSES, a passenger/cargo (refrigerated) steamship owned by the China Mutual Steam Navigation Company (a subsidiary of Alfred Holt and Company's "Blue Funnel Line"). It was the fourth Blue Funnel Line ship to carry the name ULYSSES. Like most of the troopships, it had been leased by the Commonwealth Government for 3 years from 15 August 1914. The ship weighed 14,499 tons (14,732 tonnes), a length of 171.7 m and a beam of 20.8 m. The twin screw, triple expansion engine drove her at a cruising speed of 13.5 knots.



**Photo 3. The SS ULYSSES in early 1914**

*Source: Blue Funnel Line postcard*

ULYSSES was the largest of the vessels chartered for the AIF. She was also one of the newest, having been launched in 1913 after construction at the Workman Clark shipyard in Belfast, designed specifically for the Australia-China trade. The lower decks had been cleared to make large open spaces for accommodating up to 2,000 troops (in hammocks). On this occasion she sailed from Melbourne with 2,113 soldiers, including Colonel Monash and his 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade headquarters staff, plus the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion (NSW) and the 14<sup>th</sup> Battalion (VIC).

Monday 11 January 1915

At Sea

My dear Mother,

Should this letter be not readable, blame the invention of the bagpipes for I am writing on my poop deck and one of the mess orderlies is playing for all he's worth.

It often occurs to me how I ? to remark that having two crosses on my head was bound to ?. I little thought it would come here so soon, but here we are across the line and in the Northern Hemisphere. We crossed early this morning, and by so doing defeated all the promised attacks. We were all disappointed but room is scarce and some of us may have been found to be enough trouble.

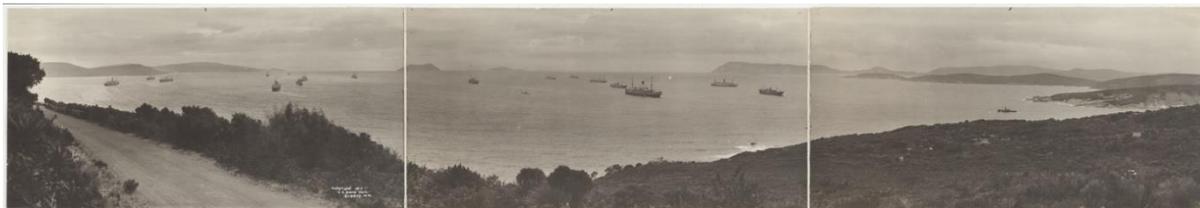
I think I informed you fully of the rumoured date of departure. Well it all came off to plan as you will know if Dr Davis sent the news. Ours is a fine ship, one of the Blue Funnel single class line and she is flagship. The 14<sup>th</sup> man is CO Troops, the master has little left to command, and overall is Commander Brewis. He is the one with the title of Chief Transport Officer.

We steam in divisions, and on the leading ship of each line is a naval officer. The civil authorities do all the transporting.

We were well forward by the schedule on setting out and made a fine run to Albany. We were by ourselves and rolled off 300 miles a day, but with the rest of the fleet we have only done 248 some days. We had a good send off but if I should write it up properly it would take more time than allowable. Just to mention it, I wrote several cards for postage at Albany. Did any of them arrive? As hundreds were written and each had to be censored if necessary, so large numbers were held over for postage at the next port, Colombo presumably.

The whole of the convoy had collected in a day or two, and under the escort of AE2 we steamed on our way for a non-stop run for close on 4000 miles. This stretch is usually about 10 or 11 days but will take us just on a fortnight.

Before touching on it I will revert to our run along the coast. The motion of the ship was good, a gentle swell was all we experienced and first weather that we experienced was in the Bight, but fate was good and we passed that dread area with but little inconvenience. The roll became considerably longer and slower but worried only a few. Under these conditions we tidied up and it was made as home like as possible.



**Photo 4. Second Convoy in King George Sound 31<sup>st</sup> Dec 1914**

*Source: State Library of NSW a7213002*

We awoke on the Sunday in Albany. There are several islands at the entrance and we anchored off them, so that we did not see the town but only the long wharf. The country around was very hilly, bushy and rocky, but Sydney was like that once.

We left Albany on the Wednesday (30<sup>th</sup>) and lost sight of land the next day, the last of the year. While at anchor it blew a gale and the sailors predicted a rough time off the Leeuwin, but the fates are kind for this convoy, and the sea was just right when off that point. Once we rounded it our course was set straight for Colombo and we are now about 500 miles from it and expect to reach there on 13<sup>th</sup> about noon. We will all be very pleased, as it is very monotonous to land-lubbers to be out of sight of land for so long.

We have not had a really nasty sea to contend with so far, wherein we are lucky. Conditions would be far from pleasant on a crowded troopship were the sea to be particularly unfavourable. Naturally, steering as we are it gradually became hotter, and the first few days in the tropics were sweltering. The wind dropped and the sea barely moved. Then the glass dropped, and we ? ? busy with awnings. Soon they were required, for we struck a tropical downpour. I had often read of them, but this was my first. All the other ships were blotted out in an instant and remained so for some time. Then at last the rain ceased, the sea looked very strange but the air was cooler.

Owing to the stuffiness 'tween decks numbers sleep out and one has to be very careful picking a path through huddled forms. I went with the mob but have now given it over. In these blessed regions it has rained each night about 2 am and getting drenched each night soon lost its novelty.

The first night I hopped in early and slung a hammock slap up against an 18" port hole. I did not sit at mess for there and had to ward off many attacks but did so successfully. Now that we are meeting these nightly showers, I have returned to the mess deck but they are very stuffy.

We are in the forward end of the ship and with the aid of a wind sock do not fare so badly, especially in a good head wind as is usual in these regions, but the 14<sup>th</sup> in the aft are finding it warm.

Each day at "rounds" – the tour of inspection by the master, OC troops, doctors and such-like ? one freely passed at the rush of air down the stair under my deck. We are right in it. The OC told me we are the cleanest deck in the ship and could not be bettered. From the kick-off I have never bullied the orderlies and am now reaping the benefit. They are good fellows and at one word will do anything that has been overlooked. What had set me thinking was a lecture given us re the necessity for scrupulous cleanliness, especially in the hot regions. Having no desire to have sickness on the deck, I'm grateful the ? and ? at to the orderlies and hence the comradeship. By stating when being complimented ? ? of them that the credit was due of these men, they are all as pleased as much as possible so now I come down here and write whilst they work without a word from me.

The bugler has blown that the morning rounds party is approaching so goodbye for the present. Give my love to all, your ever-loving son,  
Eric.

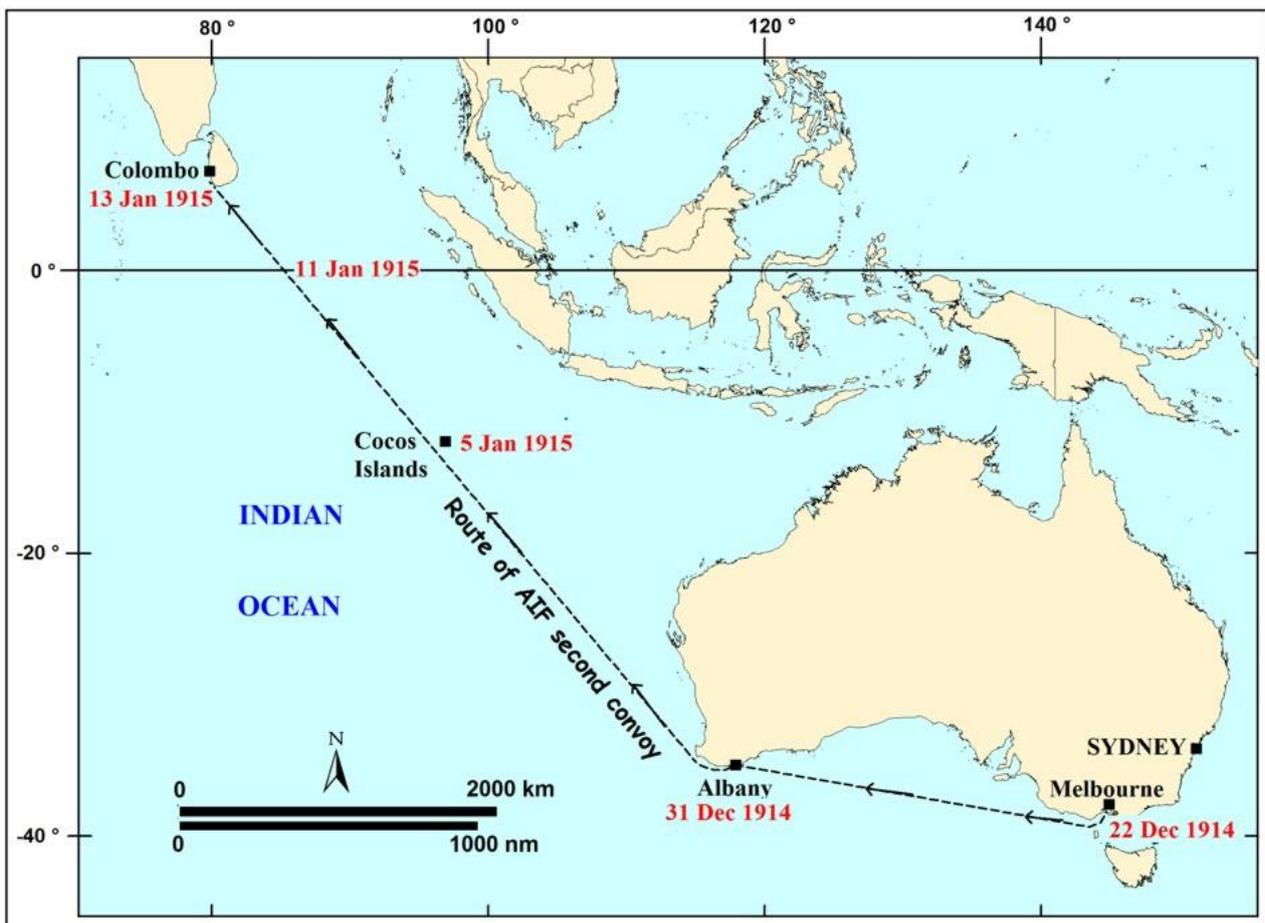
Friday 22 January 1915

At Sea

My dear Mother,

My day of birth once more. We are now in that portion of the Arabian Sea leading up to Aden and are due at the latter port about 11 am tomorrow. Having my attestation papers in his possession, Sergeant Davis had put the others wise to the fact of my birthday and each came this morning with a hearty handshake greeting. It appeared in a new light to me and I felt when wished many returns the great sincerity and significance in their wishes

Not having many chances to give a supper or a drink I gave them a most prized object on this ship – a good cigarette each also a cake of English butterscotch. These I had purchased at Colombo when the fact of it being near the 22<sup>nd</sup> had not occurred to me.



**Map 1. Route of the second convoy across the Indian Ocean**

*Map compiled by D G Jones*

There were two stoppages this morning. The first was for transferring two cases of appendicitis from another transport to us. This was done in an open boat. The sea was gently rolling so that little inconvenience was caused. They were hoisted up the side in stretchers, taken straight to our fine hospital and carved up. We now have with us, besides

the 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> MOs, a lieutenant-colonel in charge of the 4<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance, he was the king pin. He is only a little fellow, Beeston by name, but is a regular soul and very popular.

The other stopping was unfortunately sudden. They are becoming very frequent of late and not likely to diminish now we are about to enter the Red Sea. It was to commit a poor fellow to the deep. He was on the THEMISTOCLES, the boat that is losing the most. She has a degenerate lot on board and the fellows picked out as not up to standard as reinforcements for the first force. She must be overcrowded as several of her complement have died. When stopped this morning the MOs from other ships went aboard her, maybe it is an experience and the staff is insufficient.

When a death occurs, all the engines throughout the convoy are stopped, the troops fall in, and we stand to attention until the Last Post is played. It is certainly most impressive and the sound of the bugle ringing out across the deep makes many a wild spirit a little quieter.

Today is a little warm but it must be so near the dreaded Red Sea. It seems uncanny that we should come these thousands of miles and not see an angry wave. Probably it would never occur again over the course we have come. Although a month out from Melbourne last Tuesday we are still in ignorance of our destination. Egypt is freely given but the source is not authentic. All rumours here are said to come from either the brigadier's orderly (batman) or the Principal Transport Officer's cabin boy. Some are very funny. Our doctor has freely told us Egypt is our destination and given us lectures on the diseases commonly met with there, for which we were very thankful. All have been medically fortified against three of the worst, and hope to dodge the minor ones.

Each day we have a one-hour lecture from either the doc, the adjutant or a company commander, and they are very interesting. It is insisted that the new platoon organisation of the Imperial Army is to be instituted when we land. If so, two present companies are formed as one, with one OC to be mounted and promoted to major, the other OC being known as second-in-command. The four subalterns are retained as commanders of platoons. Now we come to the NCOs. One colour has a job as quartermaster sergeant, and the other a sergeant-major. As second-in-command of each platoon is to be platoon sergeant, and as eight sergeants will be available and only four are required, there will be soon be some hard business. Each platoon is in turn divided into four sections, so the remaining sergeants will have to be section commanders. The platoon sergeants will have a very responsible position, in command of 60 men should the subaltern be bowled over.

They held over vaccination till just before Colombo. I passed well. I did have a beauty, but discharged very very freely and frequently. When the arm began to swell it did that too until the elbow was enormous. I felt quite nervous from the congratulations showered on me. The swelling ran right down my wrist and both my ankles had a kick at it each and then all was right. On this second parade the colonel and major stopped to advise and commiserate and that must have ached as billyo as all horrible ? ? ?

After a fortnight's steam we reached Colombo on the 13<sup>th</sup> and spent two days here. We could see South Galle Face light the night before we sighted land, which we did at daybreak. There was a haze around but we had an interesting run into port. It is not of much size, only a bay about three times the size of the wharf and protected by a mole. How they squeezed in. If boats packed in Sydney as we were there the Harbour Trust would go silly. The place looked full when we arrived, but in we went one after the other until there was no room to

move. The harbour is full of buoys in lines and the boats moor to these, stem to stern with a distance between each of about 30 yards usually occupied by lighters. There must have been about 60 steamers in port, so you could imagine the bustle. The niggers were everywhere, gesticulating wildly. The same all vastly amused and keenly interested, the state arrived at as largesse flows more freely when in that happy mood.

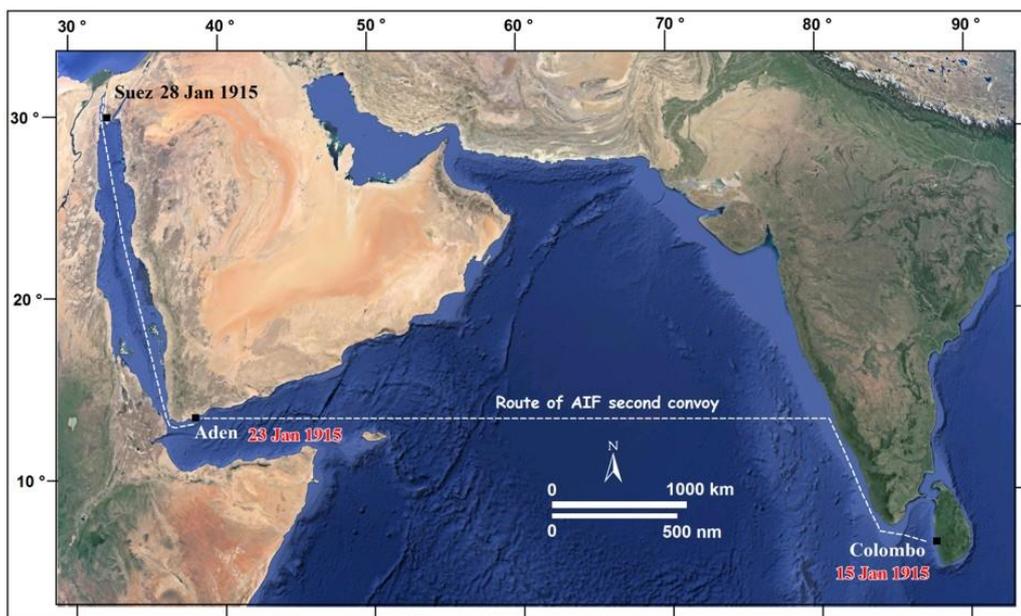


**Photo 5. Singalese boys diving for coins**

*Source: State Library NSW c028720089 H C Marshall photo album*

I was lucky enough to be sent ashore, and so set foot in Ceylon. So little time had I to prepare that I was unable to address letters that I had written and was forced to leave them although posting plenty for others. Duty prevented me from getting out of the town into the sights and hills but not from having the inevitable rickshaw ride at the rate of 6 pence per hour. It was all very picturesque and bizarre but would be awfully hot in the summer.

Am still able to write “all well and going strong”. Love to all the clan, from Junior.

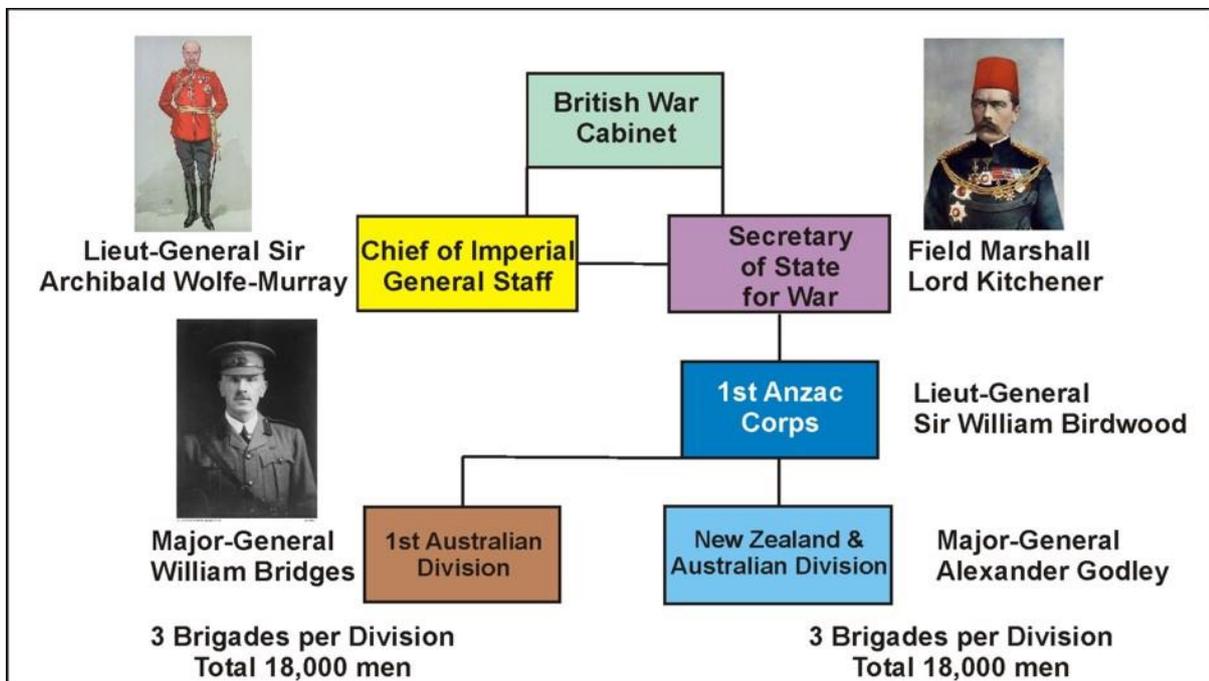


**Map 2. Route of the AIF second convoy from Colombo to Suez**

*Map compiled by D G Jones on to Google Earth image*

## HELIOPOLIS

The AIF had been destined for Salisbury Plain, a cold and bleak windswept quagmire in the south of England. The first AIF convoy was scheduled to arrive in mid-December, the middle of the bitter English winter. Colonel Harry Chauvel, senior Australian Army officer in Britain at the time, was deeply concerned at the lack of accommodation and the appalling conditions on the muddy Salisbury Plain. Chauvel contacted the Australian High Commissioner in London, Sir George Reid (a former Australian Prime Minister). Reid inspected the training facilities on the windswept Salisbury Plain in Wiltshire and concluded that they were totally unsuitable for Australians to spend a winter in the open. At the same time, the Ottoman Empire joined the Axis Powers in declaring war on the Allies, thus posing a serious threat to the vital Suez Canal in British-controlled Europe. Reid spoke to Lord Kitchener, the Secretary of State for War (a position in the British War Cabinet). Kitchener agreed with Reid's request that the AIF and New Zealand troops be diverted to Egypt instead of England for training.

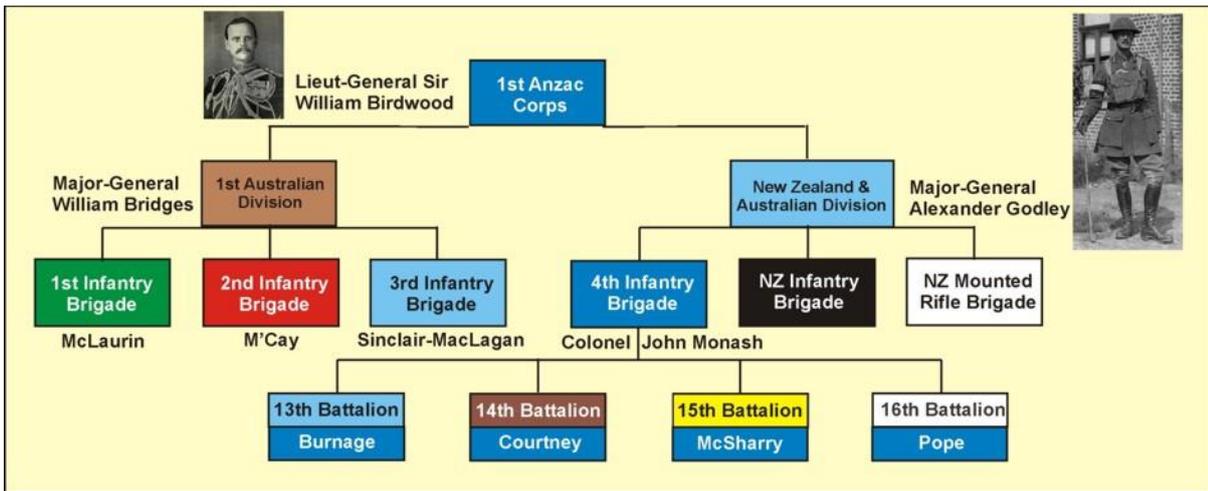


**Figure 1. Reporting line for 1<sup>st</sup> ANZAC Corps**

*Figure compiled by D G Jones*

Accordingly, on 26<sup>th</sup> November 1914, after the first AIF convoy had left Aden, Reid telegraphed Major-General William Bridges, commander of the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division, directing his force to “train in Egypt and go to the front from there.” So the convoy was diverted to Egypt, and a series of training camps established around Cairo. The second convoy, carrying Eric Cotterill and the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion, followed suit.

The Australians and New Zealanders were to form a corps, to be called the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (“1<sup>st</sup> ANZAC Corps”), under the command of the British Lieut-General William Birdwood.



**Figure 2. 1<sup>st</sup> Anzac Corps infantry chain of command, 1<sup>st</sup> December 1914**  
*Figure compiled by D G Jones*

The camps around Cairo later became the main support bases for the Gallipoli campaign, together with a range of hospitals established to treat the wounded. A base was established at Aerodrome Camp, near Heliopolis and next to No.1 Australian General Hospital at the Palace Hotel, became the training ground for the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade (including the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion).

**Map 3. AIF camps around Cairo, 1915**  
*Map compiled by D G Jones*

*HMAT ULYSSES arrived at Alexandria on 31<sup>st</sup> Jan 1915. The troops disembarked next day and travelled by train in open freight cars through the Nile Delta to Cairo and Heliopolis.*



**Photo 6. Australian troops travelling by train in Egypt**

*Source: SLNSW a5374115 (Donald MacDonald photo album)*

**Saturday 13 February 1915**

*Although by 13<sup>th</sup> Feb the 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade had been in Egypt less than a fortnight, in that time they took part in three large divisional field operations "with every man out and spread over miles of country" (Monash). This was in contrast to the 1<sup>st</sup> Division, which had been in Egypt ten weeks and had so far had only a single day's brigade training, let alone any divisional training.*

*In a letter to his wife dated 13 Feb, Monash wrote: "There is a Territorial Division camped not very far from us and it is amusing and instructive to contrast the type and physique of our splendid Australians and New Zealanders with the little dumpy, smooth faced Yorkshire and Lancashire youths who speak in an almost foreign dialect, and are a wonder and a puzzle to our Australians."*

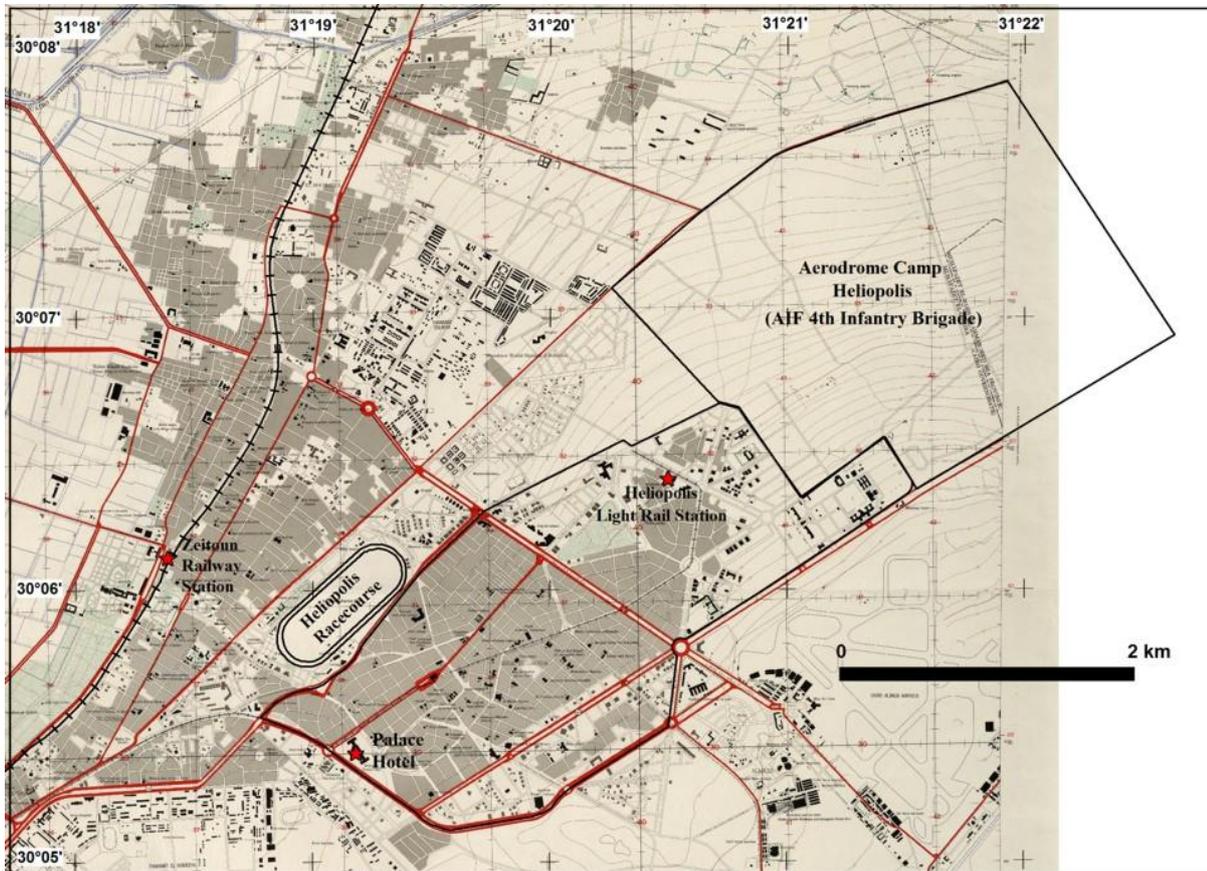
Heliopolis

My dearest Mother,

Yours was the first letter I received in Egypt and I experienced much pleasure in realising that it was dated Jan 4. It reached me on the 10<sup>th</sup> Feb so that, given a clear run, about three weeks will elapse from date of writing to receipt of our mail. This morning the regular packet also arrived and we had a great joke. The notice given me was similar to the one received

in Melbourne when a tin of cake was sent, and all the lads were chuffing me that you had sent cake to Egypt for your boy. I guessed it was the mittens, so had to laugh. Send my thanks to Doll for her labour.

You guessed right for Cairo, and here we are.



#### Map 4. Site of Aerodrome Camp, Heliopolis

*Compiled by D G Jones on to US Army Map Service Topographic Map 1:10,000 1949*

Ere I forget, we are now B Company, the rest as before, ie II AIF, the Expeditionary part being deleted, and I will again ask you to inform all and sundry.

When we start to tune up, he may look for the doings of the New Zealand and Australian Division under the command of Major-General Sir A J Godley for he is our divisional commander, and we form part of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps with Lieut-General Birdwood as GOC. So you see we are not to fight as Australians only but have our NZ friends with us and also some English Territorials. The final lot of ALH are attached. They have been here some three months and are a fine lot indeed.

You mention no news of me. I wrote from Albany; you should have received it early in January. At Colombo, Aden and Port Said I also wrote and left others with a fellow to post on landing, so you should receive some of them at least. There were cards for all from somewhere including Gulgong. It occurs to me that you might ask Doll to give those good folk all news of interest.

Your youngest son seems to be a queer stick. In a letter from Mary, she writes of his doings, he seems quite gay. Tell him to stop where he is, there are enough young lads here with the "Tommies". They are so different to our lads. Young for the most part, they are all on the short side and thus look mere lads. It is all very well to say the Australians run wild, but give these lads the pay our fellows receive, and they would bid high for the lead. I have been on picket and know our lads are outlaws but these "Tommies" are cheeky little devils. Of course it is of the minority I write.

Young Edward chummed up to a private named Walter Grieve. He is from Dorsetshire and is in the Lancashires and a very fine fellow indeed. They have been here some six months and have learned the ropes, so he willingly acts as our guide. Having done all their hard work, they only do one parade a day so he is at our call whenever we want.

These "Tommies" are regiments all from one town. I think his is Blackburn to be exact, near Dover, and nearly all knew one another. Rather a good idea, but only possible in a heavily populated country. Chaps who come from the same county and men not in a regiment are called "Fusiliers", and we have both with us. Khaki is everywhere. These Tommies are paid about 1/- per day so have to watch their finances.

I simply can't think in piastres and the corn stalkers say "disasters" – they seem to vanish like magic. For a sovereign they give 97½ and we no sooner get them than they are gone. If we want to buy something the price is quoted say 3 for 1, and we all seem to think of them as pence and as a consequence nearly all the mob are unfinancial. Had I the time I could go on leave every night when off duty, 'cos the quota of leave is rarely filled. When a payday comes – we have been here a fortnight and they have paid nothing – the men will be wishing for leave. Such will be the state for a few days until their money is gone, and then will be a falling away and the thrifty will have leave whenever they require it.

How glad I am that a clerk's chair is not mine. I haven't the patience to complete a letter ere moving on to the next.

All the little tales of home life, domestic and all, are of interest, send them all along, for you can't imagine how mail day is looked for with us. It is quite funny when giving out the mail, each man counting as he gets one. One chap in my platoon received 12 last day. He is the one writing - a girl too.

So the papers kept a discreet silence as to our doings. I hardly expected it and cannot see the necessity. After leaving Albany we steamed with lights out yet had only AE2 as guard for the convoy.

And Harry Weaver is dead. Isn't it strange, first Sid and then Harry. I did not know he was ill. Jimmie Coutts was out so I set him to help Capt Thompson and he has given me full particulars. He also looked out Lieut Pulling for me and when I go out to Mena I intend to look them both up.

I had intended to do the Great Pyramid today, but hearing that the whole camp was out on a bivouac, stayed at home to write. Sunday is the day here. Business is in full swing, Government and private, all amusement places are open here if on no other day, and everybody seems to make money. We only have a short parade, and the rest of the day

free. We have also had both Saturday afternoons off, which gives us a chance to recuperate. This is the only day leave we get so I will have to do my sightseeing on a weekend.

I have been to Cairo twice, once by day and once by night, and there is little to choose. Once I have seen thoroughly the places of interest, I won't care how soon we move on. There is plenty to see but with a time limit we can only skim over it.



**Photo 7. The Citadel**

*Source: D G Jones*

Yesterday afternoon we set out for the Museum, but being too late we changed over for the Citadel. Who built this I know not but it looks rather old and is in ruins in places. Now it is occupied mainly by the Imperial Army as barracks, with some of the Egyptians quartered there also. With our Tommie guide we set out through the native quarters. Just before the place are the ruins of several mosques purported to be the work of the great caliphate. We slowly climbed a hill and passed through huge iron doors into the place. Uniform is necessary as there is a guard. We strolled all around through the ward, billiard and reading rooms, seeing several wounded Indian soldiers there – evidently from the Canal – until we were right at the top of the hill overlooking Cairo. What a fine sight it was. The sun was setting and there was a slight haze, nevertheless we saw a fine panoramic view of the surroundings. Minarets and towers rise everywhere, all over the city, if the worshippers were only a little more attentive there would be less vice in the town. Away in the distance was the Nile with sails of boats showing out, and the Pyramids over on the other side. In the early morning it would be a magnificent sight, for this is a big city.

In the Citadel itself are many places of interest, including what is claimed as the largest mosque in the world. This is built largely of alabaster, and we are going in to see it next day we are in town. We also saw Napoleon's Fort, built by him after the Battle of the Pyramids. Then we came to a deep well, and found that a brick took 4½ seconds to reach the ground. They try to bluff you it is Joseph's well. It is lined with big stones for some distance down, and then hewn out of solid rock to the bottom. This was empty. There is a deeper one there but is guarded for some reason.

After the usual "egg feed" we went to a picture show. It was a former store house and cost 3 piastres (A\$2.95 in 2018 dollars) each for a two-hour show. The film was French but on a

smaller sheet on one side a version of its headings in English and Egyptian is shown, so that all races are catered for. The show was very good and we enjoyed it. One night was enough of Cairo for me so we caught the electric car for home. It is a fine car, not unlike our "Dreadnought" style with two classes, and for a half piastre it is a cheap ride to town for us as we travel half fare.



**Photo 8. O-Class (Dreadnought or Toast rack) tram**

*Source: Sydney Tramway Museum*

I seem to have been writing all day and my hand is cramped so will save other news until next week. We are still doing well in all respects and wanting for nothing of any account. Have no fears for my state of health, it is excellent and has never been better.

My fondest love to you all, each of whom has a fair share of my thoughts as we march along over the desert. To you, my mother dear, and father, my fondest love of your ever-loving son,  
Eric.

**Saturday 20 February 1915**

*On 16<sup>th</sup> Feb General Godley summoned Monash to Divisional Headquarters and stated that "...your brigade is the best Australian brigade in Egypt. This consideration has entirely modified the plans for the disposal of the whole Army Corps, and has greatly contributed to its fighting efficiency – I have seen your battalions at work under varying conditions, and am quite satisfied that you may abandon elementary training, and proceed at once to the most*

*advanced training, in night operations, trench work, and so on.” (Monash letter to his wife dated 18<sup>th</sup> Feb).*

Heliopolis YMCA

My dearest Mother,

No mail has arrived from your land this week and we are told a steamer did not leave the week it was scheduled. Ordinarily the Australian mail is delivered to us about Friday and we have to post on Sunday to catch the steamer.

Even in the three weeks we have been here we can notice the weather becoming warmer. Our issue of blankets is three each now but the nights are not as cool as at first, today being like those of sunny NSW.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

PS1388B

**Photo 9. Cairo trams after pay day**

*Source: AWM PS1388B*

After a hard week we are having a half-holiday. We have been granted such each Saturday but it is as a privilege not a right we are told. Anyway, nearly all have taken advantage of it and the road to the Pyramids and Mena will be crowded as a consequence. I haven't been to either place yet and been here quite a while. Usually the first place visited is the Pyramids. Sergeant Dark and self will probably do things well tomorrow. Having received a portion of the money due to us we are financially strong and as we will be able to ignore the slow-moving tram service that serves the locality, and hire a turnout. These are very fine, some having a pair of beautiful ponies. We were only paid a little of our back money as the example

the first force set was a warning to our own people, but as ours was in Egyptian money it sounded smaller when we heard the amount stated as so many hundred piastres.

My feet are doing well. After a strenuous day yesterday, they were only slightly sore this morning when I put my boots on but they soon warmed up and gave no more trouble. Both ankles are OK in fact everything is in the same boat.

Did I mention the band of one of the English regiments stationed here? It was at the Citadel last Saturday that we saw them and the tune they were playing was the "British Grenadiers". This is a well-known march but it necessitates a fast short step and the lads were on the move. How it tickled us. They all wore helmets, were fair-haired and short-legged. Each bandsman was a wee laddie about 15 or 16 and nearly all were the one height – about up to Jack's shoulder. Our English friend was with us and he enjoyed it as well as we. The sight was so queer to us, used to men as bandsmen, but we assumed that the British regiments only have lads as musicians, although the same can't be true about some of the flash permanent ones. We laugh over it now whenever it is mentioned.

This week has been a corker, yet I feel fresher than when at Sydney. We started off with a concentration march of the division. In these, all the various units that go to form a division are ordered to assemble at some spot a way out and each march to the rendezvous by the shortest route. It was just a march to test the efficiency and readiness of all ranks, but we did not manoeuvre. The next day we marched to Abbassia rifle range and engaged in field firing. This was a lot being over the sand after the previous day's march.

On Wednesday morning we had a short parade and then prepared for the *piece de resistance*. We set out early in the afternoon for an operation which was due to commence any time after we left certain bounds that suited the enemy. We marched to and occupied our positions just as night was falling and waited for the attack. We had a fine "possie", just where the road wound up a hill. Directly we arrived we set to work to prepare for the attack by digging trenches and doing all the usual movements. The men working under the eye of the general and staff so had to be slick about it. When our defences were completed, we sent out the usual precautionary patrols and the remainder made trenches as comfortable as they could, situated as they were. Those chosen for the trenches had to sleep there ready to fight at a moment's notice. Nearby were their supports and back still further, all resting with full fighting outfit on all the time.

My platoon was first made the reserve but we afterwards reinforced on the right flank when the enemy pressed hotly. It was cold you bet, out on the desert, but having our first taste of a simulated battle we all enjoyed ourselves. Everywhere we could have the sentries challenging and the various replies.

After a long wait, just about 3 am one of our patrols brought in the news that the enemy – one of our own brigade battalions – was approaching. It was hue enough and when there was enough light to do so we could clearly discern them about to deliver their attack. The usual hour for this and our foe were true to tradition. We had a nice little fight until the "cease fire" rang out and then we gathered ourselves together. This took some time, for it is surprising how the various units become mixed together. When all was completed, we set out for camp well satisfied with our first night fight and that we had annihilated the enemy.

Thursday we spent relaxing, only having a battalion parade.

Yesterday we were up behind for we knew not what. All these operations are carried through with our full kit up, just as we left Liverpool, without the blanket.

To carry on, yesterday morn we set out for some hill between us and the Canal. We noticed that all men were out and smelt a rat. After a long march of about three hours in a warm sun, along a rotten road, we halted for a hasty lunch, and then the fun began. We fought up hill and down hill for a couple of hours, until we must have slaughtered thousands. About five we must have won, for we formed up and set out for home. It took three or four hours to reach there but we marched in with our heads up and a good lively tune on the band outdid the encouraging cheer of the remainder of our camp fellows. We had had a very heavy day and had only about a dozen drop out in the company. Today I could do another of the same.

Time is up so will say good day, love to everyone from the modern war correspondent, Spagoni.

Friday 25 February 1915

*Divisional training involved 20,000 troops of all arms of the division: Artillery, Engineers, Infantry, Light Horse, Medical, Signallers, Supply columns etc – more than had ever gathered in one camp in Australia, even at Broadmeadows. Generally taking two or more hours to assemble, the whole ensemble would then march out together to take up battle positions. A full division will stretch over 25 km, while each of the 3 infantry brigades will extend around 6 km. The simulated attacks used live ammunition on an enemy represented by life size cut out figures, with artillery batteries firing live shells over the heads of the advancing infantry, with the shells bursting just in front of the leading troops. After three or four hours of fighting, the division then marched back to camp and dispersed to the battalion lines.*

Heliopolis YMCA

My dearest Mother,

(First two pages missing).

...of them. It is a blessing having cool nights after the dusty and warm days. You write of the dust storm you unfortunately endured being as dark as Egypt, but to date the nights have been anything but dark. We were out on night manoeuvres this week, and might as well have been on a barrack square. We have had a much easier week than last. It has been platoon parade work and occasional half days off. The men are getting stale from ordinary squad drill but are keen enough on the field days. They are much harder but more interesting.

In one we left camp about 4 pm across the desert. When we came to a suitable position, the CO brought his imagination to bear and we set to work to prepare for defence. Although not my duty, I usually lend a hand with a shovel, as it tends to keep the fellows more content. Maybe with a little more practice, a ganger's job will be within my reach.



**Photo 10. Commencing a trench in the desert**

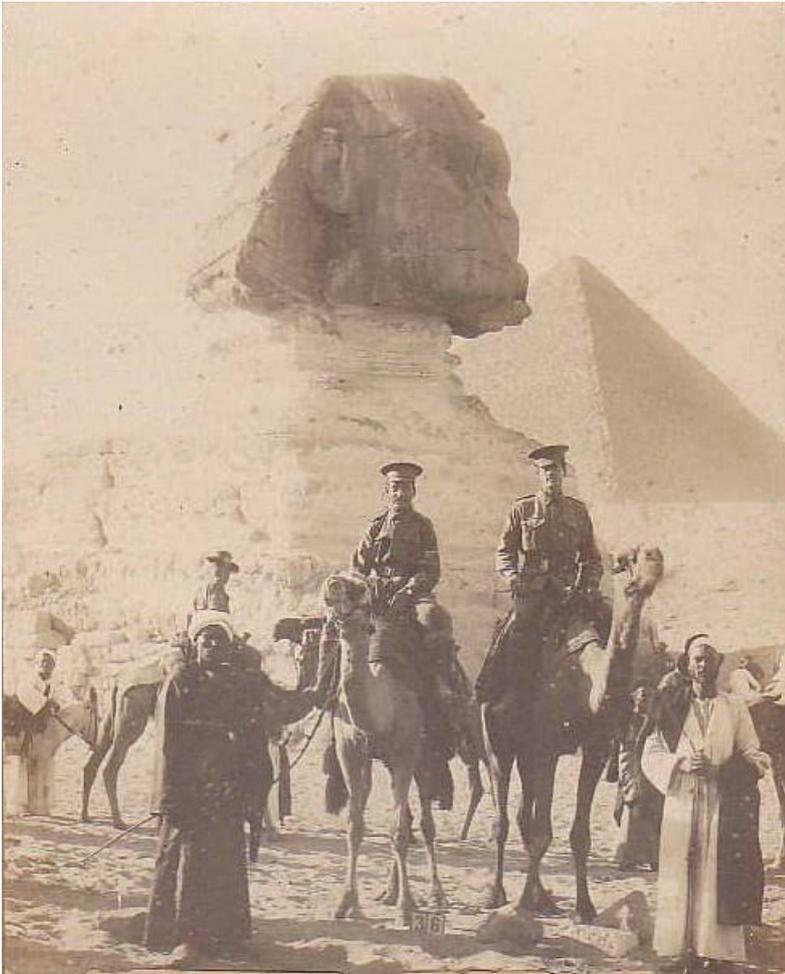
*Source: AWM C02640*

We dug our trenches and settled down, but it was part of the scheme that the enemy changed position, so perforce we went too. It was now after eight and we were about to undertake what is probably the hardest and most dangerous move in war. Luckily the moon was clear but we saw enough to recognise the increased difficulty in keeping up communication. After a good march we took up another position and then set out for camp where we arrived am the next day. A cup of hot tea and a camp bed and soon all were asleep.

Today (Friday) is usually a heavy one, the men up at 5:30 and ready to move off at short notice. We were not called out until a little later than noon, so we had a much easier day than the rest of the division. Our turn will come next and we will be all there. It is a great saying of some of my men, when rounded up for slackness: "Oh! We'll be here when the whips are cracking."

Those storms must be rather rough. We see enough dust here to be good judges of it, but so far have struck nothing worse than a windstorm.

I was wondering, you did not mention a card from Albany. Now the first has arrived you should receive some regularly. All the chaps express their thanks for your message and wish to be remembered to you. We are split up more or less now and don't see so much of one another, but when all are together the talk usually begins round Rosehill or Liverpool. We are all satisfied that the latter place spoiled us for this life, it was too enjoyable and we are in the habit of taking it as a standard.



So the group photo arrived. Mark and I had one taken by the Sphinx, so there will be another for the wall. You will be able to dispense with a wall if we become any vainer.

We have had one look at the Pyramids but it was only hurried. There seem to be about numbers of them, one group being a good distance from Cairo. The big ones as you know are only a few miles out. Near the Sphinx is an old temple built of huge granite columns and alabaster. One piece is sixteen feet in length and made a fine showing under a magnesium flare.

**Photo 11. Sergeant Cotterill (right) Feb 1915**

*Source: Cotterill family*

We saw all the tombs etc in the precinct and started in to see the interior of the Pyramid. Entry is made through a passage made smooth by countless feet so we had to remove our boots. It is a downward slope so we had plenty of fun accentuated by the fact that half the soldiers in Egypt seemed there. After entering the first chamber, and meeting some who had been the rounds and were dripping with perspiration we cried off till some other day, and went aloft by the outside. I had never dreamt that they could be climbed, picturing the surface so smooth. One of them has its outer case removed – to build an obelisk I am told – and has only been climbed by a few, including the first lot.

There is plenty to see and our leave is limited but we had to see Mena whatever else we missed. Just fancy being in Egypt and not seeing the Great Pyramid.

One little incident before closing. After our very heavy day, of which I wrote last week, our band came along soon after breakfast during “smoko” on the desert, and struck up a Scottish jig. Such a scene must be unique. The men all dead weary, but were suddenly transformed and one and all were at it, ducking and dipping frantically. We were like a pack of laddies at the sport – this will serve to show the spirit we are in.

Thanks to all for birthday greetings and love to the outfit from Jimmie.

Monday 8 March 1915

*On Sunday 28<sup>th</sup> Feb 1915 the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade under Brigadier MacLagan marched out of Mena Camp and entrained for Alexandria. His orders were sealed and marked "To be opened at sea". General Birdwood, commander of ANZAC, left Egypt on 3<sup>rd</sup> Mar. Rumours were rife that ANZAC was moving, but no-one knew where.*

Heliopolis

My dear Mother,

How much longer we will write this name at the head of our letters we cannot definitely say, but if the Aust and NZ Division of which we are part is not out of Egypt within three weeks from date, we will be unpleasantly surprised.

Rumour was busy for a day or two and then the move commenced. Going out to dinner last week and a huge procession of transport passed us and the same afternoon two battalions were "played out". They formed the advance party and all they knew was that they were to proceed to Cairo, camp at Mena and Nile Barracks that night and entrain next morning. Today's latest is that they are on board at Alexandria and that Australia's third force arrived there yesterday. All the ten battalions at Mena are ready to quit at short notice and we have been ordered to discard all kit not provided for us in the regulations. Away with my beloved kit, the companion of many a leisure hour in the last few months. We have had orders to grind bayonets so that it is those that will do the work not "How to Become a Soldier in Three Weeks".

All are agog with excitement and nearly every country in Europe is named as our destination. In view of recent bombardments at Constantinople that city is a first favourite but presently I think a few rounds from heavy naval guns will impress the terrible Turk a whole heap more than thousands of rounds of small arms ammunition. My fancy is either south of France or better still to the south of England for a couple of weeks and then across to Europe and Kitchener's Army in the spring. I don't for one moment think we will stay here much longer for the enemy is quiet about the Canal and putting two and two together it is more than likely on or about the 23<sup>rd</sup> inst we will set out after Kaiser Bill.

What a lot has occurred about those figures. My own age and every fresh step has been taken near that time of the month so to keep the ball rolling it is essential that we move about that date. Maybe if put before the brigadier he would give it consideration.

Today under separate cover I sent by registered post from here 3 photographs taken here. It was much more economical under one cover, so will ask that on arrival you will send one to Gerringong and the other to Laura Horn. This will do for the lady mentioned to hang in a prominent place with the photos of other victims and myself a willing one to her cooking. How a plate of jellied peaches or slice of light brown cake would be welcomed. The third photo of course is for yourself. How vain your son is growing, mother mine. You have more of me on the wall now than ever before.

Everything is going along swimmingly. Plenty of field work and plenty of time to do it. The lads were getting a little stale so we now have started rest afternoons and all work better for it. Today is to be a big day, right out to the third tower on the Suez road, about 10 miles. We

are the company for duty and as I am sergeant of the picquet to beat up the shop in town tonight and the early hours of tomorrow we did not go. We were all keen to do so, and these days are very popular, but the shows would be too busy. The brigade marched off at eight this morning and probably will not return till that hour tonight so they will have had a fair day's work.

Last Sunday morning I was reading the local two sheet paper, and read a para stating that a new hall was to be opened as a Methodist Church. There was a good chance to hear my mother tongue spoken by people not in khaki so off I went at 6:30 pm when it started. The feeling has been growing on me lately that a country wherein English is not spoken is of little interest to me, and as we seldom if ever see an Englishman here, I fairly rushed the chance of this service. Soldiers - Tommies and our men – easily outnumbered civilians and we had some rousing singing. We had "Lead Kindly Light", "Jesus lifts up my Soul", and we made the rafters ring. At the organ was actually a resident Englishwoman who had one of those sweet voices the ? are so fond of. To her own accompaniment she sang a classical rendering of "Abide With Me". It seemed the sweetest thing imaginable to us all for we had not heard a feminine rendering of a solo for months.

One of our chaplains then passed the word leading up to this opening. The hall had been one of the many dens of Cairo closed by the police but it had been transformed into a newly decorated hall. Of course this had cost piastres and an appeal for funds followed which amazed me. Touching everyone's soft spot as all good orators can do, he mentioned the beggarly pay of the "Tommie" and raised the smile by calling us the wealthy Australians. It is quite true, compared to the Australians who often look askance at the way Cornstalk spends his money. There will be an awful slump here when we move for the locals must be coining money now from our fellows.

It is now the next day and a rest morning after yesterday's march. My subaltern, Lt S L Perry of Auburn, one of the finest gentlemen I have met, told me it was really fine and I was sorry to have missed it. We had a lively time on picquet. In the morn with 16 men I set out for the barracks to escort back to camp, all the rowdy ones in Cairo the night before. They were a chance lot in the worst of temper having had nothing to eat, a hard floor to lie on, and a couple of drenchings with a fire hose to subdue them. Next to dropping the butt of a rifle on to a prisoner's foot, or on to his shins, a heavy stream of cold water is the best to subdue them. I am fully posted in all these "old soldier" dodges now as they are useful. Being in funds, most of the lads had had plenty to drink and we had an anxious time preventing them from rushing for more at each café. The same thing at night, dividing up the group and then subduing them. It is quite an experience, some have to be coaxed and humoured, others bullied from the jump. We have to size them up at a glance and act accordingly.

No letters have arrived from the other members of the family excepting Marj and that means they can't have written within a few weeks after departure. Still following the good healthy road with no complaints. Love to all from  
Eric.

PS Considering this has been written on the back of my pack on the ground, I don't expect to be complimented for the writing.

Wednesday 17 March 1915

*During the first half of March the pace of training increased, with three or four days and nights a week being spent out in the desert on manoeuvres. In a letter to his wife, Brigadier Monash commented "We have made wonderful progress, and my Brigade is now a very complete very well trained and very formidable fighting force."*

Heliopolis

My dearest Mother,

No wonder you can't find our resting place on the map, for it is now only a suburb of Cairo. Once it was important for it was the city of the sun-worshippers, and also nearby is the well and tree where the Virgin Mary rested when journeying to the Nile.

I was pleased to read that your baby boy was successful and has a good prospect of further success at Fort Street, and I hope it is his. He is, as you say, the last of the boys to leave you and strike out on his own, but that, you will recognize, is the best for him, and help to ease your mind.

Two outstanding features here are the receipt of two mails within five days, and rain. Which caused the most surprise and joy would be hard to say. The mail arrived after a hard day and when returning to camp, clouds banked up and opened when we were two hours out on the desert, so we fully enjoyed the experience of a tramp on the desert without the usual dust. It was quite nice for a change, but when we get to the other side we will as likely be sighing for the dust of the desert.

Letters I had were two from you, two from Marj, and one each from Rozelle, Vaucluse and Ryde. My best thanks to all but we are going like the devil and will pray for all to accept this as a general reply. Marjorie has sent me three so others had better shake themselves up else they will be out of the running.

Arthur asked me to give a message to Sam Kelso, he is attached to us now, so I saw him and delivered the goods. What a rotten run of luck by those at Prospect Villa. It would shake the faith of many, in a well-known saying. If I can do so I will rush a letter through for I don't like to hear of their trouble without a word from me.

All the chaps from the New Guinea crowd can't be physical wrecks for Geo Knox has a cousin who joined for Europe with the next lot immediately he arrived. Still I'm not sorry I delayed a while and missed them for I thought of that lot a good deal before deciding not to volunteer. I hope Jim Fowler comes through OK. I wouldn't be a bit surprised to see him yet over here. Maybe one of the brothers would see Mr Fraser or J Grant at Indi and find out his whereabouts for me.

I can't strike dinner with on Capt Thompson. Our slack days seem to clash and this prevents us. We are not out of the wood yet and will have ample time to look him up.

Mr Wickham sends me the "Times" each week and I saw an article written by J C Leek in refutation of some charges. These have been a great topic in the line and I hear fellows heatedly quoting John Norton and Bean the correspondent as answers. The article in print

I can't see but there was the refutation. This I'll say. If Johnnie Norton did one day such as we do six in each week, he would ever after be a physical wreck. It is easy to sit down with a dictionary by the side and pick out alliterative headlines, but it is best to be sure of the facts first. Undoubtedly a certain class of the first force did behave badly and disgrace their uniforms and others but why should the stigma stick to all our force. It has done a deal of harm here, and if that alliterative bouncer is the man we think he is he will not be there when the overseas forces return. There are plenty of reckless but honest and upright men with us who would as soon ? him for his ? as shoot an enemy.

"Six bob a day tourist soldier" is the term said to be applied to us. Did you even hear of a tourist setting out at 8:30 pm, fully laden, to start an action at dawn after an all-night march, or leaving his bed at 2 am the night following to do something similar? Going by when we are at work, three parts of our night would be day – the days are still days just the same.

Blowing his end is a favourite pastime now, we would give ? ? ? the time of their lives if they would call on us after a day such as yesterday. Reveille at 2 am, a handful of floury biscuits and then a 4 hours march, say 11 miles, in the dark. Halted for an hour to eat our slice of bread and bully, we march back on an imaginary attack on Cairo which the NZ Division was defending. The country was rather open about three miles from their position, so we advanced in open order and over the last mile by short rushes. One platoon fires at the enemy to make him duck and another rushes like mad for the next cover, over rocks and holes and thorny bushes. We fought a good hard fight and set out for camp, arriving at 2:20 pm. Just ? Johnnie on five biscuits, ? a piece of bread and beef, doing a stunt like that. We do it with ease, also a battalion parade this morning and a ? and fight all day tomorrow.

I wrote that last week was probably the ? but this week has been a shocker. It seems they can't find out our limits for we do all asked of us and come up ? for more.

What oh! Arthur as a soldier. This ? should ? him there. I expect to see him with a straight back when I return to put him through his paces. ? is in a ? at Newtown he says it is an awful strain doing ? by numbers. Poor old chap, he would like to be here with me but is too well balanced to leave his people. When writing a short note to him acknowledging the paper, I said that only for that training we had, my present position would be beyond my reach. Maybe it will be of help to me yet. There are 62 in our platoon now and they take some knowledge to look after.

It is St Patrick's Day and all the Irishmen have cut loose. Our battalion has delayed pay, scenting trouble, but the others are having a busy time. A procession headed by some pipes and a green banner went the rounds at breakfast and things are very merry just now.

It has occurred to me that you might detail someone to keep Allie Wickham posted with my doings. His address is "Lintern", Victoria Road, Marrickville.

I have had a "bulletin" from Dad. The drawing of the photo of our fellows on the Pyramid caused much amusement.

Herewith a permanent apology for the writing of all my future letters. I am too restless and want to rush from one word to another too quickly. It is a sign of the times I expect.

Still well and fully content with my lot. Don't fret over your boys, we're all right mother. Fondest love to you and Dad, then everyone else in the wick. The ? Australian, Eric.

Thursday 18 March 1915

Heliopolis YMCA

My dear Mother,

The last letter to you was rushed somewhat, so will try and go slow in this.

Yesterday we marched out at five in the afternoon on the usual game. Away out we halted, took up our position and awaited the onslaught. In due time it came, we fought a no decision bout, and came back having been out 16 hours.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

C01641

**Photo 12. Route march to desert manoeuvres**

*Source: AWM C01641*

We only have feet inspection and rifles to clean today and then off on another shot tomorrow. The last night out was a shocker. The start was at 2 am and all was hustle and bustle. We formed up in the rain and set about our task. Daybreak found us way out past the third old watch tower of Napoleon, a distance of about twelve miles. We turned about and fought our way back.

Another day, reveille at 5 am, move off at 6. When halted we were ten miles out from nowhere on the sandy waster with one hill just like another. Marching by prismatic compass

we set out as a Turkish army making an attack on the oil wells near Cairo. These were defended by the Tommies who have been here over six months so were up against it. They had a good site for defence, but having spotted a hill that looked good to us, No.8 Platoon set out for it. It was further than it looked and only a couple kept up with the subaltern and myself. It was a lovely possie and commanded their whole line. We sent a note to the colonel saying that ours looked to be the key of the situation and to reinforce us strongly. When the surprise came into the OC of the enemy he asked us what we had done, and made some very complimentary remarks which made us forget our long gallop. We were adjudged the winners on the day and the senior Captain acknowledged we had the ? spot on his line. Before the scrap was over, we sounded the attack and charged but bless me if the Tommies didn't hop out of their trenches and counter charge with fixed bayonets also. As our skewers are very sharp, that final dramatic touch will have to be omitted.

On a previous day we were stacked up against a squadron of Light Horse and were steadily driving them back. Seeing that the next position they could occupy was about a quarter of a mile back, immediately they returned to it we set sail for the one they had vacated. This was reached before they poked their heads up away out in front, and when they did so we were all ready and clean wiped them out. As they were the advance party of the enemy this was? and carried much praise for our platoon.

The subaltern will do me, the men will do me, and it seems each returns the compliment, so beware Kaiser Bill for No.8 of the 13<sup>th</sup>.

The weekend just passed I despatched a cable to George as having the best address. We are allowed special rates at weekends by the Eastern Telegraph Company so I took advantage of them. They are subject to censor of course, so I wanted you to understand that the despatch of a cable was to mean the same as the Christmas one from Melbourne, that is, we were about to depart. Whether your thoughts followed a similar channel I know not. It has turned out a little premature however for we are still here, but are ready and likely to move at any date now. Should my cable appear in your paper relative to my departure some days after the receipt of the cable, this letter should clear up all doubt.

I also despatched by registered post a small New Testament to Dolly. How we came by these is on the inside of the cover, and I sent it to Dolly as she is the eldest single girl at home. I already had one so am not depriving myself of it.



I had a look at the zoo the other day and was greatly pleased. It is very nicely laid out, and the paths are especially so. They are of scroll bits work, but the working is done with coloured pebbles. There is a grotto there in which this pebble work is marvellous, a story being worked out on the ceiling and walls.

One of the latest additions is not an arrival. It consists of a pair of pontoons taken from the Turks on the Canal. They are of sheet iron, very broad in the beam, and pierced in all directions with bullets, just like a colander. No wonder they were repelled. It must have been a big task getting them across country from Constantinople.

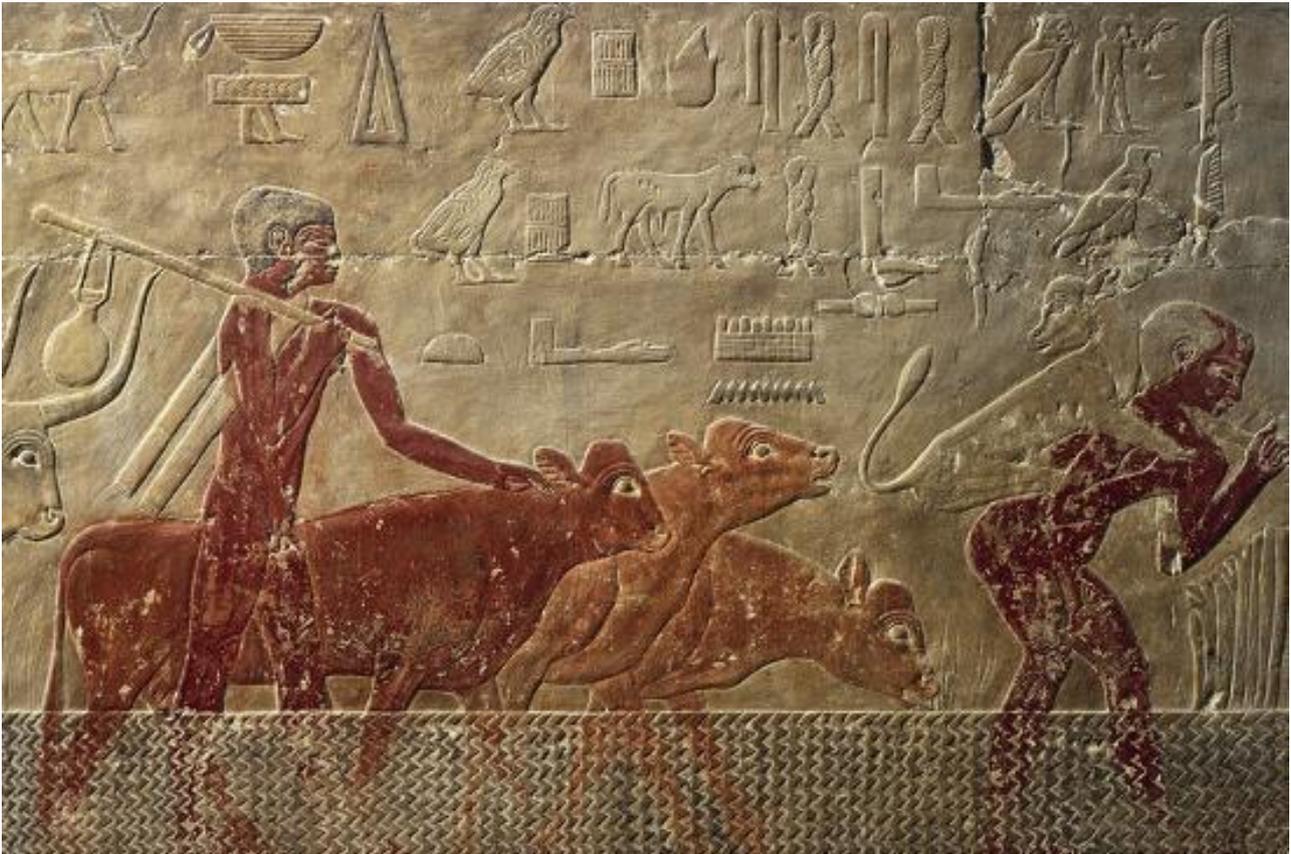
**Photo 13. The Grotto pavement**

*Source: State Library NSW c028720089 H C Marshall photo album*

We have a picture show in camp now. It was formerly at the ? camp, but as they are not as wealthy as we are the management moved it here. I have not been able to have a look but it draws well every night they tell me. Surely it is a great harvest for all in Egypt just now. The authorities have had to secure a big issue of new coinage to cope with the demand, and as it is new and bright the natives are not too keen on it. They prefer the dirty old worn out stuff.

We went on an excursion to Memphis to see the country there and were amply rewarded. It was a most exciting trip down the river in the launch and just as lovely on the donkeys. Memphis is really covered over with drift sand, being thousands of years old, the nearest villages being Badudash and Sakkara. It is usually by the latter that the ruins are called. On the plateau nearby are the oldest pyramids in Egypt. They are nine in number, and rather small in comparison with those at Mena but are notable for their age principally. One stands out alone, it is called the Step Pyramid, that is instead of a plane surface it is made of a series of terraces as if each block were smaller than that below. The interiors are all empty but the sights here are all under drift sand and have only been excavated recently. One is the tomb of Te, he was some old-time king and judging by the pictures must have had them all under his sway. The interior is quite small and covered with bas-relief coloured paintings. The work is very fine and delicate and depicts everything of moment in his life. You can see

his journey to Abyssinia, his battle there, and the maidens bringing booty and hostages. Even the scribes keeping tally on their scrolls are shown hard at it. One could spend days here but our visit was only about an hour and we could only dwell on the main features.



**Photo 14. Bas relief of agriculture in tomb of Ti, Sakkara**

*Source: allposters.com*

There also are the tombs of the sacred bull. In olden times, the bull under different names was worshipped, and if he did not die before he was 20, his followers killed him and interred him in the tomb. There are 24 in all, 12 on each side of a tunnel that is 500 feet long. There is a huge empty granite sarcophagus in each, but the contents were taken by some old-time vandals. In one chamber the present King and late Khedive died and of course we all had to get in too. Personally, I think there is more to be seen at Sakkara than at Mena.

Still able to write healthy, happy in the remarks column, with prospects bright. Love to all, from your one and only Eric.

Sunday 28 March 1915

Heliopolis YMCA

My dear Mother,

No letters this week from home, perhaps you missed the mail. Probably there will be two next time.

We are still training but not so regularly. We have one known as a big field day a week now, one rest day, and usually a practice at striking camp hurriedly as if we were off in earnest. We do everything just as if we were off and I fully expect that when we do go it will be exactly the same. So to be safe, if we are ordered to put on full marching order I do so. Many roll their greatcoat loosely in their valise and so have not to carry the other articles such as a spare shirt and sox. Should they be caught there will be a great uproar for our black kit bag with our surplus clothing is always left behind which seems to indicate Alexandria as our base.

The buildings here that are suitable are used as military hospitals and only today there was a para in the papers stating that it had been decided to occupy another large school.

One of my men has just returned after having his corns carved out and he says they are situated on the sea and are well fitted out. Most of the nurses seem to be Anglo-Indians and he doesn't care for them but has a soft spot for our own nurses at Heliopolis. There is No.1 Australian General Hospital fitted out and ? by our little ?. The building is immense and a model of architecture. Heliopolis is rather a swagger suburb in the tourist season so a syndicate decided to build a casino. They created a splendid building nearly as fine as the Sultan's Palace. Were it occupied it would be the largest hotel in the world, but the owners failed to secure a licence so they went bankrupt. Those who have been there rave over its beautiful staircases and rooms, but I can only judge from the exterior. It is built in the eastern style and is a particularly stately palace. Our people stepped in and now use it as their general hospital.

Corporal Edwards returned from there today after having his adenoids cut out, and he says that most of the patients suffer from temporary deafness. This is not the cicadas for they are silent here. Were they not this land would be unbearable for we are surrounded by swarms.

There is a Lieut G G Gardiner. He knows us by repute or from hearsay and one night when I was on picquet duty with him until the early hours of the morn we had a long yarn together. He is a fine big fellow himself and very fine in manner. He was yarning to me this afternoon and told me that with the reinforcements who arrived this week were Harold George of Paddo and Fred Thompson from that way, and a fellow by name Patrick. All three are well known as footballers and we know George at least. Perhaps father may remember Thompson. They are full blown privates and Gardiner is trying to work them into his platoon in our company.

Day after day our camp is thronged with new men anxiously seeking a brother or friend. No one has found me yet but maybe they will. I would like to have a chat with a body who left there after we did. We are writing in our mess huts and it is like an examination room.

There is a sergeant here now, Dave Williamson, an old Fort Street lad. He has just returned from an old cemetery nearby, that was the burial ground for an ancient city. The fellows, contrary to regulations, take picks over there and search for old relics. Dave has a long string of coloured porcelain beads that must be at least 2000 years old. They bring back pottery, skulls and relics of all kinds. The city is said to be the university city of On where Moses received his education.

We had an interesting journey last Saturday. About three miles from here is a spot that figured largely in olden history. It is the spot where the Virgin Mary rested on the flight to

Egypt. The well from which they drank is guarded always by natives who offer visitors water which is wonderfully clean and cool. Handy to the well is a gnarled and knotted old tree, the one under which they rested. Whether this is the exact tree or not no one can say, but it is certainly very old and is on the exact site, if not the tree. It is propped up in all ways and is fenced off, and the authorities have fenced a similar sapling off to take its place.



**Photo 15. The Virgin's Tree, near Zeitoun**

*Source: postcards of Egypt*

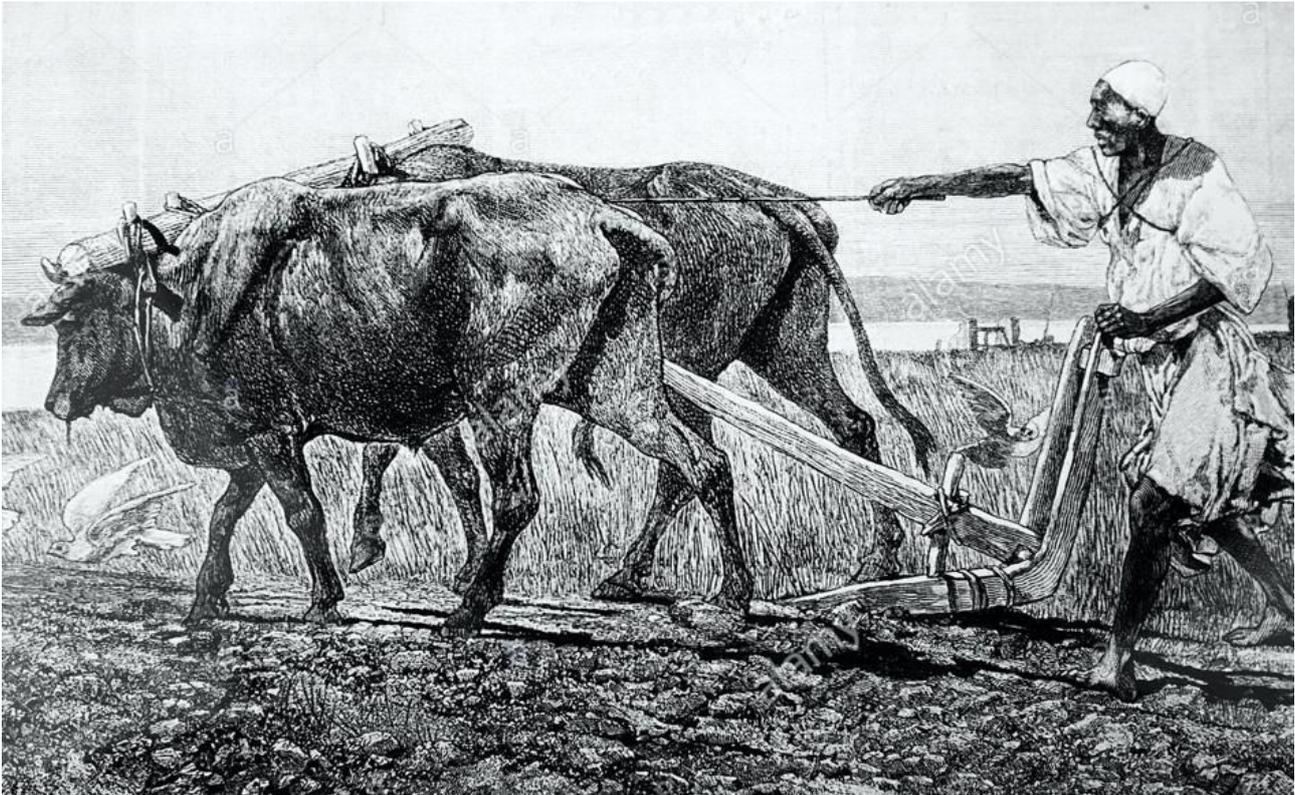
After a deal of cajoling, threatening and bullying, three of us managed to secure a piece of tree. We then visited the old church, which is famous for its paintings and sculptures. On the wall are six huge paintings of incidents in the flight of Mary and Joseph. There is the birth of the Saviour, slaughter of the innocents, the angel warning them to flee, crossing the desert to Egypt, resting at Heliopolis and on the Nile. The tree as painted hundreds of years since is similar to the one here now. The statuettes chiefly depict the main incidents connected with the Scriptures.

This chapel is very notable and is visited by pilgrims from all the world, the register being well thumbed and written in.

Another object of interest is a huge granite obelisk standing in the midst of cultivation. This miles from the river and hundreds of miles from the nearest granite deposits and the theory is it was floated down in flood time. The base is about six feet square and is at about 12 feet lower than the field around it. Parts of it near the top have been chipped off and it is covered with characters.

Whilst here we had a couple of visits to the ?. The whole family seems to go into the cabbage patch with the old men, for each had all his daughters around and his family near to where

they were working. They were ploughing with the old wooden type drawn by oxen. Just imagine this thing on virgin ground in the back block with a few roots and rocks for fun in the paddock. The soil is spanking black stuff, and the plough just turns it over. This implement is about as ancient as anything here except the water wheel. This is like this. The thick upright limb and the handle poked in is to enable the ploughman to gauge the depth of the furrow. At the bottom is a chunk of wood with a piece of steel on the nose underneath. The "slow pup" is the shaft with the swingle free attached. All parts are joined together with lashings and are as crude as possible. Our laughter caused the darkie much enjoyment but I suppose as his forefathers used them, he must too. What they would do at the sight of a traction plough I can't imagine.



**Figure 3. Traditional Egyptian plough**

*Source: alamy.com*

The water wheel to imagine also was quaint. Turning them were a camel and buffalo. Both were enclosed in a covering over the head and neither was fast. We were betting as to which was the faster, but neither had gained an appreciable advantage when we left so we cried them all off.

On another rest day we set out so see three things in the day. We took a gharry to the Citadel, and made straight for the mosque. This place, named after its builder Mahomed Ali, is a copy of one in Constantinople and is a particularly fine copy. Before entering we had to hire huge slippers and having done so and hired a guide we entered. In the courtyard is a huge fountain over a very deep well. We put our mouths to an aperture in the top and hollered, for the echo is a well-known one. The fountain is necessary for the folk wash their hands, head and feet before prayers which take place five times a day. The clock on the tower was presented by Philip of Spain, the great Queen Mary burned it down. The Citadel itself was built by the ?, mostly by the soldiers of Coeur de Lion himself.

We next entered the mosque. This is built of alabaster, excepting four huge pillars supporting the door and minaret. These are not of alabaster as it would not carry the weight but are coloured similarly.

Behind a gold cage on the right of the entrance is the builder's tomb. Prayers are said five times a year and the Khedive used to enter here as his first step in the proceedings. Mohamed Ali was the first Khedive of Egypt. Whatever the Sultan will follow I didn't enquire. The whole floor space is covered with matting and then rich red carpets of true oriental design. From the roof are thousands of globes, now electric. What a magnificent sight it must be when alight. There are huge chandeliers from the centre of each dome and globes everywhere also. Alabaster is a great sight when a watch is held behind a fluted column so this must be wondrous. The roof is a mass of colouring and all the windows are, but one now. The glass came from Italy, and one now is colourless. If it is for light, the whole effect is spoiled.

Only there were a crowd of Indian soldiers at their devotions, I would have been on the broad of my back gazing at the roof. The altar of course is on the east and like all others is let in to the side. In answer to my query the guide stated the reason for so doing was to enable the blind to find it and then know the East. We thoroughly enjoyed it but had to fly off on our way.

The guide was very anxious to show us the blue mosque. This is now used as a school as we have taken many of their buildings and boys were everywhere. It was the wall we were here to see however for they are covered with blue tiles from China. However they came here no one seems to know exactly for they are hundreds of years old. To vary matters the builder of this place – he seems to be a crank – built a tomb for his principal servants and there they still are in a tiled sarcophagus.

From here we drove through some of the crookedest and narrowest, and most evil-smelling, streets of Cairo to the Museum, but as I half asleep, I will reserve this for next letter.

All the words you can't decipher, make a note of, and I will explain them later, meanwhile they will provide a little discussion for the family in the winter. To be candid, I do not have the patience to write carefully.

Still fine and dandy. Much love to all from your ever-loving boy,  
Eric.

Wednesday 7 April 1915

Heliopolis YMCA

My dearest Mother,

Our last mail in Egypt was a bumper one for me as I received seven letters. Two from George, one from you, May, Mabel and Dad, and Jim Johnston. The latter is evidently having a spell and I am glad to hear from him. We have seen heaps of photos of him, and the route march of that other lot, and it seems that the old town is working up a ? over to khaki. Every week reinforcements are arriving and being allocated as required, but the majority will be left on the transport when we land and sent up to the front as wanted. I have noted Billie's

particulars and will look out for him as we are all to scrap together, both first and second forces.

I had looked forward to receiving a letter written after the receipt of my first from here, but we will miss it by a mail or so.

We have orders that we will move off at midnight on Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> inst for Alexandria, embark on the ASCOT, sail due north ? bringing up near "Galipoli" (?) on the Sea of Marmara and march on Constantinople. Of course anything may happen to alter this but that is the present intention. It is expected that we will land on a sandy beach and will meet with opposition. The navy and aircraft will assist so the first scrap of our ? will be modern warfare. Our officers say the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade, which left here three weeks ago, attempted to land but were repulsed.

As we are not to be supplied with anything for 48 hours, each man takes his "iron" rations and his own water bottle to be filled if he is lucky so we are to be tried out from the jump.

Everyone is elated, patriotic chants can be heard in all tents. It is rumoured Ian Hamilton is to be GOC and an ? of pride is felt that he deems us fit to act under him. He inspected us in an awful storm and was really pleased with all he saw. We are the most complete army corps ever outfitted, so should not besmirch the old fellow's reputation. After we have left our first nervousness behind us – not 1% have ever fought in a battle – and been taught a few practical lessons by the enemy's bullets, we have material good enough to shaft these Turks. They are said to be good scrappers, but I don't go ? on these darkies, they haven't the spirit of our fellows. Maybe when we dust them up Kitchener will let us have a bash at the Hun. As to Constantinople I don't wish to go garrison duty there even if it has the finest mosque in the world. I am enclosing a cutting from the local rag on the question of departure.

I heard a good reading last night. Our Lieutenant was once a ? and the lads gave it an "Australians in Egypt" frame but we now insist on the E being deleted.

I am also sending a cutting of the tourist post. You can imagine the sight but a statistical friend could indicate a ? from ?.

I last wrote of finishing up a damp outing but could not do so as we all are so busy. The first two days of this week were the busiest I ever had. Everything had to be done in a hurry and I felt really fagged out but am in good nick today. The weather was against us, a hot wind blowing and marking our very worst day in Egypt.

? for ? me of writing of the wonderfully interesting ? of the last week, and I cannot dwell on them. The officers and NCOs fought their mimic battles with ball ammunition. The din was awful and the final assault on the dummy enemy trenches was also interesting. The NCOs were complimented on the showing and nearly licked the officers. We fairly ran and shouted them off their legs.

Inspections and examinations galore for the past week. We have to leave some of our old chaps in hospital but have over 300 reinforcements to hand.

Included are Harold George and Fred Thompson and Jamie Tasker. They were away the day of the GOC's inspection and what a glorious occasion. Each spoke to me for they knew me easily. We are trying to work them into our company, but it is just a matter of luck. With

Tasker is a "Goog" Miller and a John Perry, all of Newington (*College*), maybe the girls will know of them. The shaking up at Colombo must have turned their vaccinations up for they are still plainly visible.

We lost another yesterday but have still a good record. I have not heard from Mary and she is the only one not to write. Don't worry over the sillier ??. It is here and there ?. We're fine and I'll bet all the others in NSW are just as well. I have some good fellows with me and am quite confident of their readiness and assistance when wounded.

Let your baby boy carry on. He will pull up at the right spot. Don't fear for my clothing. It is all complete I have used my own to date but am starting out with our issue. We have three pairs of sound boots so don't imagine me as barefooted.

As we are over strength we have dropped all the ? and doubtful ones and have only kept the better men so have a good team with us. I don't expect to hear from home for some time now. The same will apply to you from me. What I have written of our future operation is just what the colonel has told my officer. You should know long before this reaches you what is ? out but it ? cheer you to know that I am setting out in perfect ? and feel as cheerful and chirpy as a cricket.

What the future holds I know not but am not the least bit worried or pessimistic. I enlisted to assist in the ?? of ? and will endeavour. So bring them to a satisfactory ?. By so doing I will encounter a certain amount of danger, but don't you worry over that, for if it is to be my lot, it must be so. I have my share of common sense and judgement and will not "play to the gallery". All the boys wish to be remembered to you and ask me to thank you for your kind wishes.

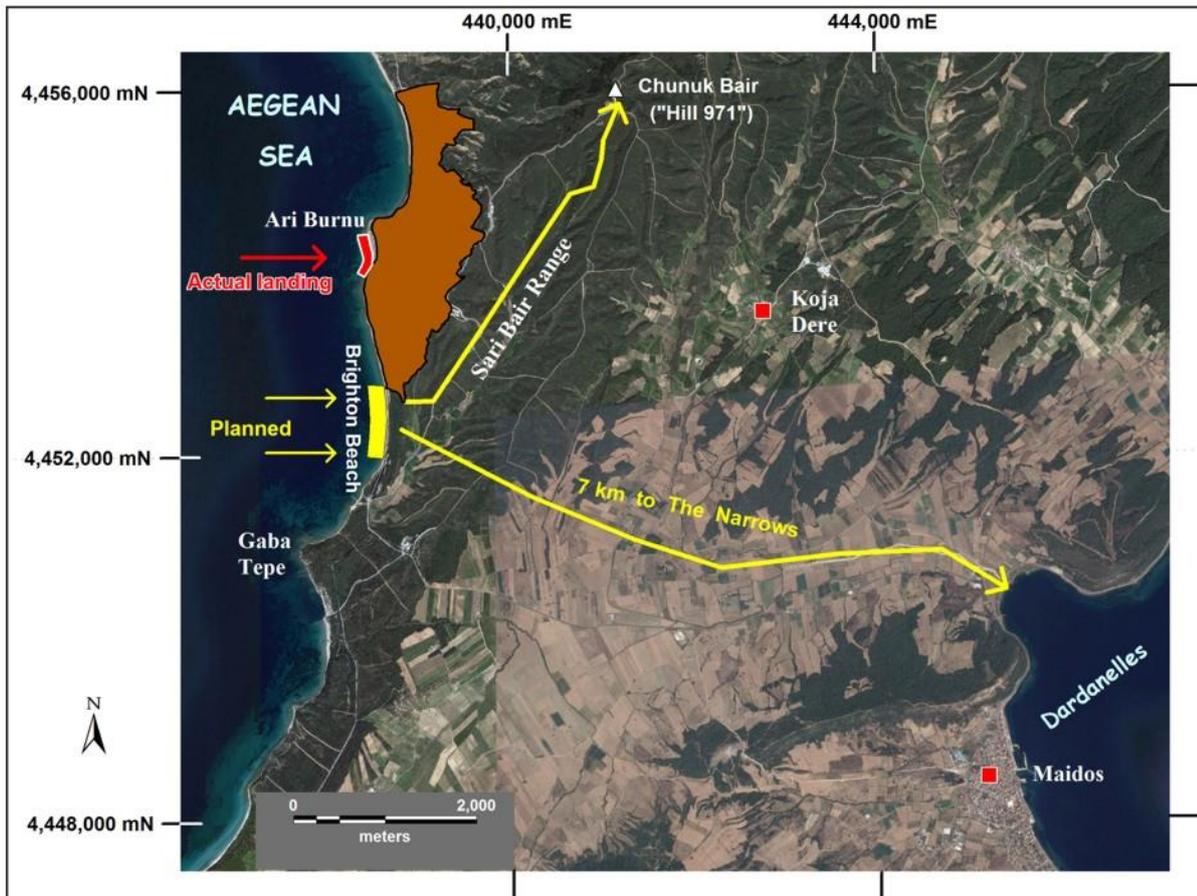
I cannot write to Gulgong, ask the girls to do so for me please. I must get on with my ? job at once so goodbye mother. My whole self and condition of mind, body and ?? of your always motherly guidance and ? and I cannot find words to express my gratitude.

My fondest love and heaps of it to all our people. Honoured am I, respected mother and father in describing myself as your ever loving and dutiful boy,  
Eric R Cotterill.

## QUINN'S POST

*Hamilton's plan for the landings on the Gallipoli Peninsula was complex, and as a result, an unmitigated disaster. His staff micro-managed in excruciating detail every aspect, not allowing for possible changes in the situation that might require initiative on the part of the commanders on the ground. This was British military doctrine as taught at Sandhurst, based on the assumption that the troops and their officers were dimwits. The resulting 4-week delay in execution of the attack gave von Sanders ample time to prepare the Turks and bring in an abundance of heavy artillery, howitzers and machine guns.*

*Also, the plan required separate attacks on several fronts. Thus Hamilton ignored the fundamental precept of Napoleon, and split his forces, with the Anzacs being assigned "an independent operation of dubious feasibility." (Patton, 1936). The Anzacs were to land near Gaba Tepe and secure their left flank by occupying the heights of the Sari Bair Range as far north as Chunuk Bair ("Hill 971" to the British), known to the Turks as Koja Chemen Tepe (the "Great Grass Hill"). The Anzacs were then to advance rapidly on Maidos with the objective of cutting off any Turkish reinforcements from the main landing site at Cape Helles.*



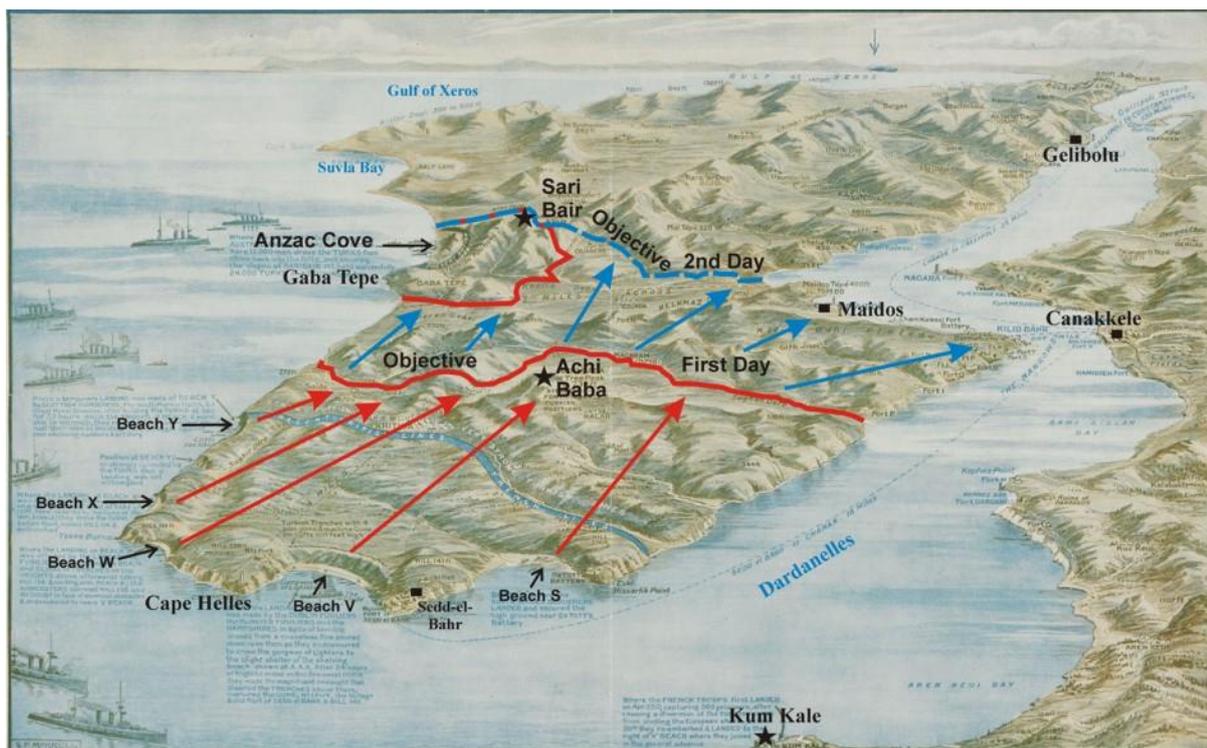
**Map 5. The ambitious plan for the Anzac sector on 25<sup>th</sup> April.**

*Map compiled by D G Jones on to Google Earth base. Area occupied by the Anzacs April-August shown in brown.*

*Hamilton knew that a very rugged and difficult part of the coast had been selected for the Anzac landing. Unfortunately, as Hamilton admitted (Hamilton, 1915a) in his First Despatch, the landing craft failed to maintain their assigned direction and "the actual point of*

disembarkation was rather more than a mile north of that which I had selected, and was more closely overhung by steeper cliffs." So, the Anzacs landed on "a very narrow strip of sand, about 1,000 yards in length, bounded on the north and the south by two small promontories." The site backed on to a series of steep, sharp spurs separated by deep ravines, the whole covered by prickly scrub. The error in navigation doubled the distance and difficulty of the task. The troops soon found themselves mixed up, scattered and lost amongst the gullies, and were readily repelled by the Turkish defenders.

Meanwhile the battle-hardened and experienced British 29<sup>th</sup> Division was to land at five beaches at the toe of the peninsula and, supported on three sides by naval gunfire from the combined British and French Fleets, was to advance and capture the heights of Achi Baba.



**Map 6. Hamilton's plan of attack for Cape Helles**

*Compiled by D G Jones on to map published in "The Graphic" newspaper*

The landings at "Y" and "S" beaches were primarily for flank protection while the main force was to go ashore at "X", "W" and "V" beaches, as expected by von Sanders, who had prepared a hot reception. The French were to land at Kum Kale, on the south side of the entrance to the Dardanelles, in order to prevent the guns there from threatening the British landing beaches.

The Royal Naval Division was sent to Bulair to pretend to attack and thus hold down the Turkish divisions to the north. However, the transport ships were so lightly loaded that they rode high out of the water. The Turks saw through this empty threat and ignored them.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion sailed from Alexandria at noon on 13 Apr 1915 aboard HMAT ASCOT, a 13-year-old rust bucket that had just unloaded a cargo of guano. She was described by Sergeant Laseron as "an old tramp steamer of perhaps 5000 tons burden. Into this something over 1000 men and about 300 horses are crammed and certainly there is not

*much room for moving about. The horses moreover have the best quarters, that is to say the de main deck and the deck below, while the men are one layer below this. Our quarters are in one of the after holds, two stories from daylight, and into the small space of this some 219 of us are jammed. Moreover the iron decks are greasy and unclean, and the deck above is leaky, so that in some places there is a continual trickle of horses' urine. Tucker now consists of biscuit and bully though we get tea every meal, and some jam and cheese."*

*ASCOT arrived at Port Mudros, Lemnos, at 5 am on Saturday 17 Apr. The men were confined to the ship for the next 8 days, apart from some practice at scaling rope ladders over the side with full kit. Private Byron Hobson wrote in his diary on 22 Apr "The sooner we leave this rotten tub the better for all concerned. Every day we send men away to the hospital. Two went from my company today and 3 a couple of days back."*

*HMAT ASCOT sailed from Lemnos at 10:40 am on 25<sup>th</sup> April, arriving off Anzac Cove at 4:30 pm. "A", "B" and "C" Companies (less 1 platoon) disembarked under fire from a torpedo boat destroyer at 9:30 pm.*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P05927.013.001

**Photo 16. View from HMAT ASCOT 25 April 1915, of transports lying off Gaba Tepe**

*Source: AWM P05927.013.001 (Roy Traill collection)*

*Corporal Eric Tuson of "D" Company described the disembarkation:" Soon came the order, "Fall in, in sections, and prepare to disembark." We put on our equipment, and picking up our rifles and other impedimenta; we shuffled into place on the tightly packed deck. I think that each man must have carried about eighty pounds. We knew that we must be self-supporting for three days. All supplies, including water, had to be shipped from Egypt. There would be no wheeled transport and every thing must be landed on an open beach under fire. We carried fuel, picks and shovels, and two hundred rounds of ammunition. Shoulder-straps were to be left undone, so that should any unfortunate get into the water, he might have a chance to free himself. Suddenly a low shape loomed up ahead, a voice came*

"ASCOT ahoy," a gong sounded, and HM Destroyer CHELMER checked her way in a white flurry, and made fast alongside. The rope ladders were lowered over the side to the destroyer's decks and we commenced our slow shuffling to the rail. I climbed over and started down rung by rung. It was pitch dark, and one had to feel carefully for each foothold. My equipment braces were cutting into my shoulders. At last the feel of solid deck underfoot. We shuffled along aft, and stood packed tight around the after gun. Our voices came quietly; a drizzling rain was falling; the sea was lapping our stern. The hull of the Ascot loomed high alongside, dark and remote. Above a horse pawed the deck; below a dynamo whirred a monotonous song. The night was chill and dank. We shivered in sympathy."



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

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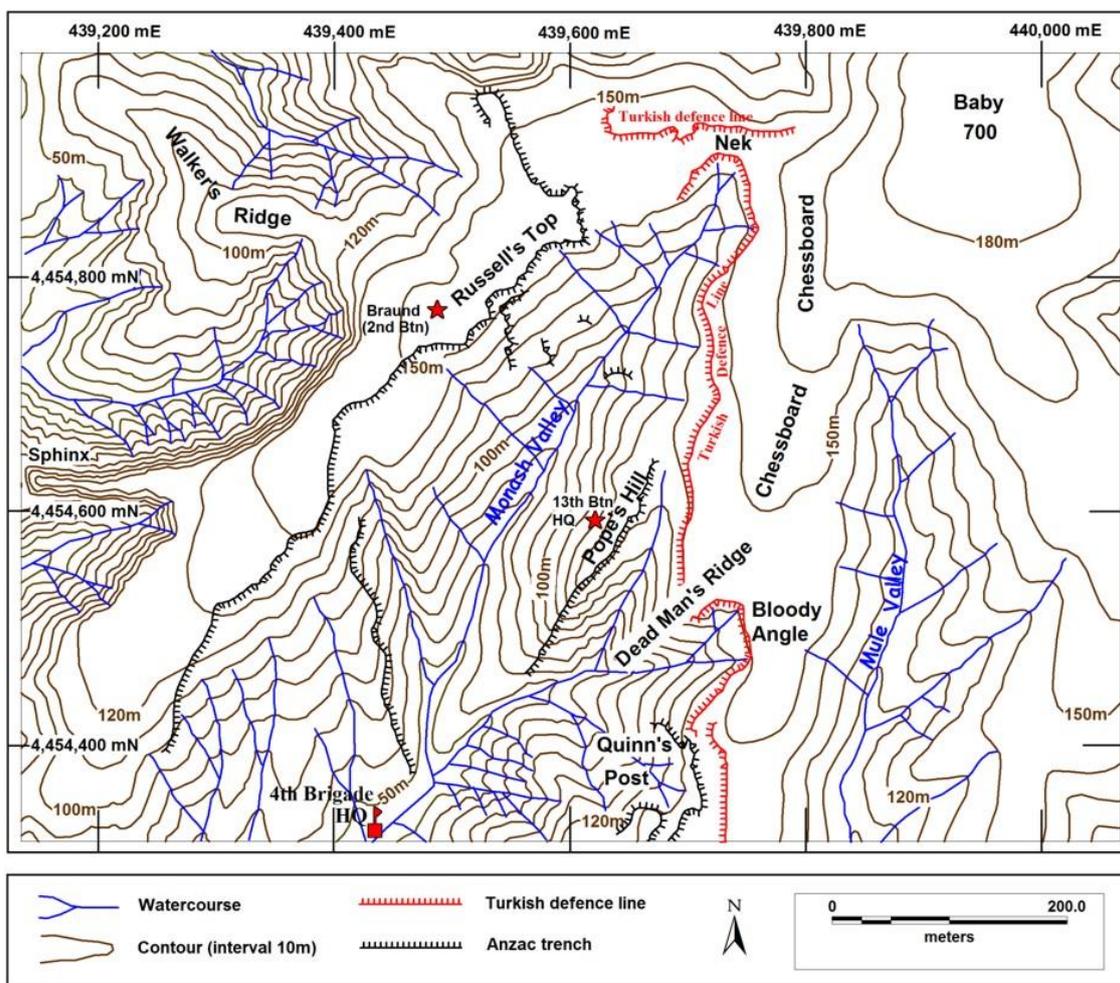
**Photo 17. 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion soldiers transferring to punt from torpedo boat, 26<sup>th</sup> April**

Source: AWM P05927.014.002 (Roy Traill collection)

Driver John Hawken, writing to his parents at Broadmeadow, Newcastle, described the landing: "It was very tough fighting for the boys to land, but they are all right now. They have done great work. It was lovely to see them going into action. They were landed in torpedo boats, with bullets and shrapnel shell flying all round them. There were many killed and wounded. The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion did great work there. They lost a lot of men. All my mates are gone, and they lost nearly all their officers. Colonel Burnage led them like a hero. He's a great fighter, and loved by all his men. He knocks about amongst them with bullets flying all about him.

The 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion landed at Anzac Beach a little before midnight. Private Dudley Walford wrote in his diary: "A muster parade was held, and after we had gained all necessary information we lay down at the brow of the hill for a few hours rest. At early dawn we started up Shrapnel Gully to reinforce the firing line. We were directed as we went by those who were either resting, or who had already been torn by wounds. As we came in touch with other Brigades, who were lodged on the summit of any precipitous looking hills, the different platoons, headed by their respective officers reinforced the more vital points, which, as the battle progressed were named after the leader of their defenders. Most of our men ascended Pope's Hill which position they defended for nearly three weeks."

For the next 4 days the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion remained on Pope's Hill. Their position was precarious; they were overlooked on three sides by well-entrenched Turkish troops on the plateau stretching from the Nek to the north, along the Chessboard to the east as far south as Bloody Angle. Both from the Nek and Bloody Angle, the Turks could fire straight down into and along Monash Valley, the main supply route to the beleaguered Australians on Pope's Hill and Quinn's Post. Troops who were at Pope's, if they wanted to get around to Russell's Top, had to go away down Monash Gully, along the beach, and up Walker's Ridge—a distance of nearly 5 km, whereas the gap in the front line between Pope's and Russell's was only about 200 m.

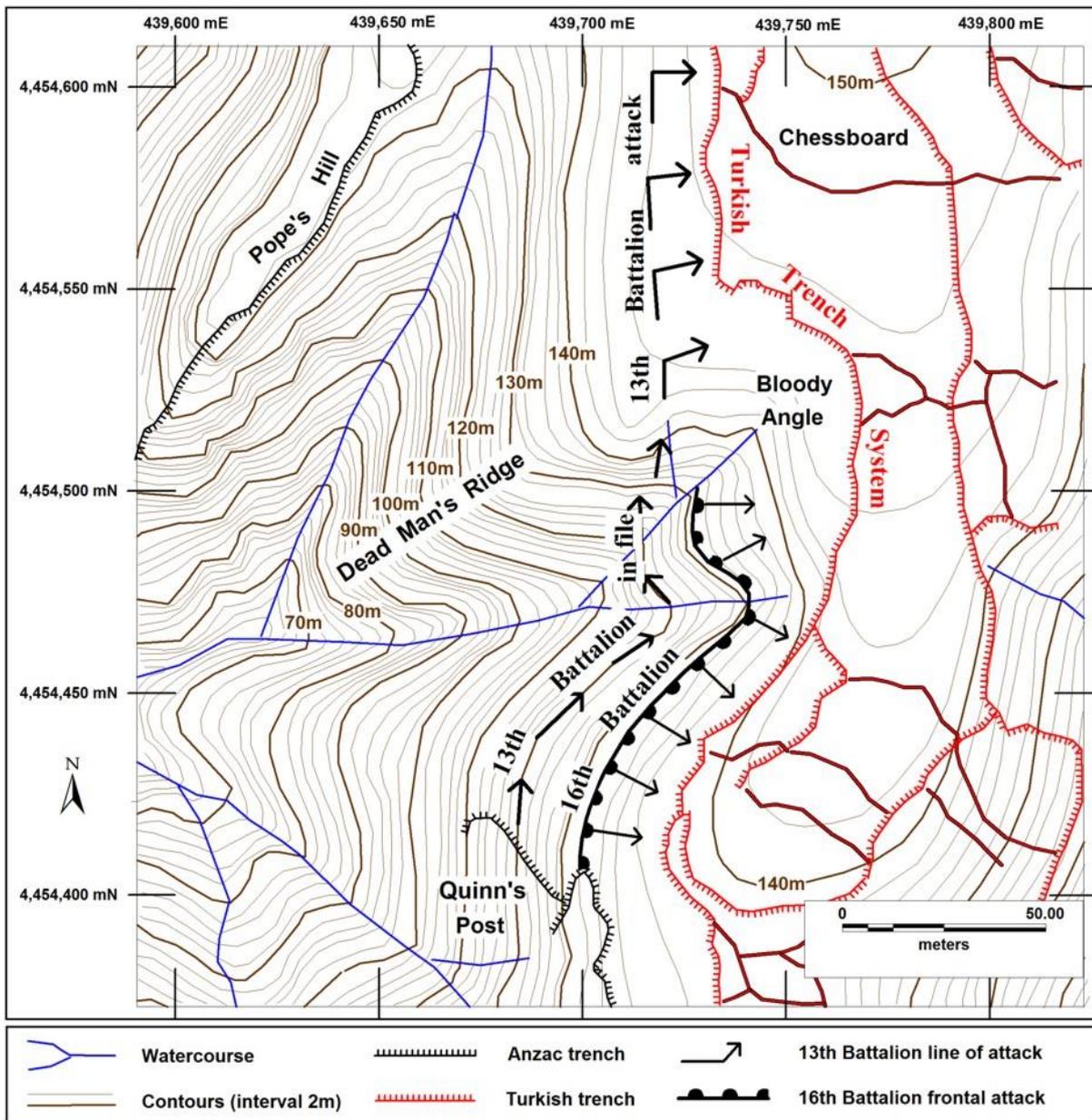


**Map 7. Positions at the head of Monash Valley, 27<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> April 1915**

Map compiled by D G Jones from Turkish 1:5,000 topographic maps (1919)

Turkish snipers could creep almost unimpeded down Dead Man's Ridge right into Monash Valley and this made re-supply of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion extremely dangerous. As a result, the Australians were desperately short of water, food and ammunition. If the soldiers in the front line trench at Quinn's had been pushed back the few short metres over the edge of the plateau, the positions on Pope's and Quinn's would have become untenable and the whole Monash Valley salient lost. Something had to be done to remedy the situation, but the Australians were exhausted from days of battle without sleep, water or food, as well as sadly depleted in numbers.

To fill the gaps in the line and push forward to take Baby 700, the 13<sup>th</sup>, 16<sup>th</sup> and Otago Battalions were ordered to advance from Quinn's Post with the 13<sup>th</sup> in the centre, the 16<sup>th</sup> on the right, and the Otago Battalion on the left. At dusk on 2<sup>nd</sup> May "the 16<sup>th</sup> filed up past the foot of Quinn's to the end of Bloody Angle. The 13<sup>th</sup> followed to the opening of the Angle, also in file. Both battalions were greatly weakened and extremely weary." (White, 1924).



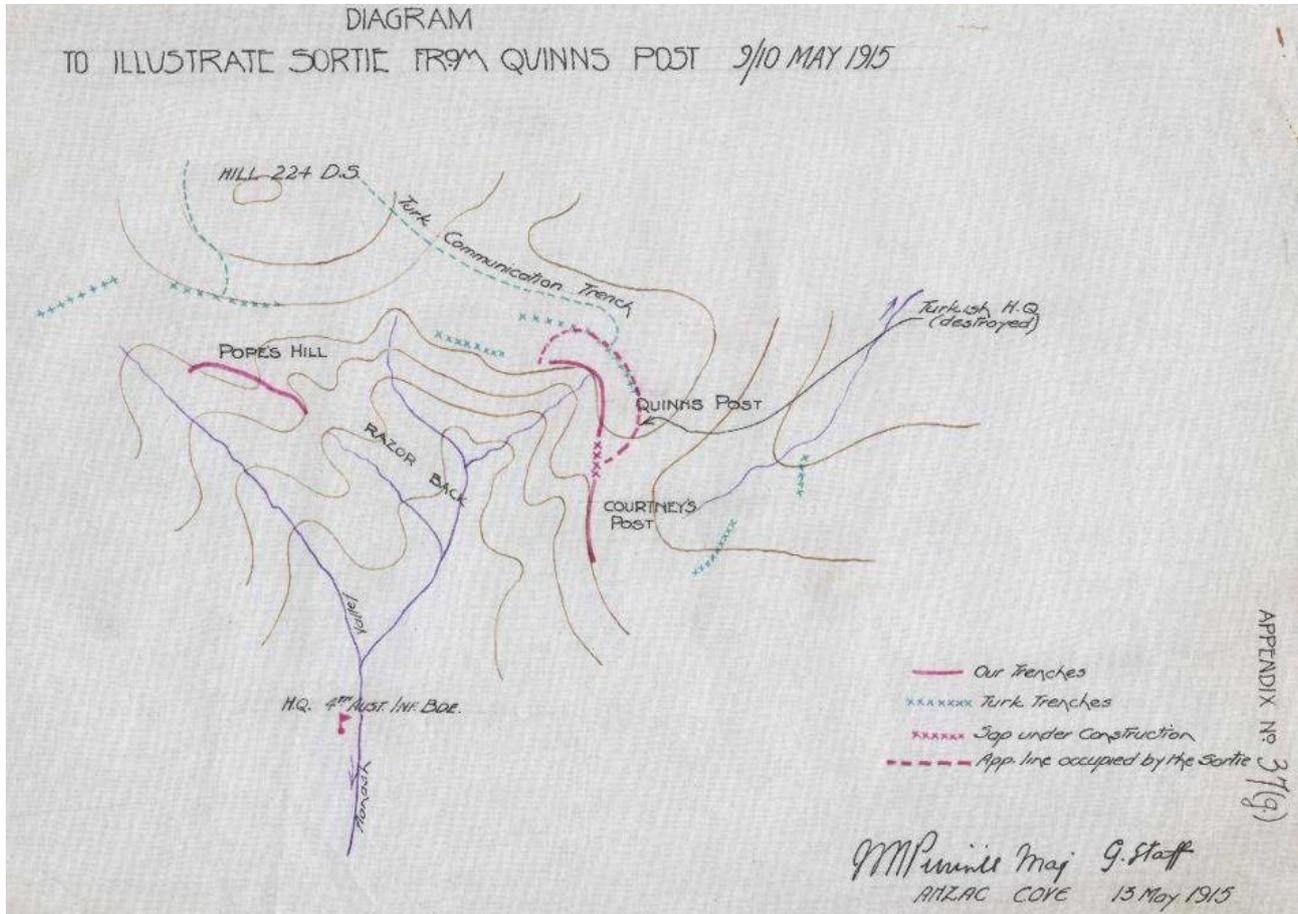
**Map 8. 13<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> Battalions launch attack 7:15 pm 2<sup>nd</sup> May 1915**

*Map compiled by D G Jones from Turkish 1:5,000 topographic maps (1919)*

The attack was beaten back by the Turks, and both battalions suffered heavy losses. Nevertheless, another attempt was planned for the night of 9/10 May.

In a letter to Eric Cotterill's parents on 15 May 1915, Major Edmonds wrote: "Long before this reaches you, you will no doubt have received the sad news of your son's death, and it is with the hope that it may bring you some little consolation in your great bereavement that I send you this, telling how a very gallant soldier met a soldier's death.

Our trenches are within a few hundred yards of those of the enemy, and it was necessary to get some estimates of the force opposing us – a very dangerous mission. Volunteers were called for, and Sergeant Cotterill, with five companions, offered to try to get the desired information. It was no rash impulse that prompted him, for he well knew the dangerous nature of the task before him. Ever thoughtful of others, he sent back the youngest member of the party, as he thought him too young to take up such dangerous work.



**Map 9. Sortie from Quinn's, 9/10 May 1915**

Source: AWM (4<sup>th</sup> Brigade War Diary May 1915)

The party left our trenches, and managed to get along unobserved for some distance. Sergeant Cotterill then raised his head to ascertain if he was moving in the right direction, and almost immediately was struck by the bullet which killed him. 'Twas a man's death - met doing a man's work, and Australia must needs be proud of such as he. He was among the best of our very fine NCO's and his loss is a great one to his regiment, where he held a high place for his soldierly ability, as well as for his manliness and his gentlemanly ways.

"He was brought back to our trenches in the most gallant manner by Private Harold George, between who and your son existed a very strong friendship, based, I understand, on old school associations. You will regret to hear that he, too, was badly hurt before reaching the lines."

A letter was also written on 28 May by Lieut-Colonel Burnage, CO of the 13<sup>th</sup> Battalion: "It is my painful duty to advise you of the death of your son, Lieut. Eric Cotterill, who was killed in action on the 9th inst. He had volunteered for duty in charge of a special reconnoitring party

*and was shot whilst carrying out his duty. He had been recommended for a commission as second lieutenant, but, though he had been awarded that rank, the official notification of his promotion did not reach us till the day following his death. I offer you my sincere sympathy in your sad loss."*

*A newspaper article (source unknown) reported more details of the engagement:*

*ALEXANDRIA, July 13. - So long as wounded continue to arrive in Egypt from the front there will be stories of bravery and devotion that will never weary in the telling. Every day some new phase of battle is unfolded before those who have not yet heard the sound of guns in anger, and few can listen without a thrill of pride. The spirit of boastfulness is almost entirely absent, and in allotting praise or blame there is an uncompromising fairness.*

*When Sergeant Cotterill, of Young, New South Wales, was shot, he was on a scouting expedition of great daring. There were five men in the party, the others being Corporal Sullivan, Private George, Private Clark, and Private Tierney. Turks were everywhere in front, but that did not prevent these men from pushing their way forward unobserved, and they carefully reconnoitred a position which it was intended to occupy later on. Then Cotterill went farther ahead, and made other observations of the enemy's trenches at close quarters. He also discovered that some of the advanced lines abandoned by our troops a few days previously had been occupied by the Turks and greatly strengthened. He completed his work without being detected, and was returning to where the other men lay concealed when a rifle cracked suddenly, and Cotterill fell on his face. A rain of bullets followed, and it seemed impossible that any man should enter that zone and live.*

*In the thick of the shooting, however, Harold George, who was one of the best known international footballers of New South Wales, announced that he intended to help his comrade, and, without a thought of danger, he dashed from cover and brought the wounded man in. The party lay quietly for a while, without answering the enemy's fire, but it was obvious that if the Sergeant's life was to be saved he should be at once removed to where skilled attention was available. Private Tierney volunteered to go for assistance, and every yard of progress he made was marked by bullets kicking up the dust all around him. He did not return. Then the football crack lifted Cotterill on to his shoulders, and commenced to creep back, while Sullivan and Clarke (sic) stayed behind to cover their comrade's movements and to attract the enemy's fire. They were successful in their ruse for a time, but it was necessary for George to stand up at one point, and, as he staggered forward with his burden, the Turkish rifleman saw him. An instant later he fell, hard hit. Then Sullivan and Clark began to fight their way back, shooting from every rock and bush that offered a scrap of cover. Corporal Sullivan was quickly put out of action, and had to be left in the neutral zone between the two lines of trenches. Clarke was the only survivor. He dragged himself into the territory of the 13th Battalion, when darkness came on, in a terribly exhausted condition, and without rifle or cap, which had been shot away. The information which he brought back, however, was of the greatest value to the Australians, and was probably the means of saving hundreds of lives.*