



South Australians at war – transcript – D6338 (L)

Diary of Jack McBean

Diary and notes of my life in South Africa as a trooper in the 4th SA, 1900

Transcription of full document

Transcribed by Sue Wallace 26/11/01

Being on the White Cliff opal fields when the first contingents left Australia, I thought how much I'd like to go too, little dreaming that a few months later, I would be one of Australia's representatives in South Africa. I left in N.S.W. in about Dec. 1898 and came down to Adelaide and after remaining there for about three months I left for Western Australia. There was nothing doing there so I returned to Adelaide. About this time the authorities were forming a 4th Cont., so I decided to have a try for this one. Luck favoured me and with the help of a bit of cheek and self-assurance I managed to get in. I was put in N. S. troop A squad under Lieut. White. At 2:30 AM on the 30th of April reveille all was sounded is, and the work miles and training our courses was started, other men struck the tents and clear the account, at 10 AM we were on our last parade waiting to march down to the tram, which was to convey us to port Adelaide, with the troopship "Manhattan" was waiting. By 1130 we were all seated in the tram, and I'm looking out of the window we could see mothers and sisters saying goodbyes to their sons, and brothers, many of her in, alas, would never see each other again. At last the signal was given and within half-hour we were at port Adelaide. After marching through the Sts., we embarked, at 4 pm sharp, amid deafening cheers, is the propeller of the good old transport commenced its sides, and we all knew that at last we had started on our long journey. I'll see time I spent on the troopship I have little to say, suffice to say that we were starved from the day we put foot on the boat till the day we left her, if the complaints were of no use, and I say that col r, the o C ought to be -- -- for allowing his men to be treated as they were. We had on board the Tasmanian and W. A. contingents, all told 500 men, who were under the command of Col Rowell. May 28th cited land at daybreak and it 8 AM we saw a gunboat bearing down on us, which proved to be British, and had come out from Beira with orders. We came to anchor just off the coast, and all that was to be seen was a long strip of foreshore with a few houses in the background, which formed the town of Beira. I was lucky enough to get shawl for an hour, and had a bit of a look round. The place is seen to the floor of saloons and knickers, the



latter being allowed in the primitive sickly style. Choral a row was from displays as far as Marian Beller, and it is of two foot gauge, But I believe the Co intends to alternative to 346 inches as soon as the troops have passed over it. The number of transports in the bay at present give it a very busy look. We received orders to proceed to turban 22nd June early in the morning, and as soon as the filed lifted we saw a number of trial sports and other vessels flying at anchor, and at the back of them green hills which can write down to the edge of the water. I cannot say it was a beautiful sight it reminded me very much of Adelaide, as seen from the golf. All the boats had flags flying, and we could not make out why they were all flying until boat came alongside and informed us that Victoria had been taken. Of calls we sent at Shearer is that it was only a half-hearted one, for we all sort, but now Victoria had been taken that the wall was over. An object of interest, was a prison shipped lying in our quarter with 900 and all prisoners on board, and all available glasses were resistant on her to see what kind of men we had left Australia to fight against. June 6 to the ninth still at anchor June 10th Merv Meerut to the shawl and obtains a better view of the harbour, is which is just in sides we mouth of the river is and is protected from the heavy swell of the ocean by a breakwater. The hospital ship was at anchor near the mouth of the river and to see the men moving about port is one in mind of that old quotation "War must always be, what it is, most horrible at best". June 10th went inside the river and started acts once to download the horses, they seem quite pleased to be on "terra firma" and feel the solid ground under their seats once more. It was here that I saw for the first time the zoo and employees and their rickshaws, the bullies are decked out in all kinds of fashion, and as soon as they see a likely customer they dance and prance about, saying "me very fast boss" we were unable to get all of the horses off the day so what were already landed were picqueted out along the wharf and I spent my first night shore in Africa on horse picquet. June 12th at daybreak commenced to land the rest of the horses and by 930 we had started to march to be where we worked account will stop during the march one of the men, trooper Prosser , was strong from his horse and the heavy lorry running over him killed him instantly. I 330 we were in camp in the horses enjoying the green grass, which they have been so long without. The Is situated on a rise and the good view could be obtains of the surrounding country. Of the town I can't say I think much, the surroundings are pretty enough, but the town seems to be laid out anyhow. Readers everywhere, some of whom are wonderful specimens of manhood, great legs and arms, the muscles standing out like great ridges of steel. Perfect models. June 13 drilling, -- first day o thisin army



rations. I was a train guard, would orders came for us to be on the move acts fall in the morning for the front wheels sort, so you can imagine power disappointment when we found out we were going to embark again and go further down the coast. Reigning cats and tells all nights and I had to the march up and down in VE/, I went to this in June 14 consistently been starting for about 24 hours, no rations, so I decided to get some by acknowledging the shawl. Orders had come out that no one was to leave the boat, as it was not lie in the minute we would sidle. I go ashore by sliding down a road and had a real good tuck out. So good in fact alone could hardly walk back to the boat. I got on board again by going on board the boats that was lying next to us, is and dropping from her bows onto the stern of the "Manhattan". This all the others who had taken French leave will call by the guard stationed at the game ways of the ship. June 16th left Durban and by the 18th were at anchor off Port Elizabeth. The town did not look is pretty in Durban, the hills were not as green and their words a lack of calls so. The horses were taken ashore in and by 6 PM we had them all about except in a had to stop the following day June 19th.