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[998]

Wing Ship
C.C.S.

W. T. Small

80
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No 3 A.S.H.

1915 No. Wing Ship "Dundas Castle"

Transferred to French boat "Tormador"

at Sicile Bay receiving wounds

wounded, frightful, some 10 days

and fly blown and septic.

With No 3 A.S.H. at Seamus

March 1918 to 6th Stab. Hvy.

wounded coming in about

500 in every two hours.

April to 13th C.C.S. - wounded

from Kessel, all French.

To the 36th C.C.S. at Provins

excellent relations with

R.A.M.C., treated with

great kindness.

The Official War Historian of the Commonwealth Government (Dr. C. E. W. Bean), after his study of the collection of private war records preserved in the Australian War Memorial Library, wrote:—

"The private diaries in this collection furnish some of its most valuable historical records, but, like all private memoirs which were not compiled with any historical purpose, they should not be regarded as first-hand evidence except where it is certain that they are so. The diarist is almost always sincere in his desire to record accurately, but he is subject to no obligation or inducement to indicate whether he is recording his own observations or incidents told him by friends or heard at third or fourth hand at the mess-table. Thus, in some of the diaries in this collection, scenes described with vivid detail, and without any warning that they are told at second or third hand, have been found to be completely inaccurate in important detail. A certain number also have been written up or revised long after the events, though doubtless usually from notes made at the time. In most cases the student must rely on his experience and on internal evidence to guide him in judging what is and what is not likely to be historically accurate."



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The Third Australian General Hospital Unit, of which I was a member, left the shores of Australia on 16th May 1915 by the R.M.S. Mooltan which also carried a full complement of passengers.

The journey was by no means an idle one. The morning was begun with physical exercises, the instructor being the R.S.M.

Afterwards the sisters gave lectures to the orderlies re bandaging & general ward nursing.

Col. Stawell & Major Sherwin, who had previous army experience, gave us many valuable hints regarding the treatment of bullet & shell wounds etc.

We arrived in England in the beginning of July 1915. There seemed to be nothing for us to do for the time being, & after reporting daily, were left to ourselves. After three weeks, the unit was ordered to Alexandria & we went on board the "Werflinger".

We began to realize that we were in for the real thing, for we had 3000 soldiers with us, all lights were extinguished at night, & we had a submarine guard of 500 men.

We landed in Alexandria safe & well & after spending a couple of days in the hotels, proceeded by hospital ship "Dundas Castle" to Lemnos Harbour, arriving there on August 4th.

The hospital was not ready, owing to the boat from England with the equipment going astray & we were transferred to a boat lying in the harbour.

Aug 6th I with five other sisters were given ten minutes notice to go to the small French boat "Formosa." This was an emigrant ship,

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all the crew being French & strange to say, there was no English spoken. We found there four English medical officers & a number of orderlies. Our mode of boarding the vessel was a very novel one for us, for we were pulled on board off a tender. Once we embarked, we had a very busy time.

We were working all night fitting the ships for patients & for an operating theatre we had a small cabin.

We left Lemnos at 5pm. & arrived at Suvla Bay at 1am. the next morning. One might mention something of interest here, for we wondered what they did not send any wounded to us.

It appears that we were flying the French flag & those on shore took no notice of us.

At length our ensign appeared above the French one & wounded were sent to us about 5pm. The scene presented was rather startling. Our own warships were all round & firing salvos at the enemy, while enemy shell & shrapnel was falling fast; & the wreck of the first landing boat (the forepart being all shattered) was lying near by.

We were receiving wounded all night & terrible wounds they were - the majority of them were ten days old, flyblown & septic.

All were operated upon on admission & the little theatre was kept busy all night, - limbs, had they been able to have been treated before & would have been saved, had to be amputated. This boatload constituted the first batch of wounded to the 3rd A.S.H. We did three trips (one daily) on this boat.

to Suvla & back.



The 7th August, we were ordered to Anzac. to do the same kind of work, but instead of taking the wounded to the 3rd A.G.H., they were transferred to bigger boats for either Alexandria or England. In all we did seven trips to Anzac.

The 15th August we left the improvised hospital boat for our unit, after having had a very busy but happy time, & our places were taken by English sisters who had just recently arrived.

When we did arrive at what was to be our next sphere of work & our home, namely the unit, we had an eye opener.

The site chosen for the hospital was a delightful one, being on a hill overlooking the bay, but instead of a well laid out hospital, only a few bell tents had been erected for the housing of the Sisters.

The patients were nursed in the open & makeshift shades were fixed over them.

There were no dressings so we had to improvise them by tearing up our own underclothing, old tins were used for washing & there was no fresh water.

Our Lavatory & Bathroom were the sea. Our food consisted of bully beef & biscuits. These things were cheerfully borne by all, but the extras in the shape of the plague of flies, were very hard to endure.

This rough style of living lasted for nearly three weeks when boxes were put down & we got fresh water, & loud cheers — the boat with the hospital equipment arrived at last.

Marquees were speedily erected over the patients,



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canteens opened & the outward structure of the 3rd A.G.H. came into being.

About two months, after the landing of the unit on the Island, other English hospitals arrived. One thing that one will never forget was, that during our hard times, the warships visiting the harbour were very hospitable, inviting twenty of us at a time for meals. After a while we received very few wounded, for the casualties were in the shape of dysentery & paratyphoid fever. These cases kept us very busy for the remainder of our time on the Island.

At the evacuation of the Peninsula we expected quite a number of wounded. Great preparations were made for their accommodation & we even ran up our bell tents, but happy to relate there was only one patient.

Xmas was a very happy time. We had no need to receive patients & the hospital was gradually being evacuated. We had plenty of time off duty & part of it was taken in having donkey rides to dirty Greek villages.

As regards the customary Xmas dinner, we would have had very poor fare, if we had had to depend on local supplies, but the Hospital ship "Aquitania" was in the harbour at the time & gave us turkeys as for dinner, which saved the situation, & we had a very happy day.

The A.I.F. also had a rest camp just across the bay, & the boys used to row over & take us for meals & entertain us with sports: these



were rough & ready but they were more than acceptable.

On Jan. 14. 1916. after five strenuous but the happiest months of the war we left Lennos on the Oxfordshire for Alexandria.

There was a little delay in starting, for we had a week on board the boat before we left the harbour. While there, the English sisters & officers couldn't be kind enough to us, comforts & all kinds of good things being provided daily. We finally left the harbour on the 22nd Jan. 1916.

About the end of the same month we proceeded from Alexandria to Cairo, half of the sisters being sent to No 1. A.S.H. Helopolis & the other half to Mena House for a week. Afterwards we went to Abbassia Barracks. In the middle of February to put up what was to be known once more as the 3rd A.S.H.

While here we had a fairly easy time, with the exception of the third week in June, when we received the wounded from the Romani push.

This kept us very busy for three weeks. We left Egypt Sept 24. & arrived in Brighton, England, on Oct 5th.

At Brighton we took over, Kitchener Hospital. This was a very big place & we had fairly comfortable quarters. While there, we received quite a number of very bad cases, four theatres were kept going & our patients represented nearly every part of the world. The 28th April 1917, we arrived in Abbeville, France. As seemed to be the custom for our unit, the hospital was not ready.

6.

while it was being built, about twenty of us were sent to No 1. South African hospital by. I spent most of my time in the theatre there. We received wounded from Bullecourt & other parts of the Somme. We came across a special kind of treatment.

The septic wounds were dressed with salt packs & Carroll Dakin treatment carried out with great advantage to the sufferers.

July 8th 1917. A few of us left for Hardlot, where the 25 General Hospital was stationed.

Though British, the whole of the nursing staff belonged to the A.I.F. It contained 3000 beds, & buildings were composed of marquees. The patients treated mostly had diseases of the skin. While there I was in charge of the theatre. We took in all clean operations from the Boulogne area the surgical cases being housed in the Hotel Hardlot.

Hardlot is a very beautiful seaside resort, & when we had any time off, we spent it very happily on the beach. We were billeted in very pretty French houses.

For recreation we had any amount of Tennis, Badminton & surfing.

In Feb. 1918. I went to the South of France for a fortnight on leave. Only for the fact that there were strange people in the places we visited, one would have thought one were back in Australia — the wattle being in full bloom & the days warm & sunny.

In the beginning of March 1918. we went to the 6th Stationary Hospital & had orders to proceed to the 5th C.C.S., but owing to the abandonment of the latter, we remained where we were, & the 6th Stationary was converted for the time being into a C.C.S. The wounded boys came in in groups of about 500 every two hours.

Some of them had the first field dressing on them, others had puttees for bandages.

The Y.M.C.A. & all available premises were turned into wards & we had to improvise extra operating theatres.

At the end of April, with only half an hour's notice we went to the 13th C.C.S., at which we received the wounded from Kennel & they were all French boys.

After being a short time there, we had to leave because of the shelling, & went to the 11th C.C.S. We were off duty for a fortnight waiting for the 13th to fit up again, but we went instead to the 36th C.C.S. at Proven as they were exceptionally busy.

This was a splendidly fitted up C.C.S., all the appointments good & tents well laid out & besides the C.O. & officers were extremely kind.

We were not to remain there long, for we were pelted with shells, & the C.C.S. moved to Watten, where we only received influenza & pneumonia cases. We were altogether seven months with British C.C.S.'s & were treated with great kindness & needless to say we were very happy.

In the end of September 1918 we went on leave, intending to return afterwards to the C.C.S., so we left our Kit there.

On our return we received orders to proceed to Abbeville as the 36th had been burnt down & so we were back again at our old unit the 3rd A.S.H.

We met once more many of our old friends, but did not have much time for rest, for the Hospital was full of pneumonia influenza. The patients were mostly our boys, as the A.I.F. troops were resting round in the vicinity & the disease took off a great number of them.

During this severe time I was in charge of the acute medical ward.

I left Abbeville in the 2nd week of April 1919. for a fortnight's leave, during which arrangements were completed for me to take up new military employment, & after which I proceeded to 3rd A.S.H. Walford to do duty, & wait for the boat to take me back to dear old Aussie.

J. E. Lovell
Sister A.A.N.S.

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