

EXTRACT FROM VINCENT'S LETTER OF 18th April 1916.

Glad you liked the glorious account of the "Retreat from Anzac", although personally I can only say that the chap who wrote it had a most glorious imagination, as the facts of the case were about 90% wrong. Although far from being a journalist, I will try to give you some idea of how it was carried out. It started with Kitchener's visit, when he decided to evacuate, and I guess it was he who gave them the idea of how to carry it out. About a month before the evacuation we had a four days silence during which time no work was to be done in the daytime and not a shot to be fired in the trenches so as to give the idea that the place was deserted, and to avoid suspicion when the final silence was on, but of course none of us knew of the idea until the last week when the taking off of the troops began - then we saw through the whole business. Each night after dark troops would come out of the trenches and go down to the boat which would then take them to the troopship and so on to Lemnos. As each lot went the firing line was thinned out a bit more and each man did a little more than normal firing so as to give the impression that no alterations were taking place, until the last night when the men walked down to the beach with blankets wrapped round their feet to avoid making any noise. We left on the night of the 18th, and would very probably have been left until the last night only for the fact of our being such a small unit - only 200 strong out of 600. I shall never forget the last week as it was by far the hardest week's work I ever did in my life. For ten days we dare not take off a stitch of clothing, and used to work on fatigue all day and sometimes half the night too, and when not on fatigue were doing a watch in the firing line. I can assure you I was not sorry when it was all over and we were to have a few days rest at Lemnos, where we spent Christmas, from whence we came on to Egypt.....

2 DRL 842
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