

**AWM4**

**Australian Imperial Force unit war diaries,  
1914-18 War**

Flying Corps

**Item number:** 8/7/27

**Title:** No 4 Squadron, Australian Flying  
Corps

May - June 1919



AWM4-8/7/27



BACK TO AUSTRALIA.

Whilst at Hurdcott a number of members of the Squadron—both officers and men—took advantage of the concessions granted under the Non-Military Employment Regulations of the A.I.F., and left the Squadron in order to take up work in England. The remainder of 4th A.F.C., comprising twenty-four officers and ~~140~~ other ranks, marched out of Hurdcott Camp at 10 o'clock on the morning of May 6, and proceeded to Fovant railway station, where they entrained for Southampton. Rain fell during the march to the station; but considerably more than rain would have been necessary to damp the spirits of any member of the squadron on this journey. Southampton was reached at 2 p.m., the personnel dis-entraining on the wharf alongside ~~the~~ H.M.T. "KAISAR-I-HIND". The work of embarking baggage and personnel was immediately commenced, and was carried out both quickly and satisfactorily. Good accommodation was found on board the transport for all ranks, there being on board officers and men from 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 7th, and 8th Squadrons, A.F.C., and a small number of unattached officers and men, in addition to about fifty civilian passengers.

Many distinguished visitors attended at the wharf in order to tender their farewells to departing friends. A conspicuous figure was that of ~~Gen~~ General Sir William Birdwood, K.C.M.G. The Lord Mayor and Aldermen of the City of Southampton, brilliantly appa-relled in their splendid civic robes, and ushered by their attendants bearing the mace and wands of office, mounted a platform on the wharf, whilst the Lord Mayor expressed the thanks of the people of Southampton to the members of the Australian Flying Corps for their successful efforts during the war. He wished the departing troops a safe and pleasant return to their native shores. During the embarkation, a military band from the Port played appropriate selections. At six o'clock the transport left the ~~wharf~~ wharf, and proceeded to an anchorage in the harbor.

Shortly after six o'clock next morning, the "Kaisar I Hind" weighed anchor, and the long homeward journey was commenced. A beautifully mild sea was encountered in the English Channel, and later in the day the sun shone out gloriously. This gave all ranks a splendid opportunity of settling down comfortably for the voyage. These pleasant conditions of sea and weather continued all the way to Port Said, and, consequently, only a very small percentage of the men ~~were~~ was troubled by seasickness.

Each morning at 9.30 all units paraded, and half-an-hour's suitable physical training was carried out. This was the only daily parade; but several life-belt parades were held regularly at boat ~~stations~~ stations during the journey, and on Sundays ~~six~~ officers and men attended Church Parade. To beneficially occupy the long hours on board, various deck games and contests were organised. Chief of these were the inter-unit tug-o-war and boxing ~~tournaments~~ tournaments at various weights. The 4th A.F.C. acquitted itself creditably in these. Its tug-o-war team was only beaten in the final round; and Cpl. Lew won the Light-weight boxing tournament. The evenings were considerably brightened by concerts cinematograph programmes, band performances, and dances. The A.F.C. Brass Band, Orchestra, and Jazz Band beguiling many weary hours with their bright and tuneful selections.

Shortly before midday on May 16 the "Kaisar I Hind" entered the ~~harbour~~ harbour at Port Said, and tied up to the buoys at the entrance to the Suez Canal. To the great disappointment of all on board, no shore leave was granted during the two days the transport spent in the ~~port~~ port taking on coal and water. To occupy the time a programme of swimming events was drawn up, and successfully carried out adjacent to the ship's side. A message was received from the Military Governor of the Port expressing his congratulations upon the exemplary behaviour of the troops carried by the "Kaisar I Hind," and regretting that his orders prevented him from giving permission to the troops to enjoy shore leave at the port.

On Sunday, May 18, the journey was resumed an hour after mid-day. Whilst passing through the Suez Canal much amusement was experienced by all on board ~~the~~ at the envious remarks shouted from the banks of the canal by the members of the A.I.F. stationed in Egypt when they saw the transport thickly crowded with Australian troops returning to their native land. As soon as the Red sea was reached, everybody on board



commenced to suffer the discomfort of the great tropical heat. Unfortunately, the worst part of the journey was done with a following wind, which made existence between decks exceptionally uncomfortable.

On May 22 the transport anchored in the harbor at Aden. A stay of twenty-five hours was made here, and all ranks were given leave to go ashore for a swim. The anchor was weighed at 3.30 the following afternoon, and the journey resumed in tropical heat. A bad case of sunstroke was admitted to the ship's hospital on May 24, but the patient was not from the personnel of 4th A.F.C. On being admitted, the sufferer was in a very precarious condition, but determined and efficient treatment on the part of the members of the A.A.M.C. and A.A.N.S. practically dragged the patient from death's door. Half-way to Ceylon evidences of the Monsoons were encountered. Deluges of tropical rain fell, but failed to appreciably alleviate the discomfort of the heat. As the result of the high wind the sea became somewhat turbulent; these conditions prevailing until after crossing the Equator a week later.

At mid-day on May 29 the transport entered the harbor at Colombo, and anchored just inside the breakwater. Shore leave was granted to all ranks, and everybody thoroughly enjoyed themselves amongst the picturesque surroundings of this tropical port. Heavy rain fell during the night, and deluged many of the troops on their return journey across the harbor to the ship. The transport remained in port twenty-eight hours, and then, having been replenished with coal and water, resumed her voyage. Fine weather was encountered, and the Equator was crossed early on the morning of June 1. Six days later a violent north-west wind swept down on the vessel, and a big sea was soon running. Fortunately ~~everybody had found their~~ almost everybody had found their sea legs by this time. The same evening the most successful social function of the voyage took place---a Fancy Dress Dinner. Over two hundred and fifty people sat down ~~in fancy dress to the~~ evening meal in the saloon, and the variety and ingenuity of the improvised fancy costumes were exceptionally good. It was originally intended to follow the dinner with a dance, but the rough weather prevented this. However, a grand procession of fancy costumes was substituted, and a short impromptu programme of musical items given.

Very few people on board failed to see the sun rise on the morning of June 9; for with the dawn came the first glimpses of Australia. Naturally, after two or three years of wandering around Europe, there was much excitement amongst all ranks at the first sight of their native shores. The "Kaisar I Hind" anchored close to the entrance to the port of Fremantle, and was soon boarded by the Port Health Officer, who conducted a strict superficial medical examination of every person on the ship. The health of everybody was found satisfactory, and the vessel proceeded to the wharf, where she was enthusiastically welcomed by a large number of people. Leave was granted to all ranks, and as feet were once again placed on Australian soil, England, Europe, and the recent strife seemed but places and incidents of the distant past. Four of the 4th A.F.C. mechanics said good-bye to their comrades and disembarked at Fremantle, and at 7.30 the following morning the transport resumed her voyage to Sydney.

At daybreak on June 14 the South Australian coast was in view on the starboard bow, and at eight o'clock the anchor was dropped outside the entrance to the Outer Harbour. The port M.O. made a medical inspection of the crew and passengers and, everything being in order, the ship proceeded alongside the wharf shortly after mid-day. The stay in port was too short to allow of shore leave, but all ranks were permitted on the wharf during the afternoon, where they were entertained at tea by the local detachment of voluntary aids. At five o'clock the "Kaisar I Hind" headed for the open sea again, and the final stage of the long homeward journey for the majority of the personnel of the A.F.C. was entered upon.



When day broke on June 16 the transport had negotiated the Heads at Queenscliff, but a good deal of delay took place before the necessary medical inspection was completed and the vessel permitted to continue her way to Port Melbourne. It was in the early afternoon when the pier was eventually reached; but once there the work of Disembarkation was quickly commenced, and carried out expeditiously. A large number of the members of the squadron continued the journey to Sydney the following morning. The final scene in the great drama was enacted ~~on~~ early in the afternoon of June 16, when the ~~XXXXXX~~ Victorian members of the Squadron, just prior to disembarkation, said good-bye to the men from New South Wales. It was the last occasion upon which the majority of the members of the 4th Squadron, Australian Flying Corps, assembled together. Doubtless many of them will meet again---not only in every town and city in Australia, but right throughout the crowded highways and the wide, lone places of the whole world. Wherever two or more of them meet each other, one thing rests ~~assured~~ assured---their thoughts will go winging back to those happy times of splendid comradeship and strenuous endeavour amongst the pleasant fields of Britain, ~~the~~ along the straight tree-bordered roads and straggling villages of France, the wind-swept desolations of Belgium, and the final weeks with the Army of Occupation on the Rhine.

*Alfred Ellis Major*  
*O.C. No 4 Sqdn*  
*AFC*