



Gallipoli diary

Lance Sergeant Leslie Burke kept a diary and wrote nearly every day of his active service from 1915 – 1919.

His grandson Paul Cockram transcribes ...

100 YEARS AGO

debris. We soon received the news it was the Southland and that it had been torpedoed.

[HMT Southland was a transport ship conveying men of 2nd Division AIF from Egypt to Gallipoli when it was torpedoed by the German submarine UB14 30 miles from Lemnos in the Aegean Sea.]

As we drew closer many of the over-packed boats drifted past us. It was something grand the way our boys in those boats behaved, we stopped and rescued one boat but soon moved again as our boat was in danger of meeting the same fate as the Southland.

As it was a torpedo is supposed to have just missed the stern of our boat. A few hours sailing brought us safely into Mudros Harbour at Lemnos Island. This afternoon we heard the sad news that after being rescued by a torpedo destroyer, our Brigadier Linton died of shock. Am worried to know whether Perce was on the Southland.

September 3rd 1915.

Heard today that Perce is on another boat about Today some of our corps on another boat came over, am waiting orders.

September 4th 1915.

My birthday, kept it up sewing buttons on my trousers, nothing about leaving yet.

September 5th 1915.

Still in harbour, weather nice, amuse ourselves swimming.

September 6th 1915.

Large numbers of warships, hospital and troopships in harbour, it is a very good harbour too.

September 7th 1915.

Orders at last. Moving out any hour now. Our transport to return to Egypt, drivers are all very disappointed not being able to go to war.

September 8th 1915.

Went off Hereford about 2 o'clock this afternoon, went by ferry boat to another troopship Prince Abbass. Five hours sailing brought us inside of Anzac, anchored there. Everything seemed dreadfully strange. Occasionally a bullet would land close by, flares were going up like rockets, we would see a flash on the water some distance away, then the roar of the shell from one of our warships. About midnight we were taken off on tugs and landed at Anzac beach. From there we went to our camp in the hills above Brighton Beach. We slept anywhere we could lie down until daylight.

THIS YEAR

September 9th 1915.

All very busy making dugouts, Dick Davidson, Dick Lawner and I fixed one up and are now installed in our new home under the ground.

September 10th 1915.

Continual shelling and ... fire makes it hard for us to sleep of a night.

September 11th 1915.

Every man cooks for himself over here now. Rations are short, we have only had bully and biscuits so far.

September 12th 1915.

Our allowance of water is very small, we have to be very careful with it.

September 13th 1915.

Beachy Bill has been putting a shell or two over our way.

['Beachy Bill' was the well-concealed Turkish gun battery at Gaba Tepe.]

September 14th 1915.

Went down along beach today, saw Sgt Crocker's grave in the cemetery on Hells Spit corner. The little wooden cross over his grave is all shattered and splintered from shell that continually fall here.

September 15th 1915.

Went up Shrapnel Gully, saw one of Perce's friends at water tank in Bridges Road, gave him a message for Perce.

September 16th 1915.

Perce came down today, stayed a good while, had dinner with me.

September 17th 1915.

We are working four posts now, Browns Dip dressing station

HMAT A40 CERAMIC, THE SHIP THAT CARRIED LES BURKE FROM AUSTRALIA TO WAR ON A DISTANT SHORE.



LES BURKE (AT LEFT) AND FRIENDS IN FRANCE.

at the trenches, Browns Intermediate, in Browns Dip, Scotts Point Dressing Station (Lone Pine trenches), Scotts Intermediate (top Shrapnel Gully).

September 18th 1915.

Things quiet about.

September 19th 1915.

Took fatigue party up Shrapnel Gully; church parade and Communion.

September 20th 1915.

Turks shelling Hells Spit and 3 men killed, 8 wounded, 2 mules killed.

September 21st 1915.

Beachy active, 15 men wounded on beach.

September 22nd 1915.

Talking to Arthur Weanes, shrapnel pellet hit me above knee. Shelling our camp, Pte Gumwader

killed and Pte Thompson wounded.

September 23rd 1915.

Weather fine, aeroplanes about.

September 24th 1915.

Aeroplane passed over our camp about 1 o'clock this morning, dropped a bomb a little further over in Browns Dip. One man killed and three wounded.

September 25th 1915.

Cruiser shelling Caba Tepo, hydroplane manoeuvring near cruiser.

September 26th 1915.

Church parade and communion.

September 27th 1915.

Go swimming often on the beach now.

September 29th 1915.

Many of our corp have gone away sick, a lot with "cold feet" have left us.

September 30th 1915.

Things are quiet today.

October 1st 1915.

Have been doing a lot of sandbagging.

October 2nd 1915.

Beachy still putting a few shells about, our monitors and cruisers don't seem to affect this battery at all.

October 3rd 1915.

Church service and communion, the only difference we find in one day from the other is when we have our service Sunday evenings.

October 4th 1915.

Saw Perce again.