

Private Robert Brown Cameron # 6/3270

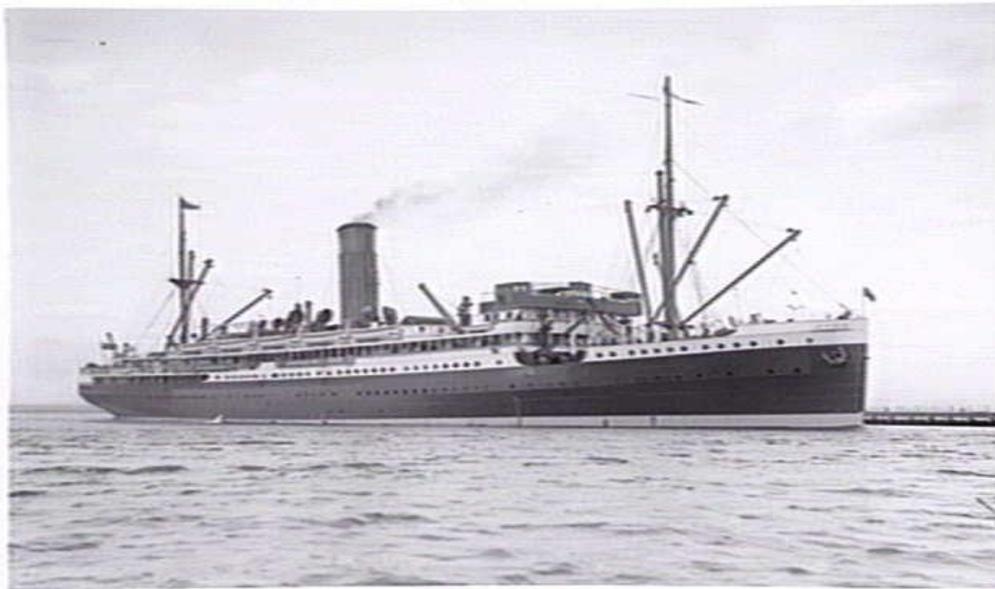
2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force

C. Company 8th Reinforcements Canterbury Infantry Regiment (C.I.R.) (2nd Company)

Saturday Nov 13th 1915 – Left Trentham 8am, arrived Wellington 9am. Embarked *Willochra* troopship 35. Marched through town 2.30pm and sailed 4.30. Lay in stream till 7.30.

Willochra

Built 1903 purchased from Adelaide SS Co, 1921 transferred to Bermuda & West Indies SS Co, 1929 sunk in collision off New York.



Sunday Nov 14th – Arrived Lyttelton 8am. Had good trip. Marched through Christchurch and sailed at 3pm.

Monday Nov 15th – Good weather – passed down the coast. Saw Dunedin in the distance. Dag cleans up cabin this week.

Tuesday Nov 16th – Started to blow. Passed Stewart Island. Was slightly sick.

Wednesday Nov 17th – Blowing a gale. Very few down for meals. Waiting all the time for *Tofua*

Thursday Nov 18th – Blowing worse than ever. Artillery quarters washed in. Rumoured *Tofua* having a worse trip than we are. Major Ross having all letters censored.

Friday Nov 19th – Everybody happy – land in sight. Arrived Hobart 5pm. *Tofua* arrived 9pm. Lay out in the stream. Major Ross the only one to go ashore.

Saturday Nov 20th – Pulled into wharf. Disembarked 9am. Route march and back onto boat for dinner. Leave from two till seven. All C.B.mens leave stopped. Had a good afternoon in town. Police had a lot of fun getting men on board.

Sunday Nov 21st – Left Hobart 4am. Some men left behind. Church service by Captain Neville at 10.30. Weather fairly good. Blowing slightly.

Monday Nov 22nd – Still in sight of land but fairly rough. Brown cleans cabin this week.

Tuesday Nov 23rd – Lovely morning, sea calm. Physical drill 5.30 to 6. Breakfast 7.30. Parade with rifles and webb at 9.30. Parade dismissed at 10.45. Parade at 1.30, semaphore, dismissed at 3.30.

Wednesday Nov 24th – Weather still fine, saw big shoal of whales. Same drill as yesterday. Officers asked for matter for paper to be printed in Albany. Jack Williams on doctors list with crook eyes.

Thursday Nov 25th – Having good weather now, appears settled. Passed small steamer, found out she was a whaler and was in tow with a whale. Still going when she passed astern. Signed payroll.

Friday Nov 26th – Land in sight. Nothing but rocks and scrub. Arrived in Albany and pulled straight onto wharf. Got a terrible shock when we are told to get ready to go ashore straight away. Route march till 5pm. Leave at 8.30. Post xmas cards and letters home. All 15 arrived boat up to time.

Saturday Nov 27th – Still in Albany. Go out on wharf and do rifle exercises. Australian transport came in and dropped sick men. Left straight away for Fremantle. Pulled out in stream 2 pm. Sailed at 4pm. Could not get paper printed in time. Band transferred to *Tofua*

Sunday Nov 28th – Land still in sight, weather good. Church parade at 10.30 addressed by Anglican chaplain. Medical inspection 2.30. Service by captain in stern at night. Moriarty reported Pat Foster.

Monday Nov 29th – Weather still good. Getting settled down to drill properly now. Officers asking for entries for sports meeting. Our places in boats all settled. The most of us in No. 7 boat. Concert on boat deck, orchestra on board given out my turn in cabin.

Tuesday Nov 30th – The old tub doing a bit of a roll. The Government getting terribly generous – paid us a quid. First boat drill, lights out 8pm. Rumoured enemy vessel knocking about. Artillery vaccinated. Measles in D coy. Six cases.

Wednesday Dec 1st – Whole C Company on fatigue. 14 Platoon on guard. All hands sharpening bayonets all morning. Played 500 all afternoon. B Company vaccinated. Concert on boat deck. D Company allowed to sleep on deck.

Thursday Dec 2nd – Still having good weather. Getting slightly warmer. Vaccinated this morning, feeling no effect yet. No drill today.

Friday Dec 3rd – Weather fine, terribly hot. Sports day; boxing, tug of war, obstacle race, skipping, cricket. No effects of vaccination.

Saturday Dec 4th – Getting warmer every day. Washing day for C Company. Concert on boat deck.

Sunday Dec 5th – Church parade. Address by Anglican chaplain. Service in stern at night by Captain Neville. Bill takes his turn cabin orderly.

Monday Dec 6th – Terribly hot – thermometer up to 105 in the shade – 130 down in engine room. Volunteers started lumping coal for 2/- a day. Struck after dinner and are getting 3/- now for 6 hours a day. Arm getting stiff and sore.

Tuesday Dec 7th – Fresh breeze sprung up this morning – lovely change. Inspection full marching order. Kit inspection. Officers started revolver shooting – target fixed up at stern for us when they found all ammunition on *Tofua*

Wednesday Dec 8th – Compulsory bath at five o'clock on the promenade deck aft. Water calm as millpond. Hot as we have had it, but gentle breeze. Concert on boat deck. More cases of measles and a good few cases of prickly heat.

Thursday Dec 9th – Supposed to be bath at five o'clock but no water. Our arms inspected by doctor. Fresh dressing on mine. All those who are right put on carrying coal. Dag mess orderly not taking to it kindly. Concert on promenade deck in front of hospital.

Friday Dec 10th – Very hot, no wind. Boat averaging 300 miles a day. No bath upstairs this morning. Father Neptune came on board. Officers got well ducked. Won't forget first time crossing the line.

Saturday Dec 11th – Mailed closed 10am. C Company on fatigue. Washing down paintwork. Coaling finished.

Sunday Dec 12th – Blowing fairly fresh. Church service by skipper 10.15. Read all afternoon "The Amateur Gentleman". Went along to skippers service at 7.30. Big crowd there, no standing room.

Monday Dec 13th – Saw land again after 15 days at sea. Think it is the east coast of Africa. Desert looking country. Saw a vessel away to starboard, Orient boat I think. Terrible lot of shark about. Inspection full marching order. Passed seven boats. Concert on boat deck. Gus Struthers got a terribly good hearing. Got a sight of land.

Tuesday Dec 14th – Address by Lieut Carmody on correspondence. Were told service cards were only to be used. Arrived Aden 12 noon. Major only one to leave boat. Sailed again 1pm. Didn't see anything of the town. Passed by the Twelve Apostle Islands at nine o'clock. Received F1 from W.M. Lecture by G.C. on entrenching.

Wednesday Dec 15th – Well into the Red Sea. Terribly hot, no wind. Lecture by Lieut Griffiths on advance guard. Received our field dressings. Lecture by Capt Kemp and shown how to apply dressings. Passed an Australian transport homeward bound with wounded. Meeting vessels all the time now.

Thursday Dec 16th – Fresh breeze blowing. C Company on fatigue. W. Brierley sergeant of guard. On sanitary guard tonight. Missed guard by a whisker. NCO didn't turn up to time so we left. Lecture on

attack by Lieut Gabites. Full marching order parade at 2pm. Lecture by Lieut Judd on map reading. Had supper with Bill at midnight.

Friday Dec 17th – Sighted land today, supposed to be sixty five miles away. Lecture by Lieut Marriott on attack. Medical inspection at 2pm. All kits packed ready to disembark tomorrow. Served with dry rations for train journey. Received first issue of paper. Grand final concert and fancy dress ball on boat deck.

Saturday Dec 18th – Steamed into Suez at 12 o'clock and was all bustle and excitement. All sorts of conflicting rumours about trouble on the canal. Can't get off boat for forty eight hours. Nobody seems to know the reason. Slept last night without blankets. Couldn't be bothered unpacking kits. Cruisers and torpedo boats lying at mouth of canal.

Sunday Dec 19th – Still lying out in the stream. Went to church service by the skipper. Father McDonald supposed to have given out that Turks were attacking canal again. Everybody anxious to get ashore. Mess order in J. Cunnick's place. Went along to hear skipper again at 7.30. Natives all barred from selling stuff from boats.

Monday Dec 20th – Pulled into wharf at 8am. Artillery and A Company went ashore at 2pm but didn't get away till 4pm. B & C Companies went ashore at 5pm. Entrained at 6. Arrived camp 1.30am – coffee on arrival but kits went astray so had to sleep in our overcoats only, cold as charity. Up again at 3.30 and wandered round to try and get warm.

Tuesday Dec 21st – Had great fun with natives. Skittles and Cobber came over to see me. Had breakfast with Bill at coffee shop. Bacon and Eggs! Had yard with A. Keaston, spent all morning talking to Dave Lecdon. Bob Hoskings got measles. Bill, David and I visited Cairo. Had a lot of fun. Came home in a taxi, saw Dave Campbell. Hut quarantined on account of measles.

Wednesday Dec 22nd – Still in quarantine. Making four platoons in Company instead of six. I've got a lovely cold so I'm not on parade. The Company out route marching. Have to write some letters. No home mail yet.

Thursday Dec 23rd – Another case of measles. C Company on fatigue. Les - Battalion orderly sergeant, Bill - Battalion orderly corporal. All our sergeants quarantined, one case of meningitis in hut. Taking things easy today. Natives all do fatigue but half our company on guard.

Friday Dec 24th – Christmas Eve – out on parade this morning. Extended order drill on desert. Easy work I don't think. Company didn't go out in afternoon. Supposed to have leave from 2pm till 12pm Sunday but no passes out. Went to Cairo at night but town very quiet. All hotels close at 5pm. Bit of a riot down the Nazza? (*Wazza – a street of brothels and bars in Cairo*) Quietest Xmas ever ever I put in

Saturday Dec 25th – Christmas Day – Out of quarantine for today. Supposed to have xmas dinner out of canteen profits but none appeared. All went out on strike. Things very lively. Food been absolutely rotten since we arrived here. Went to church service this morning. None of the boys back from peninsular yet. First NZ mail arrived this morning. Passes issued at 3pm – too late to go anywhere.

Sunday Dec 26th – Back in quarantine again. Four cases of measles. Supposed to be in for ten days this time. Did nothing but lie about and read all morning. Been supplied with lot of magazines. Went over to Heliopolis. Some of the nicest buildings in the world. Had a good wander all round.

Monday Dec 27th – Physical drill 7 till 8. Sports commence at 10am but not supposed to be allowed out. All the Canterbury Mounted came back this morning. Went over to their lines and looked up Bob Manchester and Harold Nicol. Hub.Hamilton came over this afternoon and he is the same hard case. They are terribly rough stuff.

Tuesday Dec 28th – Physical drill as usual. Out doing platoon drill on our own. Fairly warm work. Big word of Australians getting away today so our turn might come any time now. Taking things easy this afternoon.

Wednesday Dec 29th – Corporal McKay taken away with measles. Issued with valises. Supposed to go out for route march but was cancelled at the last minute. On fatigue cleaning up round huts. Went round and saw Skittles at night.

Thursday Dec 30th – Out doing attack practice in the morning, warm work too. Route march in afternoon but back early so that we could be paid before rest of Coy arrived. Received 2 pound 12 shillings – 253 PT (*pistares*) in Egyptian money. Came in very handy, was just about cut out. Went to Heliopolis and bought some things to send home. Arrived back in time for mob call.

Friday Dec 31st – Bayonet fighting and physical drill as usual. Arrived on parade ground 10am when word arrived that we had to go back to camp at once. Thought there was something doing but it was only inoculation. Had to wait till 2 o'clock for our turn. Did nothing all the rest of the day. Big crowd of

Australians seeing the New Year in came through out hut. Lot of things missing including one of my boots.

Saturday Jan 1st 1916 – Chest fairly sore this morning from inoculation. No work of course. Reported loss of boot to Gabities. He is going to get me another pair. Waiting patiently for mail that came in but none for C Coy. Something wrong somewhere. Four of our chaps in clink for dodging parade.

Sunday Jan 2nd – Medical examination. Released from quarantine. Visited the zoo at Giza?. Had afternoon tea out there and back to town for tea. Went to pictures but all writing was in French so we were well out of it. Returned to camp early.

Monday Jan 3rd – Out with the crowd for physical drill at 6.45. New artillery formation in morning and route march through Zeitoun in afternoon. Cool wind blowing so it was good exercise.

Tuesday Jan 4th – Rained some last night and got well soaked. Went out in morning and took up a position and dug ourselves in while 7th and Maoris attacked. Supposed to go trench digging but it rained and had to get into trenches for cover.

Wednesday Jan 5th – C Coy on fatigue. Four of us told off for officers mess. On it 6am till 6.30, 9am till 9.30, 2pm till 2.30 and 9 till 9.30. Had a few square feeds but dinner wasn't on till 9.30 so it was 11.15 before we got finished. Wouldn't mind doing that job every day.

Thursday Jan 6th – Went out to drill as usual but word came out to come in at once. We thought we would be shifting at once but we got orders not to leave the lines Wondering where we are going but the general impression is that we are going to Ismailia. C 7th are over at Maadi and we are taking their places to make up the battalion.

Friday Jan 7th – We were out on parade as usual this morning and we were beginning to think we had been asleep and dreamed a lot, but in the afternoon had orders to parade in full marching order and had a few details drafted in. Orders for tomorrow were Revielle at 4.30, breakfast at 6.30, ready to move out at 9 o'clock.

Saturday Jan 8th – Up at five o'clock and everything bustle and excitement. At Aalmich station at ten o'clock. Got aboard at 12 and left at 12.45. Travelled in open trucks but was lovely day and had a good view of country. Arrived at Ismailia at 5pm. Saw some of the boys straight away. Had to sleep in the open. Not bad only terrible heavy dew.

Sunday Jan 9th – Up fairly early but only dry rations for breakfast. Parade on 9am and inspection by Col. Young. Went into town with Bill Campbell in afternoon. Very poor specimen of a town. Pretty well a French settlement but always the same crowd of natives. It is situated on the edge of Lake Timsah and the canal is about a mile on the farther side of the town.

Monday Jan 10th – Paraded in morning and drafted into 2nd Coy along with the rest of South Canterbury chaps. Lieut Fryer is in charge of our platoon. Built a bivy in afternoon and Bill Dag and self are very comfortable. Out on squad drill just the same as we did first week in Trentham.

Tuesday Jan 11th – Out on squad drill again and there was some roaring. I saw one crowd doing the goose step. Received our first gift stuff which comprised chocolate, tobacco, cigarettes, condensed milk and writing materials.

Wednesday Jan 12th – Physical drill for twenty minutes in morning. Same old drill all day. Tucker a long way better than in Zeitoun and feel quite satisfied.

Thursday Jan 13th – Same drill as usual. Had our pay books called in to be made up. Thought we were going to be paid but no luck. Could do with it, have been hard up ever since I landed in Egypt.

Friday Jan 14th – On fatigue all day and told off for duty at railway siding. Had a good day and wouldn't mind a few more like it.

Saturday Jan 15th – Internal economy today which means a general cleaning up, sewing and washing. Football match in afternoon.

Sunday Jan 16th – Big inspection by General Murray. Went out at eight o'clock and had to stand in boiling sun till 12 o'clock. Off all afternoon.

Monday Jan 17th – Took our dinner out with us and had a day at Company in attack. Our ration of bread is pretty small and it takes a bit of doing to get three meals out of a fifth of a loaf of bread. Capt Boyes away on leave and a good few NCO's.

Tuesday Jan 18th – Same thing again today. The worst part is getting to the parade ground which is about two miles away. We got a bit of a shock when we were allowed to buy anything off the niggers on the march.

Wednesday Jan 19th – Out on the same old thing, only battalion in attack. The Colonel is a great chap for shaking the officers up but he is a great man for the men.

Thursday Jan 20th – Same old thing today. A good few chaps came down from Zeitoun today and the Coy is slowly filling up.

Friday Jan 21st – Out for a big day and a good few old hands on the sick list. They have been swinging the lead as the saying is. Had bathing parade on the way home but it turned out cold and I didn't go in.

Saturday Jan 22nd – On Aerodrome guard and left camp at 8.30. Arrived there at 9.30 and had first beat at 3.20 till 4.10. Wrote a few letters and read to fill in the time. Went out at night from 9 till 11 and from 3 to 5. Made a dixy of cocoa when we came off and it was pie on. Saw an aeroplane go up in the morning. Received mail from home.

Sunday Jan 23rd – Arrived back in camp at 10.30. Saw a big crowd of chaps just back from England. A chap drowned in canal and funeral in afternoon. All the chaps sorted out for firing party. Had to walk down through town to the French cemetery but we had no blank ammunition and the ceremony was a farce.

Monday Jan 24th – Out on parade at eight o'clock. Brigade out on route march. Went through Ismailia on to the canal and then extended work till dinnertime. Came on the rain at dinnertime and we just about we through. Arrived back in camp at four o'clock after having the most strenuous day since we joined the army. Received parcel of cake from home.

Tuesday Jan 25th – Blowing and raining a treat. Went out on parade but had to come back straight away. Supposed to go out for all night but weather was too rough. Went out for an hour this afternoon and shaking hands with myself.

Wednesday Jan 26th – Our company for duty and were on fatigue at ordnance stores from 8 till 1 pm. Very strenuous. Received our second pay in Egypt and was very pleased to receive same.

Thursday Jan 27th – On company parade today and had one of the easiest days we have had yet. Capt Boyes takes care not to work men too hard. Weather very cold and changeable. Night parade cancelled.

Friday Jan 28th – Same drill as yesterday but nice and warm. Mounted rifles trekked from Zeitoun and camped outside our camp. Went over and saw Davie and a good few of the other Waimate boys. They had a rough spin down, struck it wet every night. They are camped about eight miles further along the canal.

Saturday Jan 29th – Interior cleaning. That is taking things easy and doing any washing and mending needed. Football matches in afternoon.

Sunday Jan 30th – Church parade at 9.30am. Football matches in afternoon.

Monday Jan 31st – Route march across the canal. Our colonel got absolutely lost and was late when we arrived back in camp. Night parade.

Tuesday Feb 1st – Did a bit of trench digging for a change in the morning and in the afternoon Battalion marched through Ismailia to the park and watched a football match between our officers and officers off battleships lying in the canal. Infantry won by ten points to three.

Wednesday Feb 2nd – Our first divisional day and we got it very solid. Marched about fifteen miles on the desert and were well played by the time we arrived home.

Thursday Feb 3rd – Our company for duty again and I struck a very easy job. Finished at ten o'clock for the day and then loafed around and had a real lazy day.

Friday Feb 4th – Divisional night parade tonight. Out practicing some of the drill in the morning and had the afternoon off. Went over and saw a couple of games of football in afternoon. Parade at nine o'clock.

Saturday Feb 5th – Arrived back in camp at 7.30 just in time for breakfast. It was the hottest stuff we have had yet. Going all the time we were out. Nearly all the chaps sleeping today. Went over to football match A v C. A won 11 to 3. Best game I've seen for a long time. All hands in bed at 7pm.

Sunday Feb 6th – Church parade at 10am. Feeling very sleepy on it still. In afternoon went over and saw a game of football between two Maori teams. By the time the game had finished hardly a man wearing a shirt or sweater.

Monday Feb 7th – G.C. parade. Had a very easy day. Did a little platoon drill and company drill in the morning and arrived at the lake for dinner. Bathing parade and marched home.

Tuesday Feb 8th – C.G. parade on board, but it turned out to be a divisional day. Another night out on Friday and we were out rehearsing. Heard a rumour that 1st Batt. Trents had arrived but went over at night and found it wasn't true. Saw G. Wilce and B. Norrie.

Wednesday Feb 9th – Went on sick parade today. Broke a tooth off my plate and went to dentist to have it put on, but they are so busy I have to wait till 21st.

Thursday Feb 10th – G.C.parade but it turned out to be an easy day. No bugles blown in camp now. Whistles being used instead. Rumour of a Turk aeroplane over Ismailia.

Friday Feb 11th – Interior economy from 9am till 12. Football match in afternoon. Fell in at 9.30 and arrived back in camp at 4.30. 2nd Coy had a row with Major Rowe. Counted him out on the way home. Expect trouble after this when he takes charge. Colonel Young on leave on Cairo.

Saturday Feb 12th – Easy day after the night march. Lieut Griffiths met with an accident going to town. He was taken unconscious to the hospital.

Sunday Feb 13th – General Birdwood attended church parade. Had a small march past afterwards. Football competition started today. Lieut Griffiths died in hospital. Tommy Taylors canteen opened.

Monday Feb 14th – The Battalion attended Lieut Griffiths funeral. He was buried in the French cemetery in Ismailia. Bathing parade in afternoon.

Tuesday Feb 15th – Went out to do a field shooting practice but it rained and we had the day off. Australian Brigade disattached from us and concert given to bid them goodbye.

Wednesday Feb 16th – Had the field shooting practice and No.6 Platoon put up the record for the Battalion though we were disqualified for one man firing after he had orders to stop. Started the half holiday on Wednesday and I think it will be a great success.

Thursday Feb 17th – Went out and did a bit of signalling and then range finding till dinnertime. Went down for bathing parade in afternoon.

Saturday Feb 19th – Interior economy till twelve o'clock. 6 Platoon playing 5 with Dag's soccer ball. 5 won by nine to nil. Had to go on guard at 4pm.

Sunday Feb 20th – Still on guard but managed to get a fair bit of sleep. Six off and two on. Came off at 4pm.

Monday Feb 21st – Went over to dentist and left my teeth. Got to call tomorrow at 11am. Wrote letters all day and I've just about got all my correspondence up to date.

Tuesday Feb 22nd – Got my teeth all right. Dentist seems to know his job. Had to go on light duties after I came back. Received our third pay in Ismailia.

This particular diary ends at this point. Grandad's story continues in another diary starting in April 1916.