

Wilson / 2

A. M. Wilson

77 Scarborough Beach
Mt. Hawthorn
Perth, W.A.

GALLIPOLI-RETROSPECT.

In the year 1974 it seems incredible to state that when I landed on Gallipoli I had never seen a dead human being. Remember it was the horse & buggy era. Road deaths were unheard of & I believe it would be safe to state that most of the young men had never seen a dead human body.

I was in the N.Z.E.F & our ten troopships joined the Aussie's at Albany & we all steamed away in convoy under the protection of the Sydney, & the Ibuki late in 1914. When we saw the Sydney steam away at full steam & our transports starting zigzagging & waltzing we realised something was happening. Then when our wireless told us the Emden had been beached on one of the Coco's & Captain & crew surrendered to the Sydney we cheered & thought we had already won the war.

When we called at Colombo we saw the Sydney with her splintered boats evidence of the scars of battle. Thirty German sailors were transferred to our troopship & their Hatbands & canteen coins became treasured souvenirs.

We steamed through the Suez Canal & disembarked at Alexandria. to entrain for Cairo & eventually Zeiton. It was our first experience of the East. We were thrilled to see the Music Halls with their night lights. Everything was a great adventure, but we soon realised we were on no picnic. There was a war on & we had to train & train hard we did. Twenty mile route marches into the desert. Water bottles inspected on return to see we ~~followed~~ obeyed orders to keep a pebble in our mouths to conserve water. At night we had long marches taking our directions from the stars. During rests we had to lay on our backs to study the stars. Early in January 1915 we entrained for the Suez Canal & we occupied trenches near Number 3 Signal Station ~~nearwhere~~ to Defend Egypt from a Turkish Attack. The Turks transported canoes in sections & assembled them near the Canal. They were allowed to launch them but were then soon peppered with shrapnel & sunk. All we had to withstand was rifle & machinegun fire. We had no casualties but we still thought it was war. A little interlude here will give you some idea of the fine officers we had. As you realise we

GALLIPOLI RETROSPECT. (2)

were serving under British Military Law & one ~~sixth~~ law enforced when we were in camp was "We must not shave our upperlip" Most of us were under twenty & it was quite a joke with some of us with remarks such as "Bumfluff" "Seven a side" etc so as soon as we occupied our trenches our officer shouted as he waved his razor "Come on boys we're on Active Service!" It didn't take long for us all to be clean-shaven. Lieutenant Hugo was a fine man he was killed during the landing.

During our duty on the Canal we combined with a Indian Regiment & when we left to return to Zeiton their Commanding Officer a British regular Major Barret addressed us saying it was really a pleasure the way we mixed with his boys & as there was a likelihood we would be moving to another theatre of war he hoped we would meet again. We did at Cape Helles & during Sulva Bay but more anon.

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MESSINES.
(2)

It was very disappointing though, for most of the parcels were from some comfort fund. & contained two boiled eggs & a piece of black bread. We ate the eggs. The letters had to go to security.

During the early morning of our attack we saw the Germans retiring in disorder & I fail to understand the generalship that allowed the enemy to consolidate again. We broke the line & troops should have been poured through to continue the advance. The Germans did this in 1918. but more anon. suffice to say we were relieved at Messines & occupied sectors to our right at La Bizet.

DESCRIPTION OF GOODS

STATISTICAL CODE

QUANT

OWNER

STATE

PORT

NATURE

10

*1 AIRCRAFT

*2

FORM 11 (11.62)

(IN QUADRUPPLICATE)

Secs. 40A and 68. Reg. 37

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF CUSTOMS AND EXCISE
ENTRY FOR HOME CONSUMPTION

ENTRY FOR HOME CONSUMPTION

(IN QUADRUPPLICATE)

FORM 11 (11 .65)

Secs. 40A and 68. Reg. 37

STATE	PORT	NATURE	10	*1 AIRCRAFT	*2
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OWNER

B/L No.	MARKS AND NUMBERS	No. of Pkges	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS			
			TARIFF ITEM	TREAT. CODE	STATISTICAL CODE	QUANT

TOTAL NUMBER OF PACKAGES

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Wilson 13 AM. Wilson
 77 Scarborough Beach Rd
 Mt. Hawthorn
 Perth W.A.

The Battle of
MESSINES. 1917

As one of the ordinary soldiers ~~was~~ fought in this campaign I could never understand ^{the} Military strategy to concentrate such ^{fire} power to just break the German line & then allow them to consolidate. Certainly the heavy casualties did not warrant such sacrifice.

We trained for months to prepare for the Battle of Messines. Ariel photographs of our objectives had been taken & complete replicas of the fortifications had been constructed behind our lines. Our particular objective was "Bluemolin" & we captured it over & over again.

Every night we formed fatigue parties to go up to the front line to continue the tunnelling to blow up Messines.

It has been stated that never had there been such a ~~concentration~~ ^{concentration} of artillery as for the Battle of Messines & I can quite believe it for as we moved up through the lines to our hopping-off ^{French} we passed rows of guns wheel to wheel.

The night air was clouded from the explosive & some new chum officer mistook it for gas & we were ordered to wear our masks. There was so much stumbling & confusion that we soon removed ^{Korn}.

The signal for our dawn advance was the explosion of the mines under Messines & a terrific barrage. As we advanced we saw great fissures in the earth caused by the mining & groups of stupified Germans were ^{soon} surrendering. We obtained our objective without much opposition & soon got busy building our strongpoint. Then the German fire started. They blew our strongpoint to bits except for one wing where I was among the lucky ones who survived.

In the afternoon the Aussies leapfrogged over us & advanced a further thousand yards. They suffered heavy casualties

We could hear moaning from a shellhole in front of us & during a lull we crawled out & with the aid of a groundsheet we dragged him in. He was an Aussie with a colour patch of two blues shaped oval like a football. We signalled for S.Bs. & got him evacuated. He was badly wounded.

Late afternoon a heavy German barrage got on to our strongpoint again & we were ordered to drop back to the yellow defence line. Just at dusk we were ordered to line the trench with fixed bayonets & have our Mills Bombs ready for the Huns were counter attacking. How the thin line of Aussies held out was something we will always remember. We did hear they ran along the trench firing to confuse the ^{into} Huns thinking the line was strongly held. As it was a British regiment on our left ^{closed} did retire but were soon ordered back. The highlight of our experience at Messines was we captured a German Mail bag that had not been opened ^{when}.

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 FORM 11 (11.9.53)
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 WARRANT NO. 2

OWNER
 STATE
 PORT
 NATURE
 #1 AIRCRAFT
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 AGENT
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 STATION
 DATE
 REF NO.
 BOX NO.
 TOTAL NUMBER OF PACKAGES
 32 4000 FREMANTLE W.A.
 32 1433 B... BOX 403

ENTRY FOR HOME CONSUMPTION

(IN QUADRUPLICATE)

FORM 11 (11 .65)

Secs. 40A and 68. Reg. 37

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OWNER					AGENT	REF No.		BOX No. 3

B/L No.	MARKS AND NUMBERS	No. of Pkges	DESCRIPTION OF GOODS				ADDITIONAL INFORMATION	VALUE FOR DUTY	CUSTOMS DUTY				SALES TAX		
			TARIFF ITEM	TREAT. CODE	STATISTICAL CODE	QUANTITY (DESCRIBE UNITS)			RATES	P.	\$	c	RATE*	\$	c

TOTAL NUMBER OF PACKAGES	TOTALS	VALUE FOR DUTY	CUSTOMS	SALES TAX
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FORM 11 (11.6.52)

(IN QUADRUPLET)

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STATE: _____ PORT: _____ NATURE: **10** #1 AIRCRAFT #2 SHIP/OTHER FROM: _____ ARRIVED: _____ STATION: _____ DATE: _____

OWNER: _____ AGENT: _____ REF. No. _____ BOX No. **3**

PASSENDALE.

ONE OF MY PLEASANT MEMORIES DURING MY YEARS OF SERVICE IN FRANCE WAS WHEN WE WERE BILLETED IN THE DELIGHTFULL VILLAGE OF SELLES DURING A REST PERIOD DOWN NEAR THE COAST. IT WAS A PART OF FRANCE STILL UNSCATHED BY WAR. THE FORESTS & PLANTS ENJOYED THEIR NATURAL GROWTH. THE ~~X&X&X~~ CHATEAUS STILL STOOD PROUD OF THEIR MYSTERIOUS & ANCIENT GLORY. EVACUATED NOW & WHAT A NIGHT WHEN WE DISCOVERED A SECRET CELLAR FULLY STOCKED WITH MELLOR VINTAGE: FORGET ALL THIS WE WERE AT WAR & BESIDES OUR DAILY SWIMS WE STILL HAD TO TRAIN & IT WAS DURING THIS PERIOD WINSTON CHURCHILL CAME OVER TO INSPECT US. QUITE A SIGHT REALLY? A SMALL MAN MOUNTED ON A BIG DRAUGHTBUILT HORSE. THEN ACTION. PARADE IN BATTLE ORDER & THEN A FORCED MARCH TO THE BATTLEFRONT PASSENDALE. LATRINE WIRELESS TOLD US THAT THE GERMANS HAD CONSECRATED LARGE FORCES & WAS ABOUT TO ATTACK & WE WERE TO FORESTALL HIM. IT TURNED OUT TO BE THE TRUTH & I WILL NEVER FORGET THE HOPPING OFF. WE WERE DEPLOYED IN SHELL HOLES FORWARD OF THE FRONT LINE. IT WAS FOGGY WHEN AS WE WERE LYING IN THE SHELLHOLE TWO GERMAN OFFICERS APPEARED & WERE POINTING OUT THEIR OPERATIONS FOR ATTACK. WE HELD OUR BREATH & THANK GOODNESS THEY DIDN'T SEE US FOR WITHIN FIFTEEN MINUTES OUR BARRAGE LET LOOSE & SIGNALLED OUR ATTACK. WE CERTAINLY CAUGHT THE HUNS BY SURPRISE & FROM WHAT I HEARD THE ARTILLERY FIRE INFLECTED HEAVY CASUALITIES FOR THEIR TRENCHES WERE PACKED WITH MEN READY TO ATTACK US. AS FOR OUR SECTION WE WERE SOON TOO BUSY FOR A MACHINE GUN HAD GOT ONTO US & GOT SEVERAL OF OUR MATES. WE SPOTTED IT. SURROUNDED IT & RUSHED IT. WE THEN CONTINUED OUR ADVANCE TO CAPTURE A RIDGE WHERE A GERMAN PILLBOX MARKED OUR OBJECTIVE. THIS PILLBOX MUST HAVE BEEN A GERMAN HEADQUARTERS FOR WE SAW A GERMAN OFFICER THROW IN A INCENDIARY BOMB. WHEN WE ARRIVED THE PILLBOX WAS FULL OF CHARRED BODIES. WE LOST A LOT OF GOOD MEN IN THIS ENGAGEMENT & ONCE AGAIN I COULD NOT UNDERSTAND THE GENERAL'S ^H ~~HELP~~ THAT DID NOT FOLLOW UP A BREAK IN THE LINE PARTICULARLY WHEN THE ENEMY WAS DISORGANISED. PERHAPS THERE WAS A REASON. FOR WE DID FOLLOW ON IN ~~X&X&X~~ 1918 & WON THE WAR. WHY WE COULD NOT HAVE DONE IT BEFORE I DO NOT HAVE THE ANSWER. FROM PASSENDALE WE MOVED TO YPRES. THAT'S ANOTHER STORY.

CUSTOMS DUTY	b.	2	c.	RATE	2	c.
SALES TAX						

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TOTAL NUMBER OF PACKAGES

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IN THIS ENTRY PAYABLE 2

TOTAL AMOUNT

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YPRES 1917-A SEA OF MUD.

I WILL NEVER FORGET MARCHING THROUGH MENIN GATE TO ENTER YPRES. IT WAS HARD TO BELIEVE THAT YPRES WAS ONCE A PLEASANT CITY FOR THE SCENE OF DESOLATION? OF SKELETON BRICK WALLS & LARGE WATERFILLED CRATERS WHICH EXPOSED THE NERVES THAT ONCE DISTRIBUTED THE SERVICES SURELY ^{was evidence of} EXPOSED THE DISTRUCTIVE POWER OF EXPLOSIVE & THE FUTILITY OF SUCH WAR.

SHELLING SOON DISTURBED SUCH THOUGHTS & WE WERE ORDERED TO TAKE COVER ALONGSIDE A BRICK WALL. IMAGINE OUR THOUGHTS WHEN WE LOOKED UP TO SEE THE WALL SWAYING ABOVE US. IT DID NOT TAKE US LONG TO SHIFT & THEN TO FORM UP BEHIND A COLUMN OF LIMBERS & MULES ALONG A BATTERED PLANK ROAD TOWARDS THE FRONTLINE. WE WERE TO RELIEVE THE CANADAINS IN THE VICINITY OF POLOGON WOOD. DUCKBOARDS BRANCHED OF FROM THE PLANK ROAD SUPPORTING US ACROSS SOFT MUD. WE PASSED SOME CANADAINS ON THEIR WAY OUT & WHEN WE ASKED WHERE ^{the} THE TRENCHES WERE THEY LAUGHED & REPLIED "YOU WILL FIND NO TRENCHES HERE" SHELLHOLE FORMATION THEY CALL IT. "THAT'S WHAT IT WAS ALRIGHT ~~XXXXXXXX~~ TWO TO A SHELLHOLE OR HOLE IN THE GROUND & AS THE AREA WAS BELOW SEALEVEL WE HAD TO CONTINUOUSLY BALEOUT THE WATER. BUT FIRST TRAGEDY ON OUR ARRIVAL A SHELL KILLED OUR OFFICER & THE CANADAIN AS THEY WERE ARRANGING THE TAKEOVER. ALTHOUGH I HAD EXPERIENCE SOME PRETTY TOUGH TIMES DURING MY WAR EXPERIENCES I BELIEVE THE TEN DAYS IN THIS SECTOR WERE SIMPLY HELL. WE COULDN'T LIGHT FIRES BUT HAD TO THROW FIRELESS COOKERS FROM SHELLHOLE TO SHELLHOLE. SHELLING WAS CONTINUOUS BUT HALF OF THEM FAILED TO EXPLODE BECAUSE OF THE MUD WHICH WAS SPRAYED OVER US. RATION PARTIES FAILED TO REACH US & WE HAD TO EXIST ON OUR IRON RATIONS. WE HAD A HARD JOB KEEPING OUR RIFLES & MACHINE GUNS CLEAN & IN WORKING ORDER. WHEN A SHELL EXPLODED IN A SHELLHOLE WE SAW DUCKBOARDS & BODIES FLYING INTO THE AIR BUT WE ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT IT COULDN'T HAPPEN TO US FOR YOU WERE MIGHTY UNLUCKY IF A SHELL LANDED TWICE IN THE SAME SPOT. QUITE OFTEN GERMAN AEROPLANES FLEW ABOVE & WE CAMOFLAGED OUR POSITIONS BY COVERING THE SHELLHOLES WITH OUR MUD SMEARED GROUNDSHEETS. WHEN RETURNING TO SUPPORTS AFTER BEING RELIEVED WE FOUND DUCKBOARDS HAD BEEN ~~XXXXXXXX~~ DESTROYED & WE HAD TO WADE THROUGH SLUSHY MUD. I BELIEVE WHAT SUSTAINED US DURING THIS ORDEAL WAS A FAIRLY LIBERAL RUM ISSUE FROM A JAR WE SALVAGED FROM A STORE DEPOT. I CANNOT LEAVE YPRES BEFORE GIVING A FURTHER EXPERIENCE WHILST WORKING WITH THE CANADAIN TUNNELERS DURING THE XMAS OF ~~xxxx~~ 1917. I WILL ~~leave~~ ~~them~~ UNTIL I DISCRIBE THE EXCITING 1918 EVENTS WHEN WE HELPED TO HALT THE GERMAN ADVANCE THAT FORCE THEM TO RETREAT UNTIL THEY SURRENDED IN NOVEMBER.

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Telephone: 60114 404222
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			TARIFF ITEM	TREAT. CODE	STATISTICAL CODE		QUANTITY (DESCRIBE UNITS)	COUNTRY OF ORIGIN CODE	\$	c	RATES	P.	\$	c	RATE	\$

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