

ALEX CAMPBELL

First World War

TRANSCRIPT OF AN INTERVIEW WITH ALEX CAMPBELL, 15th BATTALION, 4th BRIGADE, FIRST AIF; Recorded by David Chalk.

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

4 January 1986

There was some kind of an instruction school - or some of the Lewis guns arrived. See, it's a long time ago, and I'm hazy about it.

It's seventy years ago.

Yes, that's right, and I was only sixteen then.

You were only sixteen when you went?

Sixteen yes, that's right. I was seventeen at Tel-el-Kebîr. That's why I'm a bit more active than most of the ... Of course, I'm ten years younger than most.

You're ten years younger, yes. Well, that's true. Well, actually Mr Doggett's the oldest man that I've met so far, although I have three or four men who are ninety-five, and a few of them who are about eighty-nine.

John, who you've seen, I think he had some sort of heart trouble in May, just after the May attacks ...

The August attack.

... so that he was away from the Battalion for the rest of the ... He was mainly, I think, at Horseferry Road till the end of the duration, and he was a sergeant there. But I don't think he ever joined us.... As far as I know, he never came back.

He came back to Egypt in early 1916, and then he was transferred to the 47th in Egypt.

Oh, was John ... I didn't realise that John had come ... Now, I don't remember him coming back. No doubt he did.

It was when the Battalion went down to Serapeum.

Yes, yes.

The new units for the whole 4th Division went down there.

I don't remember him there, but no doubt he was there. You see, the reinforcements were coming over fast, and everyone was being transferred. I wish old Bill Ellis was still alive; he had an amazing memory and could jot things down. He would have been very helpful to you. But he went, too, from the Battalion at that time; he went to the Camel Corps.

I've heard about them.

He stayed with them till he went to El Arish, I think, just towards the end of the war. What about Marshall? Did you see Marshall?

Yes, I've been to see Mr Marshall, and he's fairly well, but he, of course, is ninety now, I think, or about to turn ninety. He gets fairly short of breath and so on, and his health is not really very good, but he was most interested to see you.

Yes, I'm sure he would be.

I've recorded about five hours of conversation with him, which is quite a lot. Moreover, he had some photographs - actually German photographs - taken of a prisoner of war camp which he was in - of Holtzminde - and they were quite a good find. I've managed to copy them.

He was an able fellow. Syd Allwright (Reg. No. 1152) would have been another, but Syd's dead too now. I don't know what became of it - I think Bill Ellis got it - he had a diary that, for some reason or other, at Tel-el-Kebîr, we made jottings and he had both the notation of myself and of Syd Allwright. He said to me, 'Do you want this?' He was old and knew he wasn't going to be here for much longer. He gave this little book to me and I gave it to Bill. I don't know what happened to it. There might have been some notes in that.

That might be worthwhile following up. His widow is still alive, isn't she?

Yes, she is. She lives round here - nice person. What she did with Bill's - she may have them still there as far as I know. It's only a little diary, but the little jottings. You might have got something out of it.

I've located a set of letters written by Lieutenant Wadsley who was in charge of the 13th.

That's right, yes. Now he transferred later ... It was Wadsley, I think, that was killed.

Yes, that's right. He went to the 52nd.

That's right, yes.

You used to know Wadsley, did you?

I knew him, yes. Not well, but I knew him.

I've also located letters by H. M. Brettingham-Moore.

Oh yes, yes. We had Tony Brettingham-Moore here the other night. He's a friend of ours. They've built a place - they lived in Sydney. But Tony wouldn't know - he was a nephew. Have you been in touch with Tony?

I've been in touch with C. Brettingham-Moore at Sandy Bay. It's his son.

Yes, he's his son, yes.

He actually seemed to have material there; I haven't seen it yet. He has sent me some material, but he has other letters apparently. I am going very well with it, I am getting a lot of material.

I wish I'd been longer with the Battalion during the period that you're ...

Yes, well, that's alright. I think you will still be able to help to some degree. But it's a fairly natural story, the one I'm writing, because it begins with the end of the Gallipoli campaign, so there is a new beginning, and there's quite a long period in Egypt. And Egypt is a very interesting place, and there are a lot of very good stories from there. Then the period in France, of course; some of the finest actions of the Brigade were in France at that time, or at least they weren't the most successful at all but they were, nevertheless, significant. The Battle of Bullecourt was certainly an end, in a way, because it was a disaster for the Brigade, and that moved into the POW period because there were about 1,000 men captured there at that time.

Yes, I know. I was wondering ... anything interesting. I should jot down anything that I could think of. The occasional trips to Cairo on leave, of course, were most interesting. Cairo in those days was a - it still is - I did go back and have a look at it in '53, and it hadn't changed that much. But the bazaars, and the natives in the streets, and the Shepherd's Hotel: you remember these things, but you remember them vaguely.

You were 7th Reinforcement, weren't you?

Yes, that's right. I was with the 8th actually. We got there before the 7th, but we left here in the 8th. Lieutenant Wilson took us. We landed on Lemnos just before the - it was only a matter of a week or so - and both the 7th and the 8th went back to the Peninsula when the Battalion returned after the rest on Lemnos. Lemnos was an interesting place, but again, that's before your story starts.

The story that I'll be writing will have ... Well, I will be doing some sort of retrospective material in the first part of the book. There'll be some accounts of Gallipoli - and the book begins, more or less, with the evacuation of the Battalion. But certainly, I'll be fetching ...

From Gallipoli, of course, we came across to Lemnos. We came from Lemnos from Gallipoli, just as we went to Gallipoli from Lemnos.

You went over with the 8th Reinforcements.

That's right.

When was that - what month?

When did we arrive in Egypt, do you mean?

When did you leave Australia?

Mm ...

Would it have been August or later?

No, I think ... Yes, it was late in August, I think. Yes, it was in August. September we were in Egypt. I think we joined the Battalion on Lemnos in October.

I think the 7th, and the 8th Reinforcements at the same time, arrived, according to the Battalion history, in October on the Peninsula.

Yes, that's right.

And you were there for about two months?

That's right, yes. We stayed until ... and there wasn't very much doing. You were sneaking around in the bushes, being sent out on patrol work at night. There were no heavy casualties - a few people were hit in Hay Gully. I remember a shrapnel shell killing a fellow named Lynch and hitting another chap named Dickson, and Bill Ellis, who I was telling you about, carrying one of the chaps who had been hit.

Dickson.

In the Turk's artillery they had a battery of like French 75s, you know, whizzbangs. They used to come over the valley, and that was terrifying. But there was no bayonet charges or anything like that.

You were rather fortunate in that, weren't you?

Your worst enemies were the flies and the lice, and then the blizzards came.

What happened when it did get cold?

I got darned cold, and the saps were half filled with snow, you know. You still had to bring - you see - there was no - the only water supply came from the beach. They used to land it and put it in a great steel tank on the beach. We'd have water fatigues carrying the water up. You were always likely to get hit doing that because there were still a few Turkish snipers around who would have pot shots at you; or, if there were not snipers, there was always a constant rifle fire there. There was always a chance, until you got back - and Hay Gully was pretty well sheltered and you'd be pretty safe when you were in there. And then the evacuation was ... tried to get away because none of us really wanted to leave, strange to say. We always felt we'd be leaving a job unfinished. I think that was a general feeling in the Battalion. I remember Jim Corrigan having something to say about that. Old Dave Waterfield was in the same company.

He was in D Company.

Yes, yes.

What do you remember about Dave Waterfield?

Well, he was a cranky old man with a red beard, and quite fearless. He would say he was going out and he'd go all day... Actually, at the time of the evacuation old Dave didn't come away, you know. He stayed. They brought him off some days later.

Yes, I think I read that in the history.

Yes, he was a good soldier in a way, but he was a darn nuisance, so I'm told. Even on Gallipoli he was a bit of a nuisance because you were never quite sure where he was. The only orders that old Dave took were the ones he gave himself. But he was a character. Everybody in D Company knew him, and he had a reputation for fearlessness and braggadocio, you know. He was a bit of a show-off.

I know a few stories about Dave Waterfield now. In fact, I've located one of the 15th originals, Mr Bill Bradnock.

Oh yes, yes.

You know Bill, do you?

Yes, yes. Where is he now then?

He's living at Beachmere, just north of Brisbane.

He'd be able to tell you stories.

Oh yes, I've got quite a lot on tape from him.

It's still a pity you didn't get Bill Ellis, because Bill was a sergeant major at the time, and he had several goes in with old Dave, because Dave didn't take orders easily.

It's very late in the day to be contemplating the story at all, in a way.

Yes, it's a pity it wasn't done earlier, but still ...

I'm not too late though.

No, I don't think so.

I'm just going to get it in time, I think. I've missed a few people: Percy Toft died early this year. He died in February - and he would have been a great help to me.

Syd Allwright would have been helpful. Bill Ellis would have been helpful. Bill was with the Battalion from the start, right up until he joined the Camel Corps. He could tell you very much more of the old originals than I could tell you.

(Break in interview)

When you came back to Lemnos you had Christmas there, didn't you?

We didn't. We went with Captain Johnson. We had Christmas on the water between Lemnos and ... There were about 100 of us I suppose sent on to Tel-el-Kebîr, and we were sort of getting the camp ready.

Was that from all the different companies?

Oh yes. It wasn't only D Company. There wouldn't have been 100 men in D Company at that time.

Casualties you mean?

Yes. Tel-el-Kebîr, when we first arrived there, was - oh there weren't many, only a few troops there - and a month afterwards, I suppose, it was a canvas city. A huge place, the biggest camp I've ever seen. It was there that we found the whole saps of the old - there had been a battle fought there years ago.

Did you ever look around for anything?

Yes, but I never found anything. But things were found. I remember the dentist - medical set-up. People had trouble with their teeth, after Gallipoli and army biscuits - and there was a dental camp, and they found an old skeleton. There were old bones - and they had the skull on a stick with two bones crossed up and a fez, a Turkish fez, around his neck - the Terrible Turk. It's funny how you remember things like that.

Where was that?

That was at Tel-el-Kebîr.

Where was the skeleton placed though, at Tel-el-Kebîr? It was on a stick, you say - the skull. It was the skull.

I don't know, because I didn't see it found. I only knew they found the thing. Sometimes they'd find an old rifle. I think they were the old Martinis, they had. Bits of things you could find.

I thought that when the Brigade came back to Egypt it went to Ismailia first.

First of all, yes. But we didn't. Why we - that 100 - we came ... Yes, we went straight to Tel-el-Kebîr.

And that was under Captain Johnson?

Johnson, yes. We did go - the whole battalion was in Ismailia for a while, you know - rather a pleasant place. Wait a minute. We may have gone to Ismailia before we came on to Tel-el-Kebîr.

That's what the Battalion did.

Yes, I know ... yes, and so did we.

You set up camp in both places, did you?

Yes, we did. Camp was already set up at Tel-el-Kebîr; it was Ismailia where we went.

So you didn't actually set up camp at Tel-el-Kebîr?

At Tel-el-Kebîr, no.

So it was Ismailia.

It was Ismailia, yes.

What did you have to do when you established camp at Ismailia?

Nothing very much - set up a few tents and just sit on our bottoms and wait for the rest of them to arrive. We did some guard duty, you know, the ordinary routine things you had to do. For a long time there wasn't ... people were being transferred from one unit to another, and there wasn't a lot of any kind doing, except transfers and new battalions being formed. Lieutenant Wilson, who brought us over from Tasmania, went to the 47th. So that happened at Tel-el-Kebîr, not Ismailia.

No, it was at Tel-el-Kebîr that they split the battalions, wasn't it?

Yes, yes.

I think that John Doggett must have come back to the Battalion at Tel-el-Kebîr.

Yes.

He said Serapeum to me, but I'm pretty sure ... He was with the 15th when he came back, and then they were transferred.

I doubt if he was at Serapeum. I would have been more likely to have seen him than I would have at Tel-el-Kebîr.

You contracted enteric fever, wasn't it?

No, I got mumps.

You got the mumps, right.

A lot of them got that.

Yes, I know about that, yes.

It laid me out rather badly.

Where was that? When did you contract mumps?

At Tel-el-Kebîr. I never went back to the Battalion after March.

You went into hospital in Heliopolis?

Heliopolis, yes. It had been a hotel - the Palace Hotel.

What was it like there?

Oh, Heliopolis was a beautiful place, you know. There was the Palace on one corner, and just further up the street a hotel - La Place de Avenue - French name.

What was it called again?

Place of the Avenue.

Place of the Avenue.

It had a flat roof and a screen - a picture, you know - and you could go in there for nothing at night.

It was a movie theatre?

Yes, that's right. Sit on this flat roof and drink beer and see the movies for nothing. Tel-el-Kebîr was a pleasant place.

Heliopolis.

Heliopolis was a pleasant place.

They had a cinema up on top of the roof, did they - and movie screens?

That's right, yes.

They were silent films, of course.

Oh yes, they were silent films. I remember seeing Charlie Chaplain - must have been in action. I remember seeing a Charlie Chaplain film there.

Heliopolis had a bazaar, didn't it?

Not in Heliopolis ... I don't think so.

I might be wrong there; I may have been ... I think it was Bill Bradnock told me there was a bazaar at Heliopolis, but he may be wrong.

I'd be surprised because, you see, when I was well enough to come out from the hospital I used to walk round the place quite a bit, and it wasn't far to get the train into Cairo from Heliopolis. I don't think there was a bazaar there.

Where were the bazaars?

Mainly in Cairo. There was an Egyptian bazaar and an Arab bazaar, and they were fascinating places. I bought a hubble-bubble pipe in one of them. I was going to send it home. I didn't send it home. You know the hubble-bubble: a glass ...

Oh, I know, they smoke the tobacco through them, don't they. What happened at Christmas time in 1915? You were on a ship, weren't you?

Yes, yes.

What was the name of the ship, can you recall?

No, I can't.

I suppose it was only a fairly small one.

HMAS ... No, I can't remember off hand. It's possible that the ship's name is not within the history.

It may be, I can check. What sort of a ship was it? Was it a naval ship?

Naval ship, yes. Most of them were, of course.

Like a destroyer or some description?

It wasn't a destroyer, but it was a naval ... HMAS - whatever its name was.

When you went overseas can you recall which ship you went on?

I think it was the (*Kyarra*). I should remember that.

You went from Melbourne, I gather?

Went from Melbourne, yes (records indicate it was Adelaide). We went from here to Broadmeadows Camp, and from Melbourne we ...

You would have been in Claremont for a time.

Oh yes.

What was it like at Claremont?

Claremont was pleasant. It was one of the nicest camps that I can remember. It was a ... the situation was good. There were not that many of us there. Entertainment was good. We had recreation huts, and the YMCA, Salvation Army huts. Oh yes, Claremont was a pleasant place.

What it primitive at all?

It was primitive compared to what ... but it wasn't primitive then. The lavatories were reasonable. I don't remember anything ... The worst conditions there were in Hay Valley where you all sat on a long pole with a trench dug, you know.

This is on Gallipoli?

This is on Gallipoli.

That's what they had at Liverpool Camp in Sydney.

Yes, yes, that's right. I think we might have had something like that at Claremont now (laughs). But there were showers and there was the YMCA.

How long had it been open at Claremont Camp?

Not very long because they were at Brighton first, you know. Claremont didn't open, I suppose ... well, it couldn't have been open more than a couple of months. Huts were still being built there, and most of us were under canvas - the bell tents - the old bell tents.

Where did you enlist from?

From Launceston.

What were you doing at that time?

I hadn't left school very long. I was a clerk in the Launceston stock exchange with a man called Murphy, Peter Murphy. Office boy would be a better term.

What prompted you to enlist?

Oh, I don't know. I suppose everybody was going, you know. It was a great adventure. I persuaded my parents to let me go.

They, of course, would have had to sign your ...

No, there wasn't any signing really. You simply said ... parents said yes, and ... I think this did happen later, but nobody had to sign. Can't even remember. Well, they did. They must have said, 'Do your parents agree?'. Well, they did agree too, up to a point.

Did you have any other family members in the Battalion?

No. You see, there was five of us. I was the eldest of them. My brother, Col, he went in the 2nd show. Even the Boer War didn't seem far away then.

Did you ever know Ernest Etchell or not?

Who?

Ernest Etchell. He came from Launceston. He's someone that I've met. He's alive now. He's living in Melbourne, and he was a 7th Reinforcement.

I must have known him because the 7th joined us on ... but I can't remember him. They would have left Claremont before we did, but for some reason we got to Lemnos Island, I think, a week in front of them.

Was there anything to the fact that ... like I know, for example, that Ernest Etchell enlisted, I think it was only July and he went overseas in August, whereas my grandfather enlisted in late June, I think, but didn't go until December. What would be the reason for that?

I don't know. I think it was maybe that they thought there was going to be another big push, perhaps, on ... Of course, they rushed both of our - both 7th and 8th - and this was happening in the other states too.

Did they call for volunteers to ... like people that had come into camp and who'd only been there a month or a few weeks, did they say ... were there any volunteers to go early, or anything like that? Or was it completely under orders?

No, no, it was completely under orders. I thought I'd like to go in the Light Horse, and there was some sort of collection for the Light Horse. But they weren't rushing Light Horsemen away - it was the infantrymen ... And I did want to get away, because although my parents hadn't objected I thought they might if I stayed round long enough. No, there was no volunteering to get away. But some people did and some people didn't. It may be that they were useful in the camp and training others or something. See, Sergeant-Major Morgan - Old Bully Morgan, he was called - he was in camp when I - and very much part of the camp set-up. And he didn't leave. He joined at Tel-el-Kebîr actually. He wasn't with the 15th at all, but I think he was with the 47th. I'm not sure. But he was very much part of the Claremont Camp set-up when we went there; you know. One of the old hands - an Englishman - a Welshman. They used to sing songs about him - 'Bully Old Morgan, Face like an organ.' He was a bit of a disciplinarian, but a nice fellow and a good soldier.

What was Broadmeadows like?

Oh well, Broadmeadows - I think I liked Claremont better than Broadmeadows. There was this pole latrine at Broadmeadows. I think that might be where the term 'furphy' started. Of course, furphy was the night cart that came around to take the rubbish away. You know, a rumour.

Yes, I knew what the term meant. Can you recall anything about the passage across to Suez?

I can remember there were one or two other transports which joined us. And there were Japanese destroyers steaming up and down to convoy.

Did you strike any rough weather at all?

Not really. I don't remember any bad weather at all going across. One of the porpoises followed the ship, you know. No. Going through the Red Sea, it was calm and flat. Of course, it generally is. No, the weather was ... If we got a bit of a bump anywhere it would have been going to Fremantle from Melbourne.

Yes, across the Bight.

We would have picked up troops there.

You called in at Colombo I assume.

Oh yes.

Did you go ashore there?

I liked it very much. It was our first sight of a foreign place. The ship anchored in the harbour, but we went ashore and we were there for a couple of days.

What did you do at that time?

Well, we walked round. I remember we went up to Candi. That was further up in the hills - we had a trip up there. We were issued with some shocking English beer called Iron Coop. It had hops floating around in it. I remember that very well.

Iron Coop: how do you spell it?

Just I-R-O-N C-O-O-P - Coop.

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE A

START OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

C-O-O-P?

Mm - Iron Coop. I've never heard of it since.

It probably died a natural death.

I think it must have been some kind of an army - specially brewed for the army. It was in big wooden casks. Everything was in wooden kegs in those days.

What was it like up at Candi? What was up there?

Oh lovely. It was just a tea plantation, you know, and a few little stalls and things like that. It was high in the hills. It took us - it must have taken us a couple of hours to get up there.

This is marching?

No, no, we didn't; we hired a gharry and went up. We had a sail. There was a little yacht club there where they sailed dinghies in the bottom end of the harbour - an English club - where they'd sail. And I remember the local fishermen came out in a queer craft with an outrigger. There must have been hundreds of these on the bay, fishing, and a funny lateen sail.

What kind of sail?

It was a lateen sail - that's the shape of the sail.

How do you spell that?

L-A-T-E-E-N, I think.

They used to re-coal the ships at Colombo, didn't they?

Oh yes, yes. Yes, I'd forgotten that. That's one of the reasons, I think, that we stayed a bit longer. I can remember these natives carrying bags of coal.

The natives carried it, did they?

Yes, in bags. It was a sea port because they had to bring the coal out in the lighters, you know. They couldn't go alongside and get it .

It was too shallow, was it?

I suppose so. The troopships moored, and you went ashore then. Bumboats would come out and take you to shore. We slept of course on the troopships in hammocks. Hammocks were hung between decks.

What were they like?

They were pretty awful. It was better on deck if you could get your blanket down. They were just round shaped, and they were not good. It was better on the flat deck.

Did you suffer from seasickness at all?

No, I was never one to suffer from seasickness. I always rather liked the sea. I don't think anybody did because it was a good flat trip.

For some of the other reinforcements I've talked to, for example, 7th Reinforcements to the 13th Battalion, going across in the *Shropshire*, they struck a storm, a major storm, and they had their hold fill up with water and everything was drenched.

No, we got nothing like that. I'm sorry I can't remember the name of the ship.

I'll be able to find out actually, because the embarkation rolls are in Canberra. When you arrived at Port Suez you didn't go up through the Canal, you'd have entrained, wouldn't you?

That's right, they sent us straight into cattle trucks, and up by train.

What memories do you have of Egypt?

Oh ... it was an interesting place. We didn't like the Egyptians and they didn't like us either. I think even now I've got little sympathy for the Arab cause because of my memories of Egypt. On the other hand, I felt Cairo was interesting - a fascinating place. Heliopolis, as I said earlier, was a pleasant, nice place.

That was a French town, wasn't it - mainly?

Yes, yes. The climate was good really, looking back on it. A dry, nice climate.

You would have been there during the winter, wouldn't you?

That's right.

Or late summer - it would be autumn.

Autumn it was, yes.

I don't know whether they actually have an autumn in Egypt or not; it may just be summer and winter.

Well yes. It was pleasantly warm, nice days. Often I liked getting out to the pyramids - they were good tram rides out. I enjoyed that. The Ezbekîya Gardens were pleasant on the way in.

What do you call them?

Ezbekîya Gardens.

Can you spell that for me?

I've got no idea how to spell it.

I might be able to look it up somewhere. What were the gardens like?

Oh, there were fine date palms there. There was a brewery just near it, I remember that; and, of course, the Nile running - the River Nile - running quite near to it. And Arab boys were selling oranges along the road there - two for a half - that meant two for a half piastre. A piastre was about twopence halfpenny. Things were cheap, you know.

You got a shilling a day, didn't you, that time?

Just then, yes, yes. It used to add up to a bit because we didn't get paid for a long time. I think you could draw more than a shilling a day, I'm sure you could. You left so much compulsorily - had to be left at home.

I think it was about three shillings I'm told.

Yes, I think so - three or four shillings. People got six shillings a day. Yes, you only had to leave two behind - left when you came back. You could draw - yes, I'm sure you could draw the full four shillings a day. The English troops got a shilling a day; we always thought of them as a poverty stricken ...

Did you climb the pyramids?

Oh yes.

What was that like?

Well, it was exciting and a bit of fun. We went down inside them too. They were big square rocks, you know. Once you get up on top of one you can have a spell. It's not a difficult job to climb to the top of the pyramids, not in those days anyway. And a guide would take you inside. I remember a big high chamber right in the centre. It had a name but I've forgotten what it was - and I remember the guide saying, "Listen to the echo of the pyramids." And then he went, "Hoo! Hoo! And this echoed right round the high room. You could hire donkeys and camels there if you wanted to have a ride on a donkey or a camel.

Did you do that?

I don't think I did. Oh yes, I did have a ride on a camel.

Where was that?

That was at the pyramids, where they have them. Strange animals, I know that. The driver, or whatever he was - the groom - would make a strange noise like this. - 'Woo hoo.' - and the camel would get up. He'd make another strange noise, and the camel would kneel. They had to kneel, because they were so tall you couldn't get on them.

What happened to you when you got the mumps? Can you recall that particular period?

Oh ... not really, except that I was darned ill and I puffed up, and my face went crooked. And then back in hospital. Actually, the convalescing was very pleasant because we were in the Palace and they decided that it was - they were boarding people for home and I was one that was boarded. And we simply waited, and I had a very pleasant month or six weeks just poking around in Egypt and having a look at Cairo, and going for walks in the desert. That was pleasant too. The desert is a pleasant place, you know.

Where would you go walking?

Only round places ... I remember walking once into Cairo from Heliopolis, which is about eight miles, and deviating out. And there was another place, a rest camp, where they sent us for a while.

Zeitoun?

Oh no, no. This was a little oasis about ten miles out of Cairo. I've forgotten. It was a pleasant little place. It had palm trees round it and hot springs.

It wasn't Mary's Well or something?

No, it wasn't Mary's Well. I remember Mary's Well.

What was Mary's Well?

Well, it was where Mary was suppose to have rested or taken water, and there was the tree that the family - Christ, and Mary, and Joseph - were suppose to have rested under. This was a ... it was stone, you know, by now.

This tree?

Yes, it was ... Oh, there's a process, isn't there, where wood gets ...

Becomes fossilized?

Fossilized, yes, this part of this tree. And there was another tree growing that they said was ... It couldn't possibly have been the same tree, but they told us that it was.

Where was Mary's Well?

That's a good question (laughs). Somewhere, I suppose, between Tel-el-Kebîr and Cairo. It was nearer Cairo, just out from Cairo. It was one of the things they showed you in Cairo.

Did you go into the Cairo Museum?

Yes, I did, and that was very interesting - fascinating. It was nice in Cairo. You could spend hours and hours. Sometimes a train of camels would come through loaded with goods that had come from

somewhere and they were unloading them in Cairo. Metalworkers were beating out the little metal dishes, and things like that. They were clever workers.

The Arab food that they sold us. They called it mongerea - it was flat.

Like a bread, was it?

Yes, it was. This was a bread actually, a flat bread that you could put anything in between it.

Yes, I've seen the sort of thing. They sell it here now, don't they?

Yes. The monkeys performing in the street. A fellow would clap his hands (sings), 'Can-can the monkey. Can-can the monkey...', and the monkey would do a little can-can dance. And the mongoose fighting a monkey. This was a sort of a little animal, and the monkey would have a - it wasn't exactly a sham fight, but it was, because the man in charge of both animals would separate them before they hurt each other.

This is in the bazaars?

In the bazaars, yes.

(Break in interview)

And brothels. I remember one side they were licensed brothels - of course, this was supposed to be fit for human consumption! And on the other side were iron bars on windows, and they were examined in some way, and when they were found unfit for human consumption (laughs) they were put on the other side between these bars. How long they kept them there I don't know, but the ones behind the bars would call out all sorts of insulting remarks to anyone going in there. The venereal disease hospital was Abbâsîya, and the English would sing out, 'Abbâsîya bukara.' Bukara was an Arab word for tomorrow. Then, of course, there was a devil of a - before I got to Cairo - there was a regular riot there. Some of the places were burnt, but it was very much part of that prostitute quarter.

This is the Wazzar, isn't it?

The Wazzar, yes.

And they had licensed brothels on one side of the street ...

Yes.

... and on the other side of the street ...

There was a holding hospital I take it, because there were windows with bars up, you see, and this is what we were told. That they were holding places for the ...

Certainly sounds as though venereal disease was rife there.

Oh, it was horrible, yes. Oh yes, and a lot of fellows got it so badly that it probably crippled them for life, you know.

Did they?

Again, I don't know about it, but this is what we were told. That you mustn't go into the brothels, and you mustn't go bare-footed into the Nile, because it had some kind of insects that got into your feet. I suppose that was true. I don't know. We didn't try it because nobody wants to paddle in the Nile in any case.

Didn't they? It's a dirty river I suppose, was it?

Well, it didn't look dirty. It was very flat at Cairo. And these huge, flat, barge-like vessels would come down with some kind of hay on them. It was like a haystack floating down the river. Again, they all had the same kind of lateen sail, the high mast and bending boom. They looked very nice. There was quite a traffic of those things on the Nile.

Did you ever go sailing on the Nile at all, on the boats?

No, no I didn't. I would have liked to have done that, but I didn't. Very flat, you know.

Did you meet any of the Egyptian people - the upper classes perhaps?

No, not really. They kept pretty largely to themselves. So did the Greeks on Lemnos. If you'd say 'Good day,' they would say 'Good day', but get out of the way as soon as they could. I don't think the Egyptians liked the Australian occupation.

Why not?

I don't know. We didn't always behave ourselves of course, but no worse than you would expect from a mob of troops. I have never seen any really bad behaviour. I heard about it the burning of the Wazzar, but I didn't see it. They were bits of cheats, you know, the street sellers. I suppose you'd find that anywhere.

They were cheats?

Yes. They'd sell you something that wasn't what they said it was. This didn't endear them to us. No, I don't think the Australian - I don't think any troops were liked there really. There was a village not far from Tel-el-Kebîr. Now, what is the name of that? - Zagazig.

Zagazig, yes.

If you went near there the Arab kids would pelt stones at you. They were very accurate shots too, they were.

If you went there - what do you mean? It was a railway station, wasn't it, at Zagazig?

Yes. There was a village at Zagazig - a native village - built with typical mud huts. If you were walking round there the Arabs would throw stones at you. And we weren't allowed to go into the Zagazig village. It was out of bounds.

You didn't go down to Serapeum I gather.

No, I didn't go to Serapeum, no.

(Incidental conversation)

Most of the people, if they weren't country, well - or else they were familiar with country life. All Australians, I think, could shoot, for instance, whereas not many of the English could. Living on Gallipoli itself, it wasn't so terribly unfamiliar to a lot of Australians.

What can you remember about Lemnos? You would have been there for a few weeks, wouldn't you?

Oh yes, I was there twice, you see. I liked Lemnos. I remember these olive plantations. The small villages with stone - they would gather the local stones up and build a wall around them. There was always a windmill built with these stones. There were always fowls under the windmills - lots of fowls, you see, because of the grain that would ...

They were flour mills?

Flour mills, that's right. And I think they grew more rye than wheat. I don't remember seeing wheat growing there, but they grew a lot of rye.

The rye bread they'd have, wouldn't they?

Yes. And the windmill would be a stone mill with two big grindstones, and the rye grain would be crushed between these two stones. Our fellows would sometimes steal the fresh eggs if they could find them. And once, I remember - and I think this happened more than once - they took them some of the fowls out and ate them. I remember on an odd day perhaps the shepherd carried crooks like they do in the Bible, and they wore kilts, you know, not trousers. The local Greeks and a socks and sandals and a skirt down to about their knees. This fellow came down with a crook and a handful of feathers and a fowl gut in the other hand. He showed us and he pointed pointedly at me, and indicated that he'd found the remains of one of the fowls. He think he was compensated from the ... but this wasn't uncommon, you know.

That was extremely common in France, of course, too ...

Oh yes.

... the stealing of chooks, and eggs, and pigs. I've got a few stories like that.

Again, on Lemnos there olive groves - the black olives, you know. They'd pick them off the trees and the Greeks again would scream... Yes, I don't think the Greeks on Lemnos liked us much. But it was a pleasant island. The harbour was magnificent.

This is Mudros Harbour?

Mudros Harbour was on Lemnos, it was the harbour for Lemnos.

And the village was Mudros, wasn't it?

Yes, that's right. Oh crikey, there were battleships of almost all allied nations anyway, even the Russian boat. The Poms called it the 'Packet of Woodbines' because it had five funnels. It had a Russian name. I've forgotten what it was - these five funnels sticking up.

I think that Lemnos used to be subject to gales.

Oh yes, yes, my word. If the wind came across there it would cut the harbour up. As a matter of fact, we were delayed one night going to Gallipoli. The wind and the rain stopped us, but we sheltered from that. For some reason we anchored just off Anzac Cove in the morning, and one of the chaps on deck - the stray bullets were coming over all the time - he was hit through the night in the head - killed. I remember that quite well. He was asleep on deck and in the morning he was dead. But even then the gales used to hit the shores, and they were pretty rough at Anzac Cove at times. I often wondered since what would have happened if a real gale would have come because at the time of the storms, the rain and the snow, the water was lashed pretty badly there. If you hadn't have been able to get

stores ashore, there's no other way of getting them. Planes couldn't have dropped them. We would have easily been in a mess. There were one or two wells on Gallipoli, but either they were not used or not adequate enough to supply water. I often thought that I'd like to go back and have a look at it.

You probably wouldn't have known Mr James Wheeler. He's a Queenslander. I managed to find him myself. I've found a few 15th men myself, and I can remember him. He was a 4th Reinforcement, and he's been a great help to me because...

He'd have been there just in time for the big August push; we missed that you see.

He was wounded in August, and he went to London. Then he came back to Lemnos and then to Egypt, and then he was blown up by a grenade at Pozieres. Then went to London again and came back for Bullecourt, and he was blown up there again and captured. He spent the rest of the time as a POW. But he's been quite a good help to me.

He'd have been there long enough to have had all sorts ...

But obviously, because your period of service ended when you got the mumps I'll try and use as much as I can of what you can remember of Lemnos and Egypt. And you can remember some quite interesting descriptions there that I've not got from other people.

As you said, your story starts after the evacuation, but even before that there is not a lot ...

No, well that's true, too. Really with, say, Mr Etchell, who was a 7th Reinforcement, he can also tell me some good stories about Egypt and about France. He was at Bullecourt, but he managed to get out of it okay. Well, he was shot through the foot, but he got out of it.

(Further incidental conversation)

END OF TAPE ONE - SIDE B

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

From Alexandria, you know. Thinking it over I'm sure that we went first to Tel-el- Kebîr.

You did.

I'm certain of that, I don't know why.

I went and looked it up in the History.

What did it say?

You first went to Tel-el-Kebîr, and then you went to Ismailia.

That's right, that's what I said. Then I when I thought about it we must have gone to Ismailia, but we didn't; I'm sure we went to Tel-el-Kebir, as I said to you before. It's a long time thinking back, you see.

Can you tell me: I'm a little bit doubtful about the movements of the 7th and 8th Reinforcements.

I can tell you a good deal about them.

In the Battalion history you arrived on Lemnos late October, didn't you?

Yes, that's right. We arrived there - the 8th - arrived on Lemnos - I'm certain I'm right about this - about a week at least, perhaps more, before the 7th came.

Yes, because I've been reading Brettingham-Moore's letters - not many of them, but some - and the earlier ones, ones dated 30/10/15 indicate that the 8th and the 7th Reinforcements were going off to Gallipoli at that time.

Yes, yes, well that is true, but ...

So the 7th didn't actually arrive on Lemnos until, say, the end of the first week in November.

Yes, that would be about right. Oh, wait a minute ... I think the Battalion left Lemnos, I thought, about the end of October, but I might be wrong there. It was certainly early November when we landed on ... but we were mucking around for a while. You see, the weather was a bit dicey, and we went ... The first night I can remember very well; we pulled into - what's the little island?

Imbros?

Imbros - and we lay there all night. And then we came across to Gallipoli and anchored in Anzac Cove, or just out from Anzac Cove, and we landed in the boats early in the morning. I can remember this very well because one fellow was hit on deck ...

Yes, you were saying.

... and I remember this was just in the early daylight, and there was always - now there was constant rifle fire on Gallipoli. Always. Day and night there was a fire kept up. There were ... sort of ... to get us

used to ... you could see the stray bullets hitting the water when we got in. And we waded ashore - this is to land - up to about our knees with water, and I can remember how blasted heavy the military boots were when they were sodden and with puttees on, you know. I can remember that well. And there we went straight to the Battalion - went straight up to Hay Gully. But we were doing all sorts of work out of there. Lieutenant Wilson, for instance, he brought us over in charge of a group down on the beach with stores. And at night we used to meander round, and I don't know, but I think they were rather expecting a Turkish attack. Of course, our attack in August had failed, you see, and the talk was that the Turks were... and we used to go out at night and put barbed wire up, across the end of the gully, and in any other spot that ... I don't know whether they thought that this was necessary, or just to keep us busy. Then back in Hay Gully there was nothing much doing at all really. And of course, it was a pretty safe place to be. There were one or two fellows hit there. There was a New Zealand engineer who was taking us out to do some fatigue work, and he was hit. And a man named French - I think I told you about that. I remember that well because Sergeant Major Ellis - then Sergeant Major - these whiz-bangs, you know, the 75 ...

Explode in the air?

Yes. And if you kept on one side of the gully you were as safe as billyo, but on the other side - and French got hit on the other side, and I remember Bill going out and picking him up. Funny how you can remember a thing like this. He recovered, French recovered, but he was hit in the chest and one of the lungs must have been punctured. You know, he was bleeding at the mouth. And water fatigue. You had to go down and carry the water up, which was unpleasant. And then, I suppose it must have been late in November when the storm came. It was a bad storm: it was cold and wettish at night, but in the morning there were inches of snow. Lemnos was pleasant to get back to then; I liked Lemnos because the villages were pleasant. I think I told you about them.

Yes, you did.

The old women outside. They had long, coarse-haired sheep. I don't know what breed they were, but they all had long hair, something like the Australian Leicesters, you know. They used to spin the wool with a stick, not with a spinning wheel like they've got there, but with a stick between their hands, and they'd keep this rolling and very cleverly get a piece of wool and they'd push it onto this stick and roll it up. They all seemed to be occupied with this spinning of the wool. They'd sit in the sun outside their houses. Some of their villages were lovely places, you know.

There was a capital, wasn't there, on Mudros?

Oh yes, that was a pleasant little town, it was nicely built. What was the name of it? Yes, I've been there because I remember buying black olives. There's a lot of black olives grown there - and these were beautiful big olives.

Carawere or something.

Something like that. The water on Lemnos was very good, and they had these - even at the villages there would be a well, a deep well, and the women would carry these large - carry them on their head like the biblical pictures, you know - and take water into the village.

These are the big jars?

Yes, yes - put them on their heads - they must have been quite heavy.

They didn't have running water of course.

They had no running water.

No, it was just a well.

They'd pull it up from the wells and filled these things up and walked. Men wore short skirts like a kilt, and socks, and they'd carry their crooks like the biblical shepherds.

They are Greek people, aren't they?

They were Greek, yes - they are Greek islands. They spoke very little English indeed. I suppose the bigger villages had some who spoke English because I remember buying the olives, and I had no Greek, and they had enough English to know what I wanted. On Lemnos with Captain Johnson, I told you we had Christmas.

What did you do that Christmas Day?

Nothing very much. We did make a day of it. I think we had a tinned plum pudding. Lots of tinned plum puddings were issued, I can remember having this. There was nothing much else I suppose! We had, I think, about a day in Alexandria before we came up to Zeitoun. I remember enjoying it. It's a lovely place, Alexandria. The shops were pleasant and they spoke French and English as well as Arabic.

What was Captain Johnson like? I've seen a photograph of him.

Well, I don't remember him very well; I didn't know him on the ...Corrigan I knew quite well, I don't know why.

I've seen a photograph of Corrigan too.

Yes, a big fellow, tall chap, very ... a good type of man. He was a good officer too, good disciplinarian without being over assertive about it. I think he'd probably been a miner, I think, and he'd probably been in charge of men in mining gangs. He could deal with a bunch of Australians very well. They weren't always easy to handle. Fellows like - I think I mentioned - old Dave Waterfield who had a

tremendous reputation as a soldier, but he loved disobeying orders. You know, at the time of the evacuation, the silly old fellow went back to Hay Gully. I think he was pretty drunk that night. There was a broken ... rum was issued in demijohns, standard demijohns. Some of these had been broken and quite a few of the fellows had more than their ordinary rum issue. Right till almost the last. Kitchener came, you know. I saw Kitchener on the Peninsula. He was a poor old man. And until his arrival we - by 'we' I mean the lower ranks - all expected that we were going to have another go at Hill 971. This was the place you see that they had failed in the August attack. We all thought that till, oh almost the last week when it became pretty obvious what was going to happen. I rather think that some of the higher-ups too had this in mind because, as I say, we were rushed from here faster than usual across. I don't think they had the evacuation in mind. You see, that August attack - from what fellows told me; I wasn't in it - it was nearly successful. You see, a bunch of New Zealanders - again, I only know what the talk was - they actually reached, they could look down to the sea and the Turks below. And had we actually held that they probably would have got across.

That's right, the New Zealanders did get up on top - I know that much myself - and they were driven off, weren't they?

Well, either they were driven off, or ... There were different stories about that - yes, I suppose they were driven off really because the orders were for them to come off. They came off and came down and ...

I know they were attacked consistently, weren't they, when they were on the top?

Oh yes, oh yes. On the other hand they were supposed to have got there, had the rest of us got up in time, you know, we may have held it, but it was a funny, awkward ... the terrain was ... no-one knew about it ...

It was misjudged, wasn't it?

Oh yes, everything was misjudged on Gallipoli, I think. The hills, you see - there were no roads or tracks or anything like that - wandering round in the scrub. I remember, I wanted to visit Brom King, who was with the 12th Battalion. I wandered off from Hay Gully and I got lost, and I got frightened too (laughs). I don't know whether a Turkish sniper had a shot at me or whether a couple of stray bullets went unpleasantly near. Anyway, I gave up the idea of visiting Brom. And then I couldn't find my way back to Hay Gully. I did eventually. But that's the sort of place it was, there was no proper discipline or ...

What friends did you have at that time. Any mates that you remember?

Yes. There was Alec James, who was from Longford. And we came, my family came from Longford in Cressy. But he was killed. And I suppose Bill Ellis, although he was ten years older than me, and I didn't really become a friend of his until he rejoined the Battalion on Lemnos, but he and I were ... No, I didn't have any close buddies, you know. You see I went almost straight from school. I had worked for about two months, I think, in a Launceston shop with man named Murphy.

How long were you in Claremont?

Not long. No more than a month.

And then you were rushed away.

Rushed away, yes.

You didn't stay at Broadmeadows for any ...

We stayed at Broadmeadows, but not for long, not enough to get to know Broadmeadows really. I think I can remember having a couple of days leave in Melbourne, and I hadn't been to Melbourne before. I remember enjoying this. We wouldn't have been any more than, perhaps, eight to ten days in Broadmeadows. It was a big camp. What I meant when I said about Tel-el-Kebîr having nobody there when we first went there - do you remember? And then I began to think this out because when we came back from ...

Lemnos?

No, no. Ismailia. You see, we went first to Tel-el-Kebîr, and then we went on to Ismailia, and then when we came back to Tel-el-Kebîr it was a huge camp. Streets and all sorts of things. Camp beds, picture shows.

But when you first came to Tel-el-Kebîr with Captain Johnson there was nothing there?

Nothing there at all. No, it was just ... There might have been one or two tents but nothing very much at all.

What did it look like at that time?

Just bare desert.

What could you see at Tel-el-Kebîr?

The Sweet Water Canal, you know, ran down passed it. On one side of the Sweet Water Canal were little holdings, little farms, and always near to them was a camel, or a donkey, or a man - no, generally a woman - pulling the water up. If it was a donkey it walked round - or a camel - round and round, and this pulled a bucket up, and they would tip it into an irrigation canal, and down again the stone would...

Yes, I know.

They all had this arrangement. That's something we hadn't seen before. So that part of the side of the freshwater canal was green and growing green stuff. I don't know what it was, it certainly wasn't oats or ...

It would be maize, would it?

Maize I think, yes. Yes, that must have been what it was. On the other side it had, of course, quite bare, sandy desert.

Why didn't they irrigate both sides of the canal?

I don't know why. Maybe the land sloped in that direction and it was easier to irrigate; the water would run down that side and wouldn't run uphill on the other side. I hadn't thought this out before, but the land at the Tel-el-Kebîr side did slope up slightly. Yes, a very slight rise. Whereas it ran down and flat on the other side of the Sweet Water Canal.

What could you see from Tel-el-Kebîr?

Oh, you couldn't see anything except ...

The horizon?

Yes, yes.

You couldn't see Cairo at all?

Oh, Lord no - no, no, no way. I don't know how far it would be from Cairo; it wasn't far I suppose.

It was a couple of hours, wasn't it?

Yes. We came into Cairo on leave, which I liked. I liked Cairo very much, it was a ... I said about my ideas of the bazaars. Well, the bazaars in Cairo were big places, great streets on both sides, native workers making things, and selling things. Whereas I didn't think of that sort of thing at Heliopolis, but there could well have been small shops, bazaar-like places. Thinking back I think there was one street at the back of the Palace Hotel which was a sort of a bazaar, but not the big ...

No. I know they had the big ones in Cairo. I've been reading about Brettingham-Moore going in shopping.

Talking about the dislike between Egyptians and Australians. I think the Australians were no prudes, you know, but they hadn't seen the sort of perversions and sex-sellings that were going on in the Cairo streets. I think this shocked a lot of men. You know, they thought the Egyptians would do anything, and these were the street vendors. They had all sorts of gimmicks that I suppose they'd been selling to tourists. They wanted to sell dirty postcards. I think this sort of thing put the average Australian off them a bit. As I say not that they were prudes by any means, but their idea of sex was a much simpler idea. Places like the reasonably good music hall like the Kersall in Cairo: there were native girls - or girls - dancing quite naked. I remember they danced what they call the can-can, and it was not for a long time afterwards that I found out that the can-can was really a French dance, not an Arab dance. The music that they used was Arab music; it was a sort of belly dance, it wasn't what ... It was what I thought was a can-can (laughs). They called it a can-can.

The Kersall, I've heard about it.

It was a good sort of a vaudeville show, really. There was a lot of the sort of shows that would have made, I suppose ... Well, it didn't, you see ... As I said, I was sixteen and I was no prude either, but I hadn't seen or even heard of this sort of thing. I suppose no people would welcome a whole lot of troops being piled in on top of them.

Whereabouts was the Kersall? What sort of a place was it?

It was not very far from the entrance to the Wazzar, but it had no connection with the Wazzar. I can't remember the street name, although I was back in Egypt in '52, but I didn't find Cairo very much like the Cairo that I had known. I remember there were two iron pillars outside, that they opened the gates out, and they'd lock the gates as people went in. The Arab name of the street I can't remember.

What sort of a building was it?

It was ... most of the Cairo buildings were handsome buildings. It was very like a music hall in Melbourne or anywhere else; very like the old Tivoli inside.

Whereabouts is that - I don't know?

The Tivoli is in Bourke Street in Melbourne.

It was made out of stone, I suppose?

Oh yes, all the buildings in Cairo are stone. The roads were magnificent. You see, I've never seen this kind of a road, except the St Kilda Road had wooden blocks and that was a beautifully smooth road, even then. But in Cairo all the roads were like that.

Wooden blocks?

No, they weren't wooden blocks, I think. I think they must have been bitumen roads. They looked just like our present bitumen roads. They wouldn't have been wooden blocks because there wouldn't have been that amount of wood.

No, I suppose not.

They were smooth and beautiful roads. The drive out to Mena, to the pyramids, was very pleasant in the tram.

The trams, of course, were on rails, weren't they?

They were on rails, yes. They were like an electric train, but they weren't, they were trams. They held a lot of seats. Troops all over them, hanging out on the side, on the roof. Poor conductors trying to collect fares. We seldom bought a ticket. It was very cheap anyway, about half a piastre.

When you went to Ismailia what did you do when you set up the camp there?

Well, we didn't do anything very much except ordinary fatigue duties, you know. Church parade on Sundays and drill in the mornings. They took us pretty easy, you know, after ...

After Gallipoli?

Yes. You see, in Hay Valley, although there wasn't a lot of fighting, there was a lot of sickness. There was a lot of dysentery, and a fair bit of heart trouble.

That's what John Doggett was saying.

The food was really unbelievable. You had tinned beef, water that was carried up so it was not terribly good. It wasn't bad, but it had been carried and it was often a bit dirty and brackish. And it was limited, the amount you could get to drink, let alone wash. Usually the cook would try and make a kind of mixture from hot water and tinned beef, and these hard biscuits. But there was no vegetables, no fruit.

The diet was deficient, wasn't it?

Yes, oh yes. I think everybody, by the time we came off - although I was only there for a couple of months - everyone was pretty sick. Even big strong fellows like Corrigan, he was thin, and emaciated, and ill. So was Bill Ellis. I think we all were. There were a couple of outbreaks of yellow jaundice. That's what Kate said about the oranges. I had yellow jaundice too. Corrigan evidently was like a Chinaman. We got stuck into ... you know, you needed something fresh, like oranges, and you could

buy lots and lots of them. They were always selling them. We had the damned things till we looked like them. I and some others got the idea that all these yellow oranges had caused the yellow jaundice. Which amused my wife very much. But see, even there you got no green, fresh vegetables, but you did get plenty of oranges. By the time we came off, if there had been an attack on 971 not many of the troops were fit enough to ...

To be in it, no.

There was no proper food, no proper exercise, and everybody was lousy. They were awful, you couldn't get rid of them, the lice. They got under where your trousers came round here ...

The puttees, yes.

They were sort of ... the trousers came down and were tied up, and the puttees came to the top of them. These things would ... oh, hour after hour I spent looking for lice. You could get what you thought were most of them off yourself, but even then I wasn't too sure. They didn't seem to get in your hair very much. I don't remember them getting in my hair anyway.

Etchell told me they'd get up to his neck and not go onto his head.

Yes, well that's how ... but they'd get under your arms and ... Oh, they were monstrous things really, you just couldn't get rid of them. That, and I'd say altogether, we were not a fit fighting force when we came off, by any means. And on Lemnos, you see, there was a lot of sickness, not because Lemnos ... it was very good, the food and everything, but we were sort of just recovering. Your spell in Egypt wasn't too bad, but it was in Egypt that I really cracked up: I got the mumps badly on top of yellow jaundice.

What happened when you got the mumps? The mumps can go down, can't it?

Yes.

Is that what happens? Is that what happened with you?

I don't know where they went, but it left me with a twisted face and eye.

Oh, that's what happened. I thought you must have suffered a stroke.

No (laughs) I haven't had a stroke. A lot of people think that, you know. No, once when I got going with things I've been very well, you know. I've sailed a lot, and played sport. I wear fairly well now. I read a lot.

I didn't realise mumps could be that serious.

Oh, they were, and sometimes they could sterilise people, I understand. No, they didn't sterilise me. I've been married twice and quite a large family.

Yes, I didn't quite understand the circumstances there. Well, the mumps were a very common malady, and the measles?

There was a lot of them. So did yellow jaundice. There was a lot of that about. You see, I reckon more people came off Gallipoli ill than were hit. A lot of people were hit, but a lot of people were taken off ill. John Doggett was evacuated, I think, with some sort of heart trouble he told me.

And with dysentery.

Dysentery, yes. It was probably dysentery that ... but they left most. Unless you were very ill with dysentery ...

You stayed.

You stayed, yes. I didn't know John until after the war actually. He must have been, if he came back to Tel-el-Kebîr - but there was such a mess-up there that you didn't really ...

He didn't actually didn't join the Battalion until Serapeum. I don't think you would even have met him. You wouldn't have been in the Battalion at the same time ...

I can't ever remember meeting John.

... because I was reading his diary today, and he was evacuated off Gallipoli after the August attacks. He didn't come back to Egypt until early April 1916, so you missed him.

I never remember seeing John, ever; it was not until I came back here. That accounts for Bill Ellis not seeing him either. See, Bill was hit probably before John joined the Battalion.

I think he joined May or June 1915.

Yes.

Certainly in June anyway.

Bill, he joined and stayed with us while we were back on Gallipoli, but at Tel-el-Kebîr he went to the Camel Corps. I think Bill found it difficult to accept people that had been his juniors were promoted to ... because Bill had been taken off wounded. They were going up and up, and Bill was still a sergeant. He was ambitious and he didn't like it. He got a commission in the Camel Corps.

What was Tel-el-Kebîr like when the big camp was formed there in early March?

Oh, it was a huge ... as I say, there were streets, several picture shows, there was at least one vaudeville show - but that came down and went away, and whether that was a show that was travelling, and whether it had been arranged as part of the army entertainment, I don't know. But the picture shows were Arab and French, and they were very good.

Arab and French pictures?

No, no.

English films?

English films, yes. I remember seeing Charlie Chaplin among others. I know there were English films ... Oh there were. You see, I do remember seeing a French film, in French, because a lot of French were at Tel-el-Kebîr.

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE A

START OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

You mean French servicemen?

French servicemen, yes. You see, the Foreign Legion were there and there were three or four battalions of them. They all wore the traditional red trousers and blue coats. Oh yeah. And there were a lot of English troops there. I remember the first time I saw the Gurkhas. That was on Gallipoli. I saw this bunch of little fellows all together talking, with the wide hats, like Australians. Rather good looking. I thought they were Japanese. I thought Japan has sent troops. But they were Gurkhas.

What about the Ceylon tea planters, did you ever meet any of them?

Not to know them, although I went up to Ceylon - up to the tea growing section.

That's right, at Candass.

But no, I didn't meet any of them. I drank their tea and liked it. Years afterwards I tried to get some of the same sort of tea, and I asked for - in Colombo - I asked for good Ceylon tea - and they gave me a packet - tried to sell me a packet of Bushells (laughs). I was most disappointed. They said it was Ceylon tea; I suppose it was - it was packed in Australia.

What were you telling me before about the skeleton or something that they found?

Yes, well that was at Tel-el-Kebîr. The dental tent - somewhere there were - I told you of the old trenches on the old battlefield.

Wolsley's battle, yes.

They had dug up this skull and they'd rigged it up and put a fez - you know a real fez.

Turkish fez.

On its head. It had two bones underneath it crossed like this, like the pirates, and they'd written 'The Terrible Turk'. It was just one of their jokes. Even there, you know, they were not certain that the Turks wouldn't have another shot at the Canal. They did have a go at it very early in the war, before I arrived.

What can you remember about Brettingham-Moore?

Nothing very much.

Can you remember the 10th Reinforcements coming in?

Yes, I can remember them coming in very well. When I got your first letter I thought, ah, I reckon he was amongst Brettingham-Moore's group. But I can't remember much, I can't even remember what he looked like although I've known quite a few of the Brettingham-Moores here since. But I can't remember what he looked like. I can remember old Eccles Snowden because he joined the Battalion in Hay Gully. He was a Hobart man - but I doubt if I'd recognise him again. He's dead of course. It's hard for me to remember clearly, its so long ago.

The officers seem also to have had, of course, not only more pay but a different type of lifestyle than the men.

Oh yes, oh crikey yes. There was just about as much difference - although not all officers were not as - call it the 'officer class' if you like - they were from the ... But yes, their lifestyle was different. I think in the school forms, that was sort of drilled into them in those days. Of course, they had their own mess, their own orderly. Yes, they lived a different life to the men, although fellows like Corrigan, Bill Ellis, they weren't uneducated I suppose, but they weren't what you'd call educated men. Corrigan was a

miner. Bill Ellis had been a porter in London. He was clever, he had a good intellect, but they were not ...

Not well educated.

No. Well, that was unusual, I think. Fellows like Wilson, who was a university man, and could speak French. But this was unusual.

Well Brettingham-Moore was a law student, you see.

Oh yes, Brettingham-Moore, yes.

He could speak French too, I think.

Oh yes. Brettingham-Moore would have come from here with a commission, he'd have been at Hutchins School, but that wasn't ...

Why did they get commissions here? I mean, why was it that Wadsley and Brettingham-Moore were able to leave Tasmania as lieutenants?

That happened right from the jump. The officers who left here as officers were nearly all public school fellows. Brett' Moore would have been - Hutchins. In the 40th Battalion I've heard it said that all the officers were old Hutchins boys. So in that sense the officers were different because there was a bigger separation then than there is now.

So simply on the basis of their education and the schooling they'd had were offered commissions?

Yes. Whether it was ... yes, I suppose the public school again.

I think you're right. Wadsley, for example, went to Friends, I think.

Who went to Friends School?

Wadsley.

Yes, that's right, yes. You see, even my school, apart from - I don't know any of them - they did not go on to Scots College, and they were all commissioned. I was sixteen and wasn't there long enough.

You were too young for it.

In any case I was not mucking around in that group. Anyone around eighteen to twenty - Bully Hinman and all of them. Bully was at school with me.

Hinman is a name I know.

He was killed.

Was that at Bullecourt? Oh, that was on the Peninsula.

He was killed on the Peninsula.

Yes, I've heard the name.

I think you could say, without much doubt, that a public school education pretty well got you a commission, no matter whether you were suited for a commissionship or not. Quite many of our officers later came up through the ranks. See L S Corrigan - the best of them.

The ones who really had a bit of courage and initiative.

That's right, yes. I could mention one or two others but ... I didn't see them fail, but I know they did fail and came home. Yes, in that way the officers were different.

So there's no doubting the courage or even, I think, the ability of someone like Brettingham-Moore, though. From his letters it is obvious that he is a very intelligent man.

Oh yes, and he came from an intelligent, outstanding family in Tasmania - oh yes.

I was given a marvellous reception there yesterday by Tim Brettingham-Moore.

I suppose my fellow did very well. I remember one that I won't mention because any failures I only heard in a round about way. I didn't actually see things happen.

Oh, I've heard of them too.

Eccles Snowden, Brettingham-Moore, Wilson - they were, they lived always a different way. You see, there was a bigger class distinction in those days in Australia than there is now. You see, Australia

was still largely rural, and it wasn't unusual for the shepherd to say, "Good morning, sir", and touch his cap to the property owner.

That's evident. And Brettingham-Moore was also born in India. I don't know quite what the background was there - but there is a certain colonialism, I suppose, about that type of family for example.

Yes.

It's a very slight thing, but I can understand, from reading the letters I've been reading recently, that there is a different class that's affecting the fact of whether you get a commission when you go or whether you go as a private. A lot of the letters that I've read by the NCOs or men are fairly inarticulate and not very well written, and spelling mistakes and so on.

You see, the background of this place is one of almost gaolers and gaoled.

And it's an early colony too. It was in 1803. It's not much older than Sydney, is it?

Yes, oh yes.

So there's already 100 years of English presence in Tasmania before the First World War.

Most of the people who have got a foothold in those early days, they've stayed. If you look at a thing like the Australian Dictionary of Biography you'll pick out those old names, they're still here, still in the directories. I think the same thing is true of the Boer War, you know. Some people were born officers and some people weren't. I suppose there was a certain amount of - not resentment, but something near it, between the ranks and the officers.

I've come across that. A 14th Battalion man I was talking to, he always seemed to think that in any of the fighting the officers were down in the dugout somewhere and they were up in the way of anything.

I don't think that's altogether true. In fact, I don't think it's true at all. But this is the way that ...

Certainly, from what I've read and know about it, to me there would be no distinction between the courage of an officer and any of the men.

No.

In many of the instances it would seem that the officer is really in the unfortunate position of having to take a lead. And that's obviously what happens in many instances.

I'm told - and I'm sure it is true - that on Gallipoli they had the dice their Sam Brown belt and side arm, because the snipers could pick them out very easily.

I think that was pretty much the same in France too. That's what I've heard, that the colonel or the brigadier would come round in a really old sheepskin jacket and look just like everyone else because otherwise you'd get picked off.

I'm sorry I haven't got a lot of anecdotes and memories.

You've been helping me a lot. There's a limit, of course, to what I can do; there's only so many words that I can use. I know that you've been giving me very useful information - the descriptions of Lemnos and Tel-el-Kebîr and so on are very useful.

You'd probably get a lot from John Doggett because whatever John did he kept notes.

Yes, I've found that out today. Do you know much about Shepherd's Hotel in Cairo?

Oh yes.

What was that like?

Well again, we were excluded from Shepheards.

It was only for the officers?

It was only for officers, yes; even NCOs couldn't go into Shepheards. It was a big hotel in the centre of Cairo full of commissioned officers and ... There's not much I could tell you about it. I suppose I couldn't tell you much about it because I was never ...

You never went in, no.

Only from the outside. It was the only place, as far as I know, in Cairo where you were excluded. It was a handsome building and there was a fair bit of space in front where cars could park.

They had cars there, didn't they?

Oh yes, they had cars, my word.

I know this is the case because Brettingham-Moore describes going out to see the pyramids in this car with a guide, doing a great speed of forty miles an hour.

There wasn't a lot of cars, but there were cars. I used to like poking round the pyramids. I went out several times - climbed them. I had a picture of - I think it was alabaster at the top of one of the pyramids - were capped with this stuff. I don't know what happened to it. But there were certainly motor cars about the place - and horse-drawn cabs.

And the gharries that they had, were they always wagons, or were they carts as well? What would you call a gharry?

It was a four-wheeled cab pulled by two horses. And you could hire these. Comfortable things. They were well sprung, two seats facing each other.

One on one side and one the other?

One the other, yes.

Like the royalty coaches?

Yes, the same sort of thing, yes. There were cabs here in Hobart something like that, but I've never seen them anywhere else in Australia. In Melbourne they had hansom cabs and in Launceston ...

END OF TAPE TWO - SIDE B

START OF TAPE THREE - SIDE A

I remember the police in Cairo were mounted on Arab ponies, and these were very nice, they looked good.

They were Egyptian police?

They were Egyptian police - well equipped, and I would think, very efficient.

There were white uniformed police too, weren't there?

Yes.

Were they English or were they Egyptian?

I thought they were Egyptian.

And they had canes, didn't they? I might be thinking of the English Bobbies - not the Bobbies, the MPs - I'm not sure. I've heard a few stories about the police with their canes beating natives.

Yes, I think the Egyptian police had, yes, oh yes; but they had no jurisdiction over us.

No, it was only the MPs, yes.

We went to Zeitoun first, you know, when we landed; that was a well-equipped camp.

They were pine buildings, weren't they?

Well, I thought they were pine buildings, but covered with a kind of netting - you know ...

Hessian?

Yes, that's right. They were cool and pleasant. It was a beautiful camp. From there we were taken on fairly long marches out into the desert - this is between going to Lemnos and our short stay in Egypt. And it was darn cold the Egyptian desert. It was hot in the daytime, although it wasn't the hottest time of the year that we were there. But it was still hot. In the daytime we'd be taken out and several times we'd take our ground sheets. We had to sleep in the desert at night, and then come back. It was all good training. But the desert was terribly cold at night.

Ernie Etchell told me that what he used to do would be dig a hole in the sand and get down in below that first couple of feet of cold air that was lying on the ground.

Yes, yes. And the moon was upside down. This used to worry me. It was different, you see, because we were looking at it from a different part of the world. You know, the moon here is sort of flat with two peaks going up this way; well, the darned thing would go round in the other direction. A clear moonlit night in the desert is sort of eerie: as far as you can see in the moonlight is quite bright.

The desert seemed to be fascinating.

Yes, yes.

The desert seemed to come across in these photographs I was looking at yesterday. You can see the conditions very well.

The stars were bright, but they were different again. There was no Southern Cross. If I hadn't got ill I think I would have ... when I went I tried to go with a mounted troop - I think I told you.

The Light Horse?

Yes. That might have been possible with the big transfers at Tel-el-Kebîr. I would have quite liked to have ...

Going down into Syria and Palestine?

Yes. I suppose some of the outlying places too would have been quite interesting. I was trying to think of an oasis - it was Helouan.

How do you spell that?

I don't know.

I think I've seen it recently somewhere on something, one of the letters perhaps.

I can simply remember the word, I don't know that I've ever seen it. I must have seen it written, but I don't remember. It was an oasis, and pleasant date palms and trees around it, and the rest was just desert.

I saw a few pictures yesterday of when they were on the march. There were some of the officers resting, and the men too, under the trees at an oasis. I suppose you'd go swimming in the Sweet Water Canal? Were you allowed to swim in the Sweet Water Canal?

No, nobody was allowed to swim in it, and I don't think anybody ever did.

In the Sweet Water Canal?

Yes. I'd be surprised if they did; I've never seen any of our troops in there. I've seen the natives in it up to here, you know.

Where was Zeitoun?

Zeitoun was not far out of Cairo.

There's not a canal there, is there?

No.

Where was the Prince of Wales stationed? Bill Bradnock told me a story about the Prince of Wales. I'm sure the story is right, but I think he's probably got it mixed up with the places, and I think I've probably got it wrong in this article now. He told me the Prince of Wales was stationed at Zeitoun, and he used to see the Prince of Wales every morning when he went for a swim there. He was in the canal.

We were told not to swim, or go into water.

I think you'd be right because I think there was danger of infection, wasn't there - or disease?

Yes.

Even on the march I know they wouldn't allow anyone to drink from the Sweet Water Canal.

No, no. I don't know where you'd swim from Zeitoun.

I think he's wrong. I think that Zeitoun ... Where were the headquarters staff usually?

At Zeitoun.

I don't know what he's talking about then.

Zeitoun was the best equipped town of them all, and all details, as far as I know, went to Zeitoun.

Was Zeitoun all wooden huts, or these mesh huts, or were there tents there too?

I don't remember tents. There may have been, but when I was there there were these very comfortable huts and punkahs that the natives pulled, you know.

With what?

Punkahs, you know - a big fan, swinging, pulling it to keep it cool.

In the huts?

In the huts, yes.

So each hut had one of these?

No, I don't think each hut had one. The mess huts did. I don't remember any in the huts where we slept.

They were all on beds there, weren't they - bunks or something?

They were all on bunks.

Were they bunks or beds?

As I remember them they were more ... Well, how do you distinguish a bunk from a bed? What do you call a bunk?

When I'm talking about a bunk I mean one bed above another.

No, no, they were not that; they were very small.

In other words everybody would have been ... I noted Wadsley, for example, saying that it was the first time he'd slept on the ground, and he'd been in Egypt for some time. He went out on a march somewhere and slept on the desert, on the sand.

Yes, yes, that's what I was telling you.

The first time that he did it.

Yes, well that would be right.

First time in the army.

Oh golly, he was lucky because even here they used to take us out for a night. At the waterworks we slept on the ground. I remember doing that. Oh, I wasn't in Zeitoun for very long because they

rushed us out to Gallipoli pretty quickly. But I can remember at least three nights sleeping in the desert, sleeping out ...

Was there ever any problem with scorpions?

There were big scorpions but I never heard of any trouble.

Bill Bradnock told me a story about when they were on this desert march, that one night there were apparently some of the men camped where scorpions were and they were being bitten by them.

Yes, well, they probably were because there were scorpions.

I reckon he's right with his stories. He's a pretty honest man, Bill Bradnock. He's a sort of Christian person, I don't think he'd concoct any stories. I've not had that impression from anybody, although I've had the occasion where people will sort of borrow somebody else's story. Or in other words, they will tell a story a little bit beyond their own personal story. Well, I'm really just interested in their personal story; that's actually more interesting. Some things I'd just like to check.

No matter how truthful you try to be, things grow in your own ...

That's true, it's a long time ago to remember too. That's of course the case, you get mixed up: you might get half of it, you might get the wrong place or you might get the wrong time, or you might get the wrong story - something mixed up.

Even the best of us, when you're telling a story, if there is any excitement in it you sort of tend to ... I was telling the boys last night about a voyage Kate and I made in the little boat I had once, and I found myself dramatising certain ...

Aspects of it.

... aspects of it, yes. There's not much - after we left here - I can never remember being given any rifle practice at all.

Really?

No.

They used to schedule musketry, as they called it ...

Oh, you had musketry, but I mean actual firing practice.

Musketry is a different thing? What is musketry then?

I don't know. I take it that it's how to understand your rifle, the way to handle it and ...

That would make sense, yes. I've got to be pretty careful about my understanding of some of these terms, I think, because I've been reading musketry and I thought obviously they were firing the rifles, but no, they'd be just practising cleaning it or taking it apart or ...

They gave us plenty of bayonet practice, you see. I remember thinking one was a parry, and a thrust, and the butt, you see. Well, we did this *ad lib*, *ad nauseam*. But after leaving here - we got rifle practice here - I don't remember firing the rifle.

And then you went to the Peninsula; you didn't really engage in any actions there.

I had a couple of shots on the Peninsula, but simply for the sake of letting the thing off!

Yes, I'm sure that would be the feeling.

I think, often they sent us in with the bayonets rather than ...

Yes, well that's true. They wanted you to advance and not stop, didn't they?

Yes, yes.

I know on Gallipoli - the actual landing - it was without ammunition. Their rifles were unloaded, although some of them did load and fire them. Of course, they did later - but a lot of them didn't, they just went off with the bayonets.

With bayonets, yes. You see, Bill tells me - who was in the landing - that there was heavy fire on the beach but, except in isolated cases, they didn't get a pot shot at some Turks; they were just simply going up the hill with a bayonet. Why they stopped I don't know. But Bean said - I've read his book - I got it when we went across to the opening of the ... and I found it very interesting.

This is *The Story of Anzac*?

Yes, yes. You know, there were troops running backwards and forwards, and from some of the others I've talked about this was true. There was no ... and it would have been a difficult place to actually use

your rifle - you know, fire it. Although old - he died - I asked you if you'd seen him. I'll remember his name in a minute ...

Cliff Hill?

Cliff Hill - he did talk of shooting a Turk in the scrub. And I'm sure this would have been true.

Yes, I think you told me that last time I was here.

I remember old Bully Morgan who was a sergeant major - nice fellow, a Welshman. I don't think anyone disliked Bully, but because he was a disciplinarian they used to make up funny songs about him. He was giving us this bayonet drill - Bully was an ex-English Army man - he said, "The Turks don't like cold steel!" And someone yelled out, "And neither do we!" (laughs). And I don't suppose anybody did! You know, they'd have bags up and you'd have to yell and thrust at this bag. Then you were taught to parry a bayonet thrust. I suppose, of course, when I'd sort of worked this out, if ever I get stuck into this sort of position - I never was - I would try and let the other fellow thrust and I would take this parry in front of the butt. I had all this worked out if ever I had to do it.

It's just as well you didn't.

Yes, just as well I didn't.

You were lucky you didn't go across to France; I don't think that was an experience worth having.

But that's the sort of musketry practice that we used to get, apart from shoulder arms and all that sort of rot. Apart from, I suppose, the big attacks - the May attack and then our counter-attack in August - you didn't see many Turks. They'd bring prisoners in. We had them camped down on the beach. But to see one and have a pot shot at him ...

I know that Percy Toft was a 15th Battalion man. He died in February this year (1985). I've been in touch with his daughter. In fact, I've got an article written by him called 'Playing a Man's Game', which is written in *Queensland Digger* years ago. I did find a photograph of Toft, of the C Company football team, taken about March 1915. On the back of it, it has got what happened to this dozen or so men or whom Toft was one, and most of them were killed, generally at Quinn's Post.

That was a slaughter house. That's where Bully Hinman was killed.

Anyway, two of them are cited on the back of this particular photograph with having killed seventy-four Turks between them. It's a good picture that. I've been on the lookout for original photographs, particularly of groups, not the sort of standard portrait group. But rather, informal groups.

It would be pretty difficult to get, I suppose, because cameras were not as common then, and the Peninsula wasn't an easy place to carry anything around. You wouldn't have been able to get a supply of film.

I don't think I've got anything so far actually taken on Gallipoli, although there are photographs available. These are in Egypt mainly.

You've seen that old book - *The Anzac Book* of course. That was published ... I've got a copy here somewhere.

Yes, I know the one - the one that was published just after ...

Gallipoli - was written mostly by the men.

It's actually written in the letter that my grandfather wrote; he sent it home to his mum. Yes, it's quite good.

Well, it's good because it was done at the time, and there. I think that there is some really corny writing in it, you know. The writing of that time, and in any case, they weren't trained journalists.

(Incidental conversation)

END OF INTERVIEW