

Reg, Ern, and events leading to and following the verse work

The verse work on Gallipoli was written by Ern Camden, probably after his injury in September 1915 and before the end of 1915.

Ernest George Camden was born on 19/2/1896, in Kentish Town, London. He was the last of the four children: Bill, Dorrie, Reg and Ern. Their father Thomas died on 19/10/1896 aged 32, and their mother Annie (nee Edwards) died on 5/5/1906, aged 45. In October 1910, Reg and Ern migrated to Western Australia. Reg went to Wokalup. Ern went to Woodlapine (now Welshpool in Perth) and later to Wokalup. They worked together for a farmer there.

Reg enlisted into the Australian Imperial Force on 21/10/1914 and went to Gallipoli with the 11th Australian Infantry Battalion. His service number is 1112. Ern enlisted on 22/4/1915, joined the 12th Battalion, and was later transferred, at Gallipoli, to the 11th. His service number in the 11th is 2386A.

Sari Bair (or Sarid Bair) is the range just to the east of Anzac Cove, and it includes the summits Chunuk Bair and Hill 971. The events of the work seem to be at the start of the 'August offensive' on the Sari Bair range. The events would then be on the evening of 6/8/1915 and the morning of 7/8/1915.

The August offensive finished (in a sense) on 21/8/15. On 22/8/15, Ern was transferred to be with Reg in the 11th. Some two weeks after, on 7/9/15, Reg found Ern unconscious and with an eye damaged by shrapnel (according to family memory) or gunshot (according to casualty report) or by ricochet of a bullet off a cave wall, skimming across his eye (according to memories of a conversation with Reg or Ern). Ern was taken that day to the army hospital on the island Lemnos, then to Malta, then to London.

Both brothers survived the war. Reg went to France, and became a POW from 15/4/1917 to the end of the war. He returned to Western Australia and farmed in the Bengier district. He died on 23/12/72.

Ern was discharged from the army in Western Australia on 25/9/1916. He travelled through the eastern states of Australia to Hastings/Napier New Zealand, where his sister Dorrie was living. In 1918, Dorrie's husband Jim McMillan died in the war, in Palestine, and Ern decided to stay in NZ. He moved to Masterton to start his career as a linesman, and married Mary Lynn of Hastings on 5/4/1926. They lived in Masterton from then. He died there on 20/8/1959.

Reg visited Ern in Masterton in 1957.

The work

The original is in Ern's handwriting. It was sent to Dorothy Paris (nee Camden) in 1986 by Mrs Midge Bishop (of Western Australia), with this note on the back:

I came across this recently and thought you would all be interested in it - so felt you should have it - I've had it for a very long time - haven't I? 1986.

It has a note, in Ern's writing:

By ERNEST CAMDEN
1915.

That dates it to the first months of his hospitalisation. It is possible but unlikely that he wrote it before his injury, or after the end of 1915. We assume it describes his first night in action.

The typed version follows Ern's punctuation, spelling, and layout. We're not aware of any other verse works by Ern.

The work has 8 stanzas, and each stanza has 8 lines.

In each stanza, the rhythmic (metric) pattern is approximately 4+3+4+3. The work can be read like that throughout. In each stanza, the rhyming pattern is A B A B C D C D.

The content is the story of what Ern experienced, felt, remembered, and thought about, that night and

morning. At these events, Reg was 21 and Ern was 19.

The work stops on that morning, and does not refer to his following weeks of action.

By August 2015, Ern and his colleagues would have been very well aware of the horrors of this campaign.

We're not sure what Ern experienced in the following four and a half weeks in the 12th then the 11th, but much of it must have been extremely unpleasant.

After these events, the two brothers did not get to go riding again 'side by side through the hills and dells'.

We are very appreciative that Ern recorded his experiences, and that the one handwritten copy was kept safe for 71 years.

Notes by M.C.; March 1987, and April 2015. For feedback, please contact m.camden@clear.net.nz.

Dates and events relevant to the work

Date	Event
21/09/14	Reg enlists in Western Australia, and goes into the 11 th Battalion, as a stretcher-bearer
22/04/15	Ern enlists, and goes into the 12 th Battalion, in the 7 th reinforcements
25/04/15	Reg is part of the Gallipoli Landing
??	Ern arrives in Egypt, then the Greek islands, with the 12 th
06/08/15	The August Offensive begins with a 4.30pm landing. It aims to take peaks in the Sari Bair Range: Chunuk Bair and Hill 971. The 12 th contributes 2 companies to the attack on Lone Pine. Possibly Ern's poem describes the night of 6/8 and the morning of 7/8
22/08/15	Ern transferred to be with Reg in the 12 th
07/09/15	Ern 'wounded in action', taken by Reg to aid post, admitted to 'ANZAC' hospital, then Mudros (on Lemnos island, 100 km away)
12/09/15	Ern admitted to St. Elmo hospital, Valetta, Malta, with 'gunshot wound left eye', and has 'left eye taken out'
15/09/15	Ern embarks for England
02/10/15	Ern admitted to hospital London
24/10/15	Ern admitted to 3 rd London general hospital Wandsworth
22/01/16	Ern arrives at Depot, Weymouth
25/03/16	Ern 'proceeded with 27 th Draft to M.E.F.', 'returns to duty' in Egypt M.E.F. is Mediterranean Expeditionary Force
22/04/16	Ern admitted 3 rd Australian Hospital Cairo
13/05/16	Ern admitted Heliopolis
15/05/16	Ern 'returning to rejoin M.E.F 27 th Draft'
10/06/16	Ern rejoined battalion
24/06/16	Ern left Suez for discharge
25/09/16	Ern discharged at Fremantle
?/?/16	Ern travels to Napier/Hastings NZ
15/04/17	Reg becomes POW at Lagincourt
16/05/17	Reg reported missing, with Ern to be informed

16/07/17	Telegram to Ern in Hastings NZ, informing that Reg is POW
16/06/19	Reg is discharged, back in Western Australia.

Sources

Australian Archives, National Office, *World War 1 personal records service*, Series B2455, AAF A 190. Records on RJ Camden and EG Camden. Obtained by Kenneth Camden, 1996.

Australian government. *Gallipoli and the ANZACs*. <http://www.anzacsite.gov.au/>. Retrieved 16/4/2015.

Camden E. 1915. *Gallipoli*. Unpublished verse work.

Camden family members. Some fragments of information from conversations with Ern.

Gill I. 2003. *Fremantle to France: 11th Battalion A.I.F. 1914 – 1919*. Advance Press PTY Ltd. See pages 103-104, 497, 568 for mentions of Reg and Ern.

Hickey M.1995. *Gallipoli*. John Murrrray, London. See pages 245, 253-254 for mentions of Lone Pine.

Wikipedia. *11th battalion (Australia)*. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11th_Battalion_\(Australia\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/11th_Battalion_(Australia)). Retrieved 16/4/2015.

Wikipedia. *12th battalion (Australia)*. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/12th_Battalion_%28Australia%29. Retrieved 16/4/2015.

Added Aug 2015:

Newton L, 1925. *The story of the twelfth : a record of the 12th Battalion, A.I.F. during the Great War of 1914-1918*. <http://trove.nla.gov.au/work/26599347?q=12th+battalion&c=book>

Winter G. 2105. *War horrors captured in Gallipoli verse*. Wairarapa Times Age, Tue 4 Aug 2015: http://www.nzherald.co.nz/wairarapa-times-age/news/article.cfm?c_id=1503414&objectid=11491588

Added Sept 2015: 3 photos:

1: Ern and Reg on the farm on Western Australia, pre-war.
Original is in ATL; Camden collection.



2: Ern and Flo (Reg's future wife); Western Australia

Probably after Ern's return to WA. This is on a postcard that was sent to Reg. Flo Barefoot and Reg married after Reg's return from WW1. Flo died about 1926. A document with more detail is available on request.



3: Ern in NZ, around 1920.

