

Earl Stephen Howard 1895-1938

Earl Stephen went to school at Sisters Creek, but later moved to Flowerdale with his father and later about 1909 moved to Mella where he became interested in competitive wood chopping, he was able to practice extensively when clearing the land.

Earl and Les Farnham, a very close friend, were among the first to enlist, Earl on 23.9.1914 and Les 29.9.1914 at Smithton for the 1914/18 world war, they proceeded to Claremont camp for basic training. # 51

The 15th battalion was composed (Queensland Organization) of two Companies of Tasmanians and six of Queenslanders, one Company of Tasmanians being under the command of Major Snowden, the other under captain H. C. Davies. The Tasmanian companies were formed in October 1914 and went into camp at Claremont, being the first troops to train there. In November 1914, the Battalion concentrated in Victoria, and went into camp at Broadmeadows, together with the 13', 14', and 16th Battalions, the Brigade being under the command of Colonel Monash. On December 22nd the 15th Battalion embarked on the Transport "Ceramic" for Egypt, arriving there early in February 1915.

The whole of the 4th Brigade went into camp at Aerodrome Camp, some nine miles from Cairo, and after undergoing further training there, proceeded to Alexandria early in April to embark on the transport Australind for Lemnos Island. On arrival at Lemnos a special course of training had to be gone through, including quick disembarkation into boats. On the night of the 24th April 1915, the Transport Australind, in common with the remainder of the transports at Lemnos, proceeded to sea with the object of going to Gallipoli, half of the 15 th Battalion only being on the Australind.

This half included the Tasmanians in the Battalion. The transport had two pontoons on board, and these were to assist the Imperial troops to land at Cape Helles, the Australind proceeded to the entrance to the Dardanelles, whilst the rest of the Australian convoy proceeded to Anzac. The troops on the Australind were, therefore the only Australians to witness the landing at Cape Helles, which was effected by the British and French troops at daybreak on the 25h of April. From the transport, the River Clyde could be plainly seen as she was run on shore, a mile away, while a little in rear of the Australind the Queen Elizabeth, with her immense 15 inch guns, opened fire at the Turkish position at a range of about seven or eight miles.

After discharging the pontoons the Australind at 11 a.m. on the morning of the landing, proceeded along the coast to Anzac Cove, where some hours previously, the first Australian troops had landed in the afternoon, but as soon as darkness set in preparations were made to effect the landing of all troops on transports for the shore, some two miles distance, on a destroyer. After proceeding to within a few hundred yards of the shore, under fire the whole time, the destroyer stopped, and the troops were transferred to smaller boats, and by this means taken to the shore, where they arrived at about 8 p. m. As each party arrived on shore it was directed or led to certain positions in the general line that had been decided on. As a result of this the members of the Battalion were scattered all along the firing line, only about 500 men being left under the command or the battalion commander.

Most of the Tasmanians remained together, and after marching for some time were directed to "dig in". This they did on quick time as the bullets and shrapnel were flying very thick. When day broke the firing got heavier, but the trenches had been well constructed, and the casualties were not heavy. After holding the position for 12 hours orders were received to advance to a position about 500 yards in front. This position was occupied at the double, and the battalion dug in. the losses during the forward move were not heavy.

With the assistance of the Indian Mounted Battery, the Turks were held in check, no attack was made on this part of the line during the time it was held by the 15th Battalion, but during this time were subject to heavy shrapnel fire, causing a number of casualties. The position they held at the head of what was afterwards known as "Shrapnel Gully".

The battalion headquarters remained in this position until the 28th of April, when they proceeded to the beach, for the purpose of reorganization. On arriving there, the fit of the remainder of the battalion met them with a cheer and enquiries regarding the doings of each company, and met with the reply that, although the losses had been heavy, the men were in good spirits, eager to avenge their lost comrades. The battalion remained on the beach until the morning of the 29th and members were thus able to enjoy their first undisturbed sleep since the landing.

On the afternoon of the 29th, the battalion was moving up Monash Gully, preparatory to taking over the Pope's Hill position, which was done on the morning of the 30th. Les Farnham of G Coy was killed some time in this action and buried at pope's Hill. #52

The position occupied by the Tasmanian Company was known as the "Death Trap", on account of its exposed position, and the shallowness of the trenches; the ground being of a rocky nature, a great deal of hard digging had to be done to secure a couple of feet of cover. Owing to the fact that the Turks had a machine gun laid on the position, the digging could only be done at night time, and even then could not be done without loss.

The line occupied was about four hundred yards from the Turkish trenches. On the Sunday after landing orders were issued that a combined attack of the 4th Brigade was to be made on the enemy in front of "Pope's I-El", and at 7.30, after a heavy artillery bombardment, the Tasmanian portion of the Brigade moved forward to the attack.

The Turks were evidently prepared for the attacking party, who were met with concentrated machine gun fire from all the guns in the vicinity, and although by this time darkness had set in, heavy losses were suffered. However the attack was pushed home, and the position captured.

When morning broke it was found that there were not sufficient men to occupy the ground captured. The R.M.L.I. were, therefore, ordered to occupy the position on the left of the Tasmanians, but owing to the heavy fire they could not advance far enough to be of any use in protecting the left flank, with the result that the Tasmanian right flank was in touch with the Battalion, but the left flank was exposed. The Turks taking advantage of this, pushed their troops in but were unable to recapture the trenches, although they fought stubbornly all day.

On the night of the 4th May, after being without sleep for two nights, the members of the 15th on were ordered to retire. The retirement was effected without loss.

The losses during the two days had been exceptionally heavy, and owing to the exposed position water and food could not be brought forward except at great risk.

After retiring one day's rest was allowed, however Earl of H Coy set about digging a trench when he was shot by a Turk sniper through the neck as he raised his pick, the casualty form lists the following details:

5/5/15 received from "Devanha" Paralysis right arm 8/5/15 admitted to Deaconess Hospital, Alexandria 29/5/15 G. S.W. neck, Admitted to convalescent camp, Mustapha 5/7/15 Embarked per "Ballarat" Alexandria to Australia for discharge. Authorized by Medical Board.

At the time Earl was in the convalescent camp at Mustapha, when the orders of the 15th Battalion were to hold the post at all costs. Then commenced one of the hardest fights the Tassies had been into to date.

Line after line the Turkish troops came forward, only to be shot down by the defenders of Quinns' Post, ably assisted by the troops on their right and left, who not being engaged in front, assisted the 15th by their fire from the flanks.

With only 500 men in the trenches at Quinn's, and 10,000 attacking, it seemed impossible for the position to be held, but the orders were to "stick to the post" and stick to it they did. Eventually the Turks were forced to retire, leaving over 5,000 dead in front of Quinns' alone.

Earl on his return to Tasmania, was finally discharged on 16th June 1916 at Hobart, being medically unfit through wounds received in action, not due to misconduct. Total service 1 year, 268 days, service abroad 250 days.

It would appear Earl could not just stand down as he enlisted again in the army on the 11th October 1916 (No 118 8) and was sent to Claremont where he obtained the rank of Corporal Instructor, he was again discharged on 6th July 1917 (No T4734), serving 263 days, being medically unfit, not due to misconduct.

Item in the Smithton Newspaper in 1938:

Mr. Earl Howard has written to his brother Fred of this town that he is to enter the Caulfield Repatriation Hospital for special treatment. Earl and Les Farnham, who was killed at the landing of Gallipoli, were the first two volunteers to be accepted from Smithton.

Earl was wounded at Gallipoli, but re-enlisted from Smithton and was again wounded. (this error wounded a second time was the result of the discharge papers noted, medically unfit due to wounds). Later he went to Canada, and missed the medal, which the Smithton Red Cross committee had secured for each local volunteer.

In 1932 he re-visited Smithton and received the medal from Mrs. Ward. For some time he has been in the Repatriation Hospital at Hobart. # 53

Earl could not settle down after the war, so he went to Canada in 1919, working his way down to the U.S A. where he was employed by Western Division railways as a conductor. He later moved to Hollywood as a Script writer, where he came in contact with many famous actors. Among those was Tom Mix who spent considerable time with Earl and Tom presented a large - photograph framed for Earl. There it was that Earl acquired the knowledge of story writing and radio building. He later moved to Utah where he stayed with a Mormon family, by the name of Garcia # 54

Earl returned to Tasmania in 1922 and took up residence in Hobart, where he spent considerable time on his hobbies of radio and writing, receiving an Amateur Operators certificate of proficiency in Radio-Telegraphy No. 470 dated 6th December 1928 and later obtained an Experimental licence No. 1018 23rd September 1930 to operate a amateur radio station, transmit and receive valve radio at 25 watts call sign 7 ET.

Stories Earl produced many radio sets for interested persons, and when time permitted he wrote short stories, they were printed in Smith's Weekly newspaper and the periodical "Australian Journal". He wrote under his own name and also under a ghost name "Anon U, Myss". Some of these stories included "Twenty Thousand Pounds", "Exactly at Three", "Test Case", "Symptoms of Sin", "The Art of Story Writing". # 55

At this time he was a clerk of the court at Hobart, when he met and married Pearl Elaine Tomlinson, a daughter of Sydney Morgan George and Kate Pike Tomlinson (Ackerly) on the

17th December 1927. The ceremony took place at the Baptist church Moonah, Rev. Raymond Farier officiated and was witnessed by S. M. G. Tomlinson and H Liddall. There were two children to this marriage. Earl Garcia b. 28th March 1933, June Pearl b. 15th December 1937.

#56

While retaining an interest in writing and radio Earl built a motor boat which was used for racing and pleasure. Earl was a member of the general committee of the Motor Yacht Club of Tasmania in 1930-31, in later years he built a caravan and this was used to tour around Tasmania.

#57

Earl lived in many addresses around Hobart, but with his failing health due to war wounds he had sustained and was finally admitted to Caulfield Repatriation Hospital in Melbourne. Pearl and family also move to Truganini Road, Carnegie, so they could be close to Earl, however after a short period of illness he died 14th June 1938, age 42. Earls' body was transported to Somerset, Tasmania and buried in that cemetery.

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Extract from

HOWARD PIONEERS OF TASMANIA

Earl G Howard