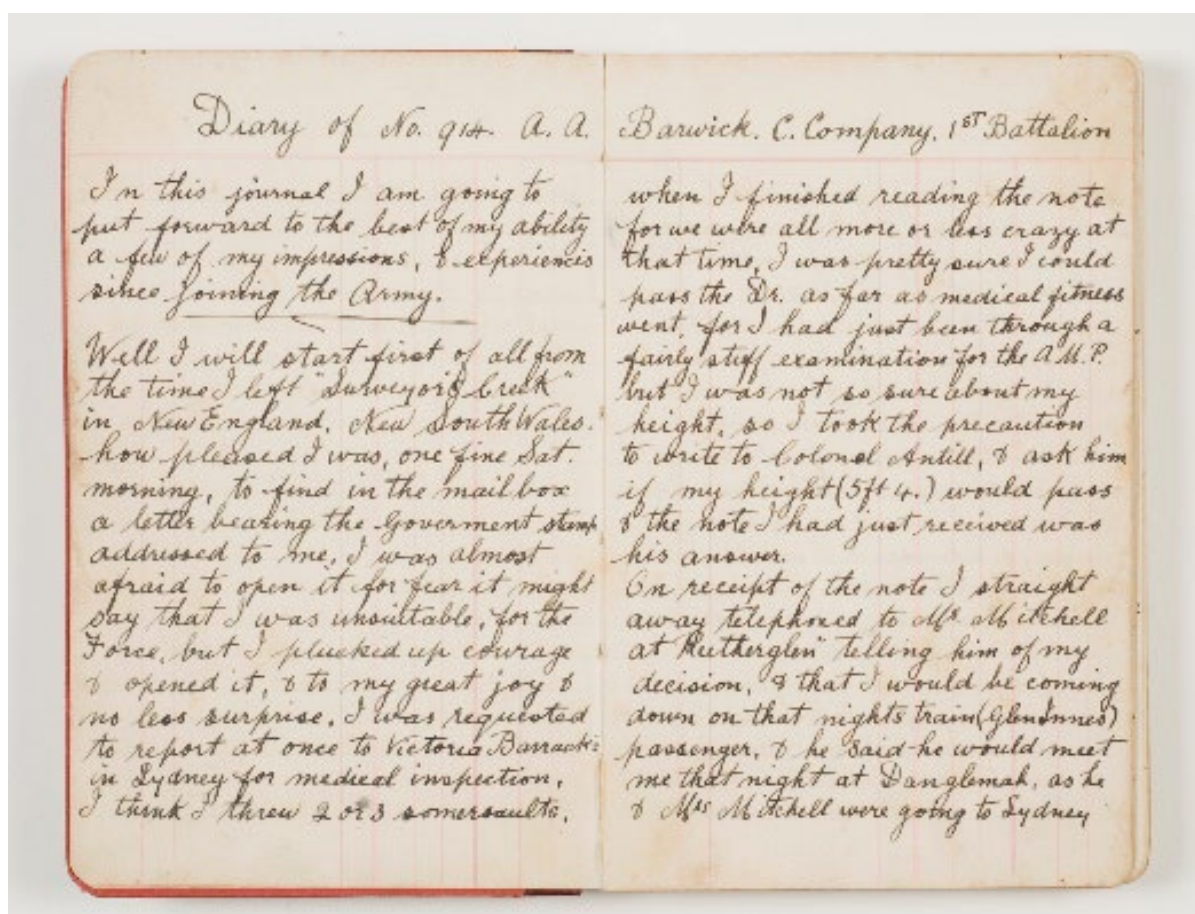


Diary of Archie Barwick at Kensington Camp

Phrases in bold have been added for readability

A country boy's first weeks in the army's Kensington Camp and his amazement at seeing the first plane in his life fly over. Read Archie Barwick's 1914 diary.

There are 186 pages in this diary. The transcribed excerpt below starts on page 11 and ends on page 18.



Archie Barwick was a farmer of Surveyors Creek, New England, New South Wales when he enlisted at the age of 24, in August 1914. He embarked from Sydney on board Transport A19 Afric, 18 October 1914 and disembarked in Egypt for training on 9 December and served as a Corporal, later Sergeant, in Company, 1st Battalion, A.I.F.

Kensington Camp

'... though now I like signaling well, **our food was much improved here**, a typical breakfast this would be, viz. chops or steak, plenty of bread, butter and jam, whips of tea for dinner we generally had a stew or roast with onions, cabbage, potatoes

and etc. for tea at night they always turned out boiled potatoes, what for I don't know for no one used to eat them, we always had plenty of good tea, or coffee and stacks of bread butter jam and etc. it was shameful to see the bread that was wasted there, and the jam we had tons of it good jam it was to, nearly all from Jones factory at Hobart.

We used to have **good times at Kenso** for most of the chaps had friends and relations, and they used to bring big hampers of all sorts of good things, and of course the boys would share them round.

It was here that Reg Duke and myself chummed up, and a right good mate he was, we used to have some good times together.

Not so very long before we left Kensington Len came down from Scone to see me, and while there he kidded me to have my photo taken in my equipment, I have regretted ever since, that those photos ever reached home, if I could lay my hands on them, I don't think they would live long, a chap looks a perfect fool in them.

While training here, **I first came in proper contact with drink, and my determination never to touch it was strengthened properly**, I saw enough to convince me for the rest of my life of the evils arising from the curse, lots of our chaps only lived for pay-day, and as soon as they got their money, off to town, and straight to the pubs, they would go, next morning would find them with a big head, a terrible thirst, and empty pockets, and they would be humming for the rest of the week, it used to be funny some nights, when the chaps would be coming home late, and had to pass through the guard at the gate, the majority of the revellers would have bottles with them, and if the sentry was a thirsty soul, he would give the order "halt bottle pass soldier", and if they had a bottle with them they were right, and if they could not produce the needful, well into the guard tent he would go. One night we had a **terribly heavy thunderstorm**, the rain fairly fell down, and in about an hour's time the whole of our camp was under water most of us laid in bed till the water started to carry us off, and then we were forced up, the drunks got a terrible ducking that night, one of them came into our tent with only his shirt on, and an entrenching tool in his hand, and started to dig a gutter round the tent pole to let the water off, not bad was it we got a proper soaking that night all our clothes and equipment were carried away by the water, so that night a lot of us camped under and on the grand-stand, and needless to say we passed a most miserable night, next day however most of us got dry clothes and blankets.

A fair sample of the day's work here would be reveille at 6 o'clock physical exercise from half past six till 7. breakfast at 7.30. fall in at 8. we then would drill till 12. dinner at 12.30. parade again at 2.30. till 4.30. tea 5 o'clock night march or something from 7. till 8.30 and sometimes as late as 9 o'clock so you see they kept us going, they used to cull a certain number from each company nearly every day so that kept us up to the scratch.

We used to have some **bonzer route marches** at times, one of the best was the one we had to La Perouse we all enjoyed our march to there it was a bonzer day, and we camped on a lovely green patch of grass overlooking the ocean, we had

our dinner there on the grass, and then we all went for a swim, and the water was bonzer we had several marches through the suburbs of Sydney, and the people used to turn out in thousands to see the boys marching, during these marches we used to get plenty of chocolate cigarettes, fruit and etc. from the people in the street who were very good to us, but one fine day we had a big march through the streets of Sydney itself, I remember it well for it was a very hot day, and marching down the closely packed streets was worse than 100 in the shade ...

All along the route the streets were absolutely packed, and opposite St Mary's Cathedral they were about 100 deep even trees were full we went down as far as Hunter Street, and then turned up George Street and from there back to camp at Kensington without a spell I think they were afraid to let the men fall out, for fear they wouldn't turn up again in time for the march back I think that was the most tiring march I have ever been on, and I have taken part in a few pretty solid ones. After we had been in camp about a month we began to think we were fully trained and ready to have a cut at anything, and so **the rumours began to fly** about, **that we would be sailing any day**, you can't beat a military camp for rumours, the little country townships haven't got a look in with the camps, once these rumours go going, we got fresh ones every day, and some of them were very funny, but most of them seemed to come from the cooks or the pieman...

About a week before we left for the troopships we had a pretty **severe course of musketry**, and **skirmishing at Long Bay**, and we bivouacked for the night pretty close to Little Bay, we had outposts, entries, and picquets out just as if we were expecting an attack from an enemy, and when morning came most of the outposts were in town, the sentries were asleep and the picquets were missing, nice state of affairs, but nothing came of it only a good lecture from the Colonel. About tea time one night an order came round from Brigade Hqr's to the effect that every one was to be ready to move off in the morning wasn't there some noise, and everyone rushing about packing up their black bags, and getting things

I saw the first aeroplane of my life here, it was a Frenchman flying over Randwick early in the morning, we were doing our physical drill at the time, and I can tell you there was not much notice taken while the aeroplane was in sight we nearly screwed our necks off ... We were inoculated several times at Kenso for various diseases, the second inoculation for typhoid was a pretty severe one, I know I had a mighty sore and swollen arm while some of the chaps were sent to hospital it affected them so much, I believe in inoculation and vaccination, and my experience so far in the Army has proved the worth and wisdom of it ...'

Source: State Library of New South Wales
[Archie Barwick, call number MLMSS 1493/Box 1/Item 1](#)