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Statement made by Repatriated Prisoner of war.
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Administrative Headquarters,
Australian Imperial Force,
"B" Records Section.

Reg. No. 1720.

11th December 1918

Rank. Private.

Name. FOXCROFT. H.

Platoon. No. 14.

Company. "D" Company.

Unit. 14th Battalion.

CIRCUMSTANCES OF CAPTURE.

- (a). Date. 8th. August. 1915.
- (b). Place. Anafarta, Gallipoli.

My Battalion left a rest gully, Gallipoli, on August 6th, about sunset. I heard that our objective was Hill 971., which we were to take by a surprise bayonet attack at midnight. From some cause the 4th. Bde was delayed. We got to within about 1,000 yards of, and opposite to the hill, just had time to dig in before daybreak on Saturday, August 7th. In our section of the trench we had a few casualties from snipers whilst digging in. We remained in the trench all Saturday and received orders that night that we were to advance next morning at daybreak on Hill 971. We advanced as ordered. There was a 700 yards stretch of flat ground, covered with stunted bushes, to get over before we could leave the foot of the hill, and we lost a great many men in crossing this, because of the slight cover obtainable. Our attack was supported by fire from the ships. "D" Company was on the extreme left of the Brigade. In the excitement of the advance we got separated from our Officers. We went on till we reached a gully at the foot of the hill. This gully was evidently a Turkish ammunition depot, and was guarded by two or three turks. We made these men prisoners and took possession of the ammunition. We had shelter from shrapnel fire but the snipers were able to get at us. Whilst there, 2 /Lieut. Luscombe joined us and detailed me and the other man named Masterton to observe the entrance to the gully which was about 50 yards long and gave us a view of the whole turkish camp, in the nullah and their redoubts. Our orders were, if we saw any Turks, not to fire, but to observe their movements, whilst the others made a barricade across the gully which was not more than five yards wide. A Turkish sniper spotted Masherton and myself and fired at us. On this the officer ordered us to get behind the barricade. In the meanwhile the Turks were getting all round us. We knew this by their fire for we had not seen one of them. They had crept up behind bushes and depressions in the ground. Lieut. Luscombe detailed two men to guard our prisoners, and the rest to the barricade. He asked for a volunteer to go back for reinforcements. A man of the 15th. Bn. volunteered, but as soon as he got out of the gully he was killed Mr. Luscomb then said we must hold the gully if possible till reinforcements came. All this time men were being killed and wounded by snipers fire. There were about 14 men in the gully, when we first reached it. A large party of Turks came up the entrance and divided so as to rush our position from two sides. As the majority of those surviving in our party were wounded or disabled, Mr. Luscombe said

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we had better surrender, as it was hopeless trying to beat off the attack. Just about then I was hit in the left calf. We put up a white handkerchief. A Turkish N.C.O. came out from under cover and beckoned to us to come out. Then the Turks surrounded us. There seemed to be 150 or more of them. We were all searched, my boots were taken from me. Then a German Officer came along, who could speak a little English. I was sent to an Ambulance dressing station, about 1,000 yards behind where we were captured. A German doctor was there who could speak very good English. He attended to all the wounded. It was about 10.30 on Sunday morning when we were captured and we remained at the dressing station till Tuesday afternoon at about 4 pm. During this time we were treated fairly well. On that Tuesday morning a heavy bombardment was started from our ships and we were in danger from our own shells. The doctor said he would evacuate us, as soon as possible. The Turks were loosing heavily coming and going along a main road where we were. I was put on a mule at 4 pm. and went off in company with some others of our own boys. We went some three miles behind the firing line where we were transferred to carriages. These took us across the neck of the Peninsula and at midnight we reached a big Turkish rest camp. Here particulars were taken of my capture by a German Officer. I was given tea and biscuits and had my wound dressed. Then we were sent off on a bullock waggon to the sea port town of Gallipoli on the sea of Marmora. On the way I was robbed of everything except tunic and trousers. We reached this town early on the Wednesday morning and were put on board a hospital boat. The boat left on Thursday morning for Constantinople, which we reached at night. We were kept below, next the engine room while on the boat. A German doctor came on board this boat and ordered jugs of tea, hot milk, and biscuits to be served to us. He attended, to Pte. Leydon, who was in a bad way. A Motor bus took me and others to Harbie Military Hospital There we were stripped and given calico underpants and shirts. Whilst there (about a fortnight) we received decent treatment. Two German Red Cross Nurses who could speak English well, were over us. They were very good to us, even buying eggs and milk for us out of their own money. 2144. Private L.C. Hodges died at Harbie Hospital. From Harbie, at very short warning, we went to Tasch-Kischila Hospital, getting our own uniforms back before leaving. At Tasch-Kischila we were put on the ground floor of a house the windows of which were boarded up. There was little light. The ventilation was poor and the sanitary arrangements were revolting. Enver Pasha told us that Turkish prisoners of war were being treated badly and that we would get the same. Lieut: Stone of the Worcestershires, who was with us, tried to speak to Enver Pasha on our behalf, but was ignored. I remained here for about a month and was glad to get another move, as in addition to the bad conditions the Arab doctor who attended us was brutal and dirty in his ways. Many men died whilst I was there through lack of proper treatment, we were marched from here across Constantinople to a big naval barracks in Stamboul. During our march Turks crowded to insult and revile us, many of them spitting at us. In these barracks we were confined in a small basement room. It was in a filthy condition and alive with vermin. A small window, high up, gave us scanty light. Sergeant Barrisher of the Bucks and Berks Yeomanry who was in charge of the room asked the Commandant of the Barracks why we were treated like this and why we were not allowed exercise. The Sergeant protested against our being treated as criminals instead of as honourable prisoners of war. The commandant laughed and replied that he had received his orders from Headquarters. There were a number of Greek and Armenian long-sentence prisoners here, in other rooms. After being there about a fortnight, Mr. Phillips, the American Ambassador's Secretary visited us. He said that he had tried three times to see us and had had to get a special order to do so. He gave us 60 piastres per man. There were over 150 men in this room which measured 50 ft by 18 feet and 14 feet high. Many of these men had running wounds and there were numerous cases of dysentery and chronic diarrhoea. We were practically sleeping on top of one another.

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We received Turkish food whilst here:- boiled wheat, brown bread full of husks and very little meat. After Mr. Phillips visit, things improved slightly. We were permitted half an hour's exercise each day and got one bath by paying 2 piastres per man. There was a doctor there, but the only thing he had was iodine. I believe he tried to do his best but he had no medicines. Mr. Phillips demanded better accommodation for us but was told that within a few days we would leave for an internment camp. Before we left for this camp, at Angora we were taken out for a demonstration of Turkish prisoners. We were marched two deep through the streets of Stamboul most of us barefooted (for our boots had been stolen) and very scantily clothed. The crowds were very hostile. They attempted to throw street refuse at us, but were stopped by the Turkish police, however we were frequently spat on. In the outskirts of Stamboul we were grouped for a photograph with a number of officer prisoners (including a few Australians) That night we lay in an artillery barracks with no blankets and received no food. The sentries over us were very strict and were very fond of using the flat of their bayonet's on all who desired to use the sanitary conveniences. The next morning we were marched back again. Three days afterwards we went to Angora by train, about 200 miles into Asia Minor, we were three days and two nights in the train. All we had on the journey was a loaf of bread per day and a little water. We reached the town of Angora about midnight and marched three miles to the camp which overlooked the town. Here we were put in a fairly decent room with a mattress and two quilts for each two men. For about 18 days here with conditions here were fairly decent. We did no work except our own fatigues. The rations there were the Turkish soldiers rations, consisting of one loaf of bread and boiled wheat for one meal and potato water at night. Then we left for Changani, a four days march going from daylight to dark. The guards over us were harsh and cruel. Stragglers were frequently struck and beaten. We reached Changani at night, and were put in a Turkish prison. Conditions were a trifle better here than at Angora. All this time we had had no change of clothing and only the one bath. Here we received some more money, about 30/- each, from the American Embassy, also some clothing. It was now approaching Xmas there was snow on the ground and it was bitterly cold. We managed to get a fairly decent feed on Xmas day, being allowed a certain amount of freedom by the commandant, who had himself been taken prisoner during the Balkan war. We left Changani in January for Bellfemidik arriving there on February 1st. This is a construction camp on the Bagdad Railway, under German Control absolutely. On Feb. 5th. we were started on what was called the No. 2. tunnel on the railway line. We now had Turkish guards and German supervisors. My pay was 14 piastres per day of 10 working hours. The conditions here were vastly better. The Germans gave us almost absolute freedom, and as we bought food out of our pay we fared rather well. We had to work to live. About May we received our first mail and home parcels. The parcels were useless as they had been rifled, the tins punctured and most of the articles either stolen or destroyed. Everything went well here till June, when Malaria broke out, and in a short time half of the camp was down with it. Those who caught the fever went into camp hospital which had a German staff. The doctors and nurses did their best to cope with the rush of patients, when a prisoner went into hospital the German railway construction Coy paid him 8 piastres "sick pay" but this went to the hospital for his upkeep. On the surrender of Kut, an English doctor, Major Pearson came to this camp but he was handicapped by lack of materials. The Turks and Russians had by far the heaviest death roll. Conditions got so bad. that the sick were sent away. The first party left for Angora on Dec.4th. 1916., I left in the second party on December 10th, for Afion Kara-Hissar arriving there on December 12th, in very cold weather. We were taken up to be fumigated and bathed and the detailed off into

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in to small rooms, 12 men being put into a room, measuring about six feet by eight feet. We were kept in quarantine for 14 days and then were put on a working party. All this time most of the men were very sick with ague and malaria, many dying in hospital in this camp. We were sent out to work in the early morning road making on the Smyrna road, being now under Turkish supervisor who treated us badly. Some men were flogged for trivial offences, such as not working fast enough to please the guards or for reporting sick. About Xmas 1916 the commandant gave us a suit of clothes each sent from the American embassy, one suit of thin underclothing, an overcoat, pair of socks and pair of boots and toilet necessaries. After that each day he would have an inspection for vermin, and if any man was found to have lice on him, they tried to make him eat them. He would also be flogged, and put into solitary confinement. In January I was moved, with others to another camp in the same town, where we were billeted in an Armenian church along with prisoners of war from Kut and the fronts. There was something like military discipline at this camp. We were put into sections under our own N.C.O.s. The convalescent men were put into one building, the working party in the church. There was strenuous discipline here, but I saw no brutality. Here again we were employed on the Smyrna Road, mostly quarrying and blasting. We were promised pay but never received any. The Kut men about that time were dying in dozens every day. I went to a burial party (3 dead men) we were allowed to dig a hole, 18 inches deep, but were permitted to hold no burial service, although two British Padres were in the town. I went into Hospital with Pneumonia. The warders were harsh and gave us no attention, and the Turkish doctor said he had no medicines. I was in hospital about six weeks. On returning to camp I was treated, as convalescent for two months. Then I left for Ada-Bazar by train. 40 men with kits, being jammed into each truck. We were two days and a night on the journey. We left Ada-Bazar for the working camp at Kargaldi, where we were placed in a dilapidated farm-house. The weather was fine then, so that we didn't suffer much. We were there for three months before we received any recognition of our existence, owing to the neglect of the Arab commandant to report our arrival to the authorities. Eventually he was removed, and a Turkish Officer, Tarsin Bey, took charge. Conditions improved greatly. We were made known to the Dutch Legation, which had taken over from the U.S.A. Embassy (America being now at War) and shortly afterwards a consignment of clothing and Red Cross parcels arrived. The work here was wood construction. We worked 8 to 9 hours per day and no work in bad weather. I received here 82 piastres, which was the only pay I ever received from the Turks. Tarsin Bey, was the most just commandant we struck whilst prisoners. He allowed us to go into the bazaar and buy food twice per week. And at Xmas 1917 he did his best to make us happy. On April 3rd. 1918., we left Kargali for San Stefano in European Turkey. There we worked in the goods yard of the railway under German supervision. The commandant here (a German named Major Benckem) was extremely harsh and tyrannical. We were allowed the Turkish Sunday (our Friday) off, occasional, but otherwise we had to work seven days a week. At that camp we were 15 miles from Constantinople and in constant touch with the Dutch Legation. Fortnightly we received extra food rations from this Legation, such as vegetables and tinned stuffs. The Dutch ambassador himself visited us once and promised to send us parcels more frequently. In this camp I received my mails and Red Cross Parcels very regularly. The last clothing parcels I received from the Red Cross was rifled. We made enquiries and the Dutch said that the Turks alleged that the parcels were rifled, Austria. We remained at San Stefano till the signing of the Armistice., On Oct. 31st. Shortly before this the Commandant got his marching orders. Before leaving he apologised for having been so harsh to us. I left San Stefano for Constantinople on November 2nd. and embarked, there on November 16th. for Toronto, reaching there on the 23rd. We stayed there for five days and then came on to Calais and reached Dover on Dec. 8th.18.

Statement continued.

Of my knowledge I can state that the following Australian prisoners of war died whilst in captivity.-

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| 2144. | Pte. | Hodges. | L.C. | 15th. Battalion | died at Barbie, |
| 2156. | Pte. | Jones. | W.D. | 15th. Battalion. | -do- Afion. |
| 1510. | Pte | Kerrigan | | 15th. Battalion. | -do- Afiono. |
| 2161. | Pte. | New. | L.G | | -do- Belemidik. |
| 552. | Pte. | ALLEN. | W. | 9th. Battalion. | -do- Beleinldik.. |

New. died as the result of an accident., and Allen and jones from fever. Hodges death was the result of his wounds.

(Signed) Pte. H. Foxcroft.

Witness. (Sgd). A.O. Pane. L/Cpl.