

# World War 1 Journal Entries

1091 Lance Corporal James Donald Tully 11<sup>th</sup> Infantry Battalion A.I.F.

As seen through the eyes of Michael Demura

Great. Great Grandson of James Donald Tully (2013)

## **Entry 1**

All the men were excited as they boarded the ship, farewelling loved ones to head to an exciting foreign place. After jumping down onto the beach at Gallipoli we were confronted by heavy artillery fire, some of my closest friends I had made on the ship from Fremantle were shot down. The morale was low in the trenches, this wasn't what was expected.

Tonight, as I lay in the dugout, the guns are silent, I'm reflecting over where we are now, thousands of miles from home. The desolate, barren land and hot, dry weather reminds me of home in Western Australia. Life seemed so secure back home, so much better than the unpleasant conditions on the battle front.

The food is much more basic than at home as everything has to be easy to store. Our daily rations are usually something like; tinned beef, biscuits, some jam and tea. The food is not the nicest but we face bigger problems.

I wonder how I will fare during the war, the thought of not surviving is a great weight in my mind, and the uncertainty of this volatile combat is terrible. I wonder where my life will go after the war, if I will be scarred emotionally and physically. Today our trench was hit by a large shell that caved in part of it, luckily everyone survived, but it was confronting seeing troops being pulled from mounds of earth.

It's been hard to adapt to trench life, rats have infested our trench only a few days after arriving. The rolling hills looming over us make it hard to advance, especially since the Turkish have established turrets on them. I wonder how we will fare, if we will defeat the Turkish and how the world will have changed after this war. Will it be better will it be worse?

## **Entry 2**

I have been repositioned to France, after the withdrawal of the Allies from Gallipoli. In the time since arriving at Gallipoli on 25<sup>th</sup> of April I was sent to hospital and re-deployed to Gallipoli 3 times. Bronchitis has affected many of the troops (including me), making even breathing difficult at times. The bullet wound to my thigh is slowly scarring over.

It was a terrifying experience having to be pulled from the battlefield in Gallipoli, my leg covered in blood as they carried me down to the tent. I was sent to London for treatment on the leg and later bronchitis – it was a long trip to London. Since my last stay in hospital I haven't received any letters from my family, it's worrying not knowing how they are faring – or even if they are still alive.

France is a lot different to Gallipoli, but still the same in other ways. It is a lot colder and wetter than Turkey, the battlefields are muddy and that makes everything much harder. The frigid conditions over winter have changed our outfits from as little as possible, to thick coats and jackets to ward off the bitterly cold winds and occasional snow and sleet. The brutal one on one combat and trench warfare still wage on, day after day freezing night after freezing night.

I've witnessed many deaths and horrific injuries, that kind of thing takes a toll on everyone in the camp. The weapons being used here are much more sophisticated and deadly than what I've seen in Gallipoli, aircraft constantly swoop over, devastating army camps and outposts. Our battles on the ground have been making little progress, so new offensives and weapons are being

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implemented. The threat of mustard gas landing in the trench is a real one, so now we are forced to lug a gas mask around.

Reinforcements are also starting to arrive. Canadians are beginning to arrive on the front to relieve us. Also, tanks are gradually being introduced to the battlefields. However, word around camp is that few (if any) will ever be deployed here. I think it would be so nice to be commanding a tank rather than wallowing around in knee deep mud and snow.

## **Entry 3**

I write from England now; the war is over and I'm still having flashbacks to it. Random images from war come to me frequently – awful moments. Like the time when a shell landed in the trench, blowing bits of shrapnel everywhere, knocking everyone off their feet and killing many of my comrades. Or the time when the gas siren sounded, and we all raced to put on our gas masks and run for our lives. The image of the ominous, rolling gas cloud is deeply entrenched in my mind, I'm taken back to that time whenever there is fog here in London.

Sometimes the brutal killings we were strongly encouraged to perform reverberate through my mind, the torturous murders such as stabbing enemies in the face with bayonets are things I can't shake. The horror on a man's face before dying is a tragic image, it instils hopelessness and causes me great pain. These mental engravings flash before my eyes, occasionally melding into my everyday life. War has taken a strong toll on me mentally; physically I came out relatively unscathed – that bullet wound to my thigh has healed.

My mind is having trouble transitioning from that of a soldier in combat, back into civilian life. I'm always alert (even though I don't need to be), I'm always looking for danger (even though there is none), I'm not really switched on to finance and managing money, or any of the day to day civilian tasks.

I hope these reminders, these mental scars will eventually fade from memory, the flashbacks will stop and life will return to normal. I'm relieved that my parents are all OK, and that I was not receiving letters from them because of confusion when I was admitted to hospital.

More positive thoughts are of my beautiful wife Queenie, who I met and married in London. We are expecting a baby soon and unfortunately cannot return to Australia until he or she is born. We are hoping to raise a family in Western Australia with my parent's around. Hopefully that will be the next step in my life, away from the terrible experiences of war.