

5. Troops Returning to Australia

Pre-printed postcards

With thousands of troops to be repatriated home, it became a logistic issue of how to transport them from France to England, and how to house them before being allocated a troopship. Postcards were pre-printed stating that soldiers had arrived in Weymouth, England and were expecting to be shipped out in the coming weeks.



League of Soldiers Friends - Weymouth: A pre-printed postcard by the League of Soldiers Friends stating that the soldier had arrived in Weymouth in readiness for embarkation back home in the next couple of weeks. However, some soldiers took many months until their Battalion was able to secure a transport home.

In early 1919, the Weymouth postcards where many of the Australian military camps were based were overprinted "Southampton". Many soldiers were sent or billeted at the seaside port of Southampton waiting for the troopships to take them home.

ON ACTIVE SERVICE.

The League of Soldiers Friends of the Organisation
in Victoria to help the A.I.F. send warmest greetings
to Victorious Australians.

**HELP REPATRIATION.
BUY WAR SAVINGS
CERTIFICATES**

GOD SPEED YOU HOME.

Just arrived in Southampton
~~Weymouth~~
from France—entraining for
camp in England. I will receive
leave, and expect to embark
for home in a few weeks.

I am well,

Signed E. Hodgkinson

Date 11/4/19

ADDRESS.
Mr Hodgkinson
1000
Peace
Longwayne
Road
Weymouth
Via Southampton
Australia

STAMP NOT NEEDED IF GOING TO AUSTRALIA

League of Soldiers Friends - Southampton : England 12.4.1919 to Victoria

Postal markings: "A.I.F. CAMP/2" datestamp of the 12.4.1919 allocated to the Perham Down Camp in Wiltshire.

Troops Returning to Australia

September 1918 - November 1919

The final port of call of the H.M.A.T. "City of Exeter" - Melbourne

15th January 1919



H.M.A.T. "City of Exeter": An unused postcard of the troopship signed by the soldiers returning to Australia after hostilities had ended. The ship docked in Melbourne on the 15.1.1919.

Some of the soldiers identified on the card are:

2159 Pte. John Rogers
2nd Pioneer Battalion
W.I.A. 12th October 1918

14632 Pte. Herbert Billson
23rd Howitzer
Burnley, Victoria

60132 Pte. Bertram O'Brien
New South Wales

326 Pte. Austin Young
5th Machine Gun Co.
W.I.A. 30th Sept 1918

3348 Pte. Richard Arnott
57th Battalion

Pte. John Black
57th Battalion

3382 Pte. Walter Davies
57th Battalion

828 Pte. Walter Tooth
No. 1 Mining Corps
2nd Tunnelling

2951 Pte James McNamara
56th Battalion

5151 Pte. Tasman Lewis
4th Battalion

2191 Pte. Arthur Jones
56th Battalion
Wagga Wagga

3082 Pte. William Darker
57th Battalion

3662 Pte. Hugh Fraser
57th Battalion
West Geelong

5033 Pte. James Anderson
57th Battalion
W.I.A. 28th April 1918

222 Pte. Joseph Atkins
3rd Light Horse Battalion

2503 Pte. Eric Ward
56th Battalion

2459 Pte Samuel Millard
46th Battalion

3184 Pte. George McGuiness
26th Battalion

3137 Pte. Charles Cornell
57th Battalion

Troops Returning to Australia

September 1918 - November 1919

Unknown troopship - Cape Town, South Africa

20th April 1919



Unknown troopship: Cape Town, South Africa 20.4.1919 to South Australia

Postal markings: "ON ACTIVE SERVICE/FRANKED BY G. O'HALLORAN/MILITARY SECRETARY A.I.F." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type CA 212). This was the most commonly used censor cachet on mail sent home from South Africa.

H.M.A.T "Orita" - Cape Town, South Africa

13th July 1919



H.M.A.T. "Orita":

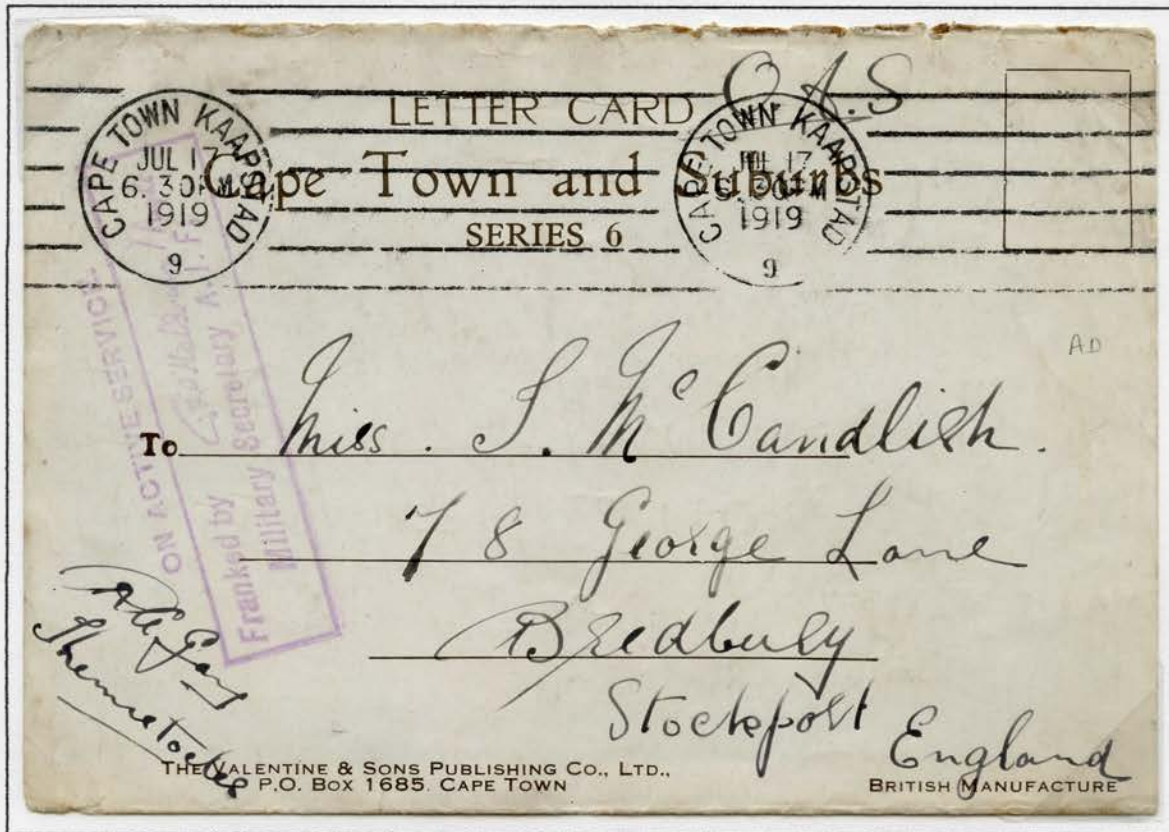
A real photo of the troopship at Cape Town, South Africa dated 13th July 1919

Troops Returning to Australia

September 1918 - November 1919

A32 "Themistocles" - Cape Town, South Africa

17th July 1919



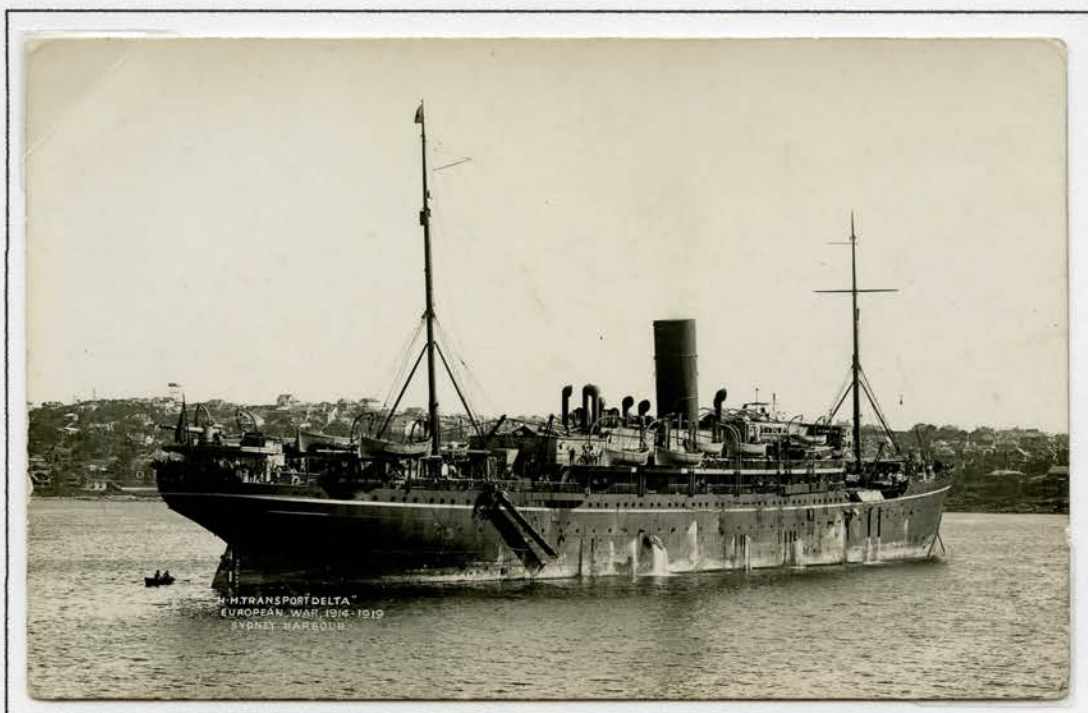
A32 "Themistocles": Cape Town, South Africa 17.7.1919 to England

Postal markings: "ON ACTIVE SERVICE/ RANKED BY G. O'Halloran/MILITARY SECRETARY A.I.F." handstamp in violet (Finlayson Type CA 212).

Note: Many of the troops with wives were transported directly to Cape Town where they picked up the civilian mail ships for the journey home.

H.M.A.T. "Delta" - Sydney, Australia

1919



H.M.A.T. "Delta": A real photo of the troopship at Sydney Harbour in 1919



"Konigin Luise": A real photo postcard of the troopship at Fremantle docks 3.8.1919.

This postcard was produced by the Owen Brothers. On board was Victoria Cross winner Private James Woods of the 48th Infantry Battalion.

Note: The "Konigin Luise" was only one of two ships in its class not interned during the war. The ship was allocated as war reparations and surrendered to the UK Shipping Controller on the 10.4.1919 and allocated to the Orient Steam Navigation Co.

Unknown troopship - Fremantle, Australia

1919



Unknown troopship:

Another Owen Brothers postcard of a troopship returning to the Fremantle docks.

The soldiers are lined up against the rails, whilst the expecting crowd look up to see if they can recognise their loved ones. A person at the bottom right holds aloft a flag entitled: "VINCE! WELCOME HOME".

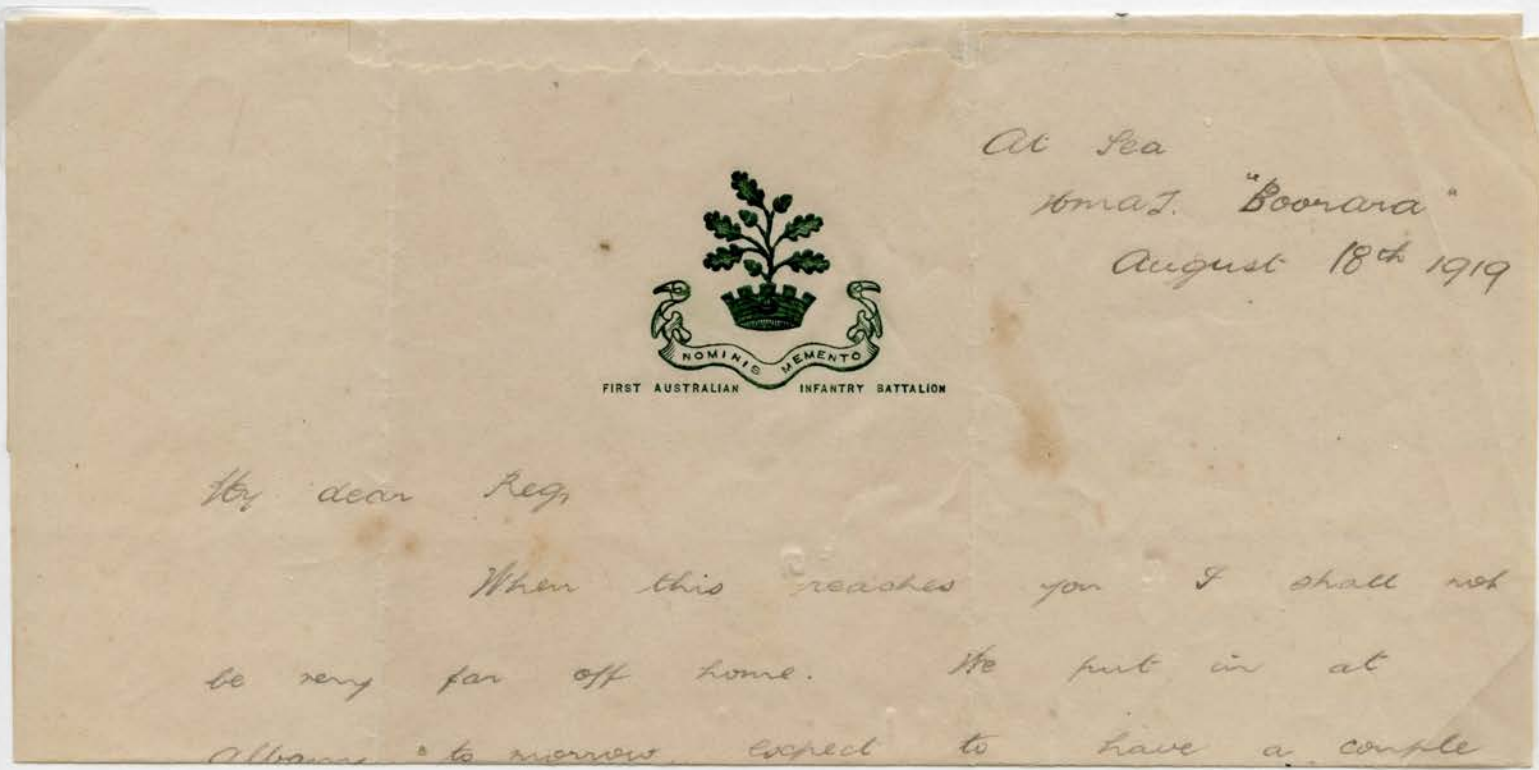


A42 "Boorara": Sydney, New South Wales 2.9.1919, redirected to East Maitland

Postal markings: "TRANSPORT. A. 42./ S.S. BOORARA" handstamp in violet (not listed by Finlayson).

Note: The enclosed letter on First Australian Infantry Battalion letterhead is headed "At sea" with the ship just outside Albany harbour where they expect to dock for the next three days. In all probability, this letter was bagged on board the "Boorara" at Albany until she docked at Sydney on the 2nd September 1919.

This is the only recorded example of this troopship handstamp



Troops Returning to Australia

September 1918 - November 1919

"Port Dennison" - Outer Harbour, South Australia

November 1919

This group of photographs and real photo postcards were the belongings of Private Edward King (nicknamed "Hughie") of the 5th Infantry Battalion. He fought mainly in France and in September 1918 he was wounded from an exploding gas shell. He returned to Australia aboard the troopship "Port Dennison", arriving in Outer Harbour, Adelaide in November 1919.

A photograph of the troops eagerly trying to catch a glimpse of friends and relatives on the dock at Outer Harbour.

On the reverse is written *"the day Hughie came home"*.

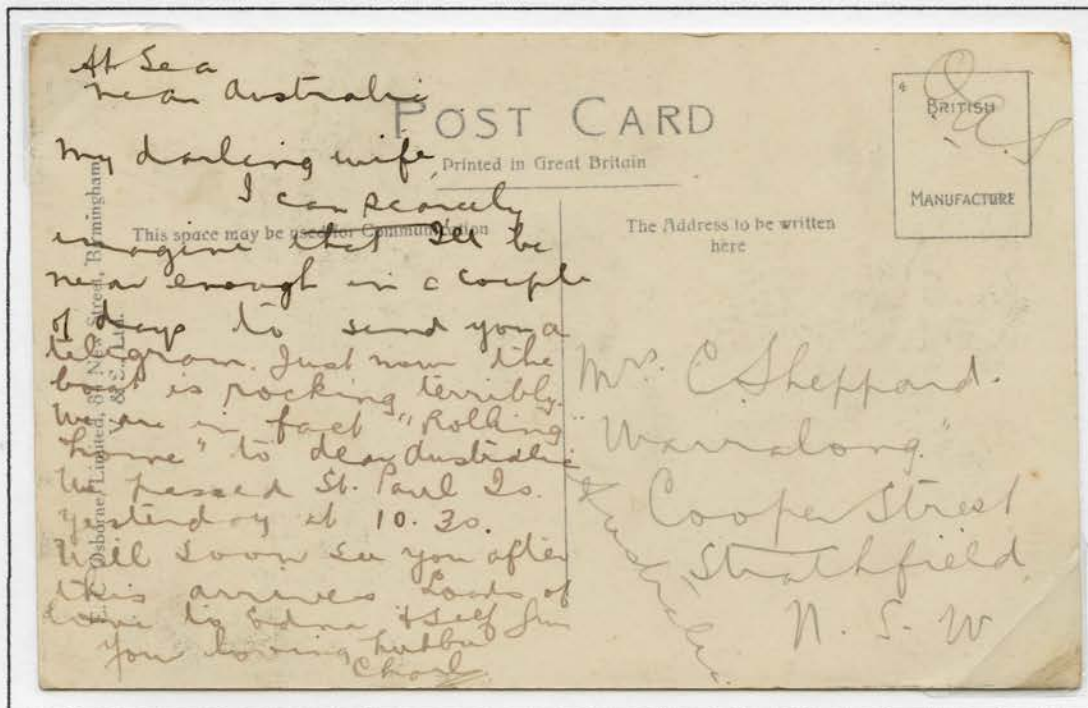


A photograph of the crowd on the pier looking up to the soldiers returning on the "Port Dennison"

"Port Dennison":

A real photo postcard of the troopship.





Unknown troopship: A postcard headed "At sea near Australia" and written by Private Charles Sheppard to his wife in Sydney. In a heartfelt message he writes:

"I can scarcely imagine I will be near enough in a couple of days to send you a telegram. Just now the ship is rocking terribly. We are in fact "rolling home" to dear Australia. I will soon see you after this arrives. Your loving husband, Charles"

Photographs at home

1919



The return of the soldiers to Australia: Troops returning from the front lasted well in to late 1919. This real life postcard was sent under cover and dated "Xmas 1919". It shows a soldier returning home to his family. The girl with the horseshoe on her arm is identified as the new English bride of the soldier.