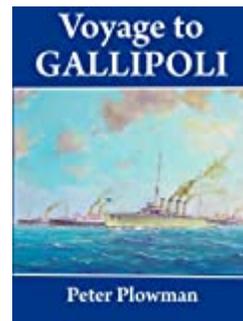




Peter Plowman. *Voyage to Gallipoli.* Dural, Australia: Rosenberg Publishing, 2013. Illustrations, tables. 304 pp. \$34.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-922013-53-8.



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Peter Plowman is a well-known maritime historian who specializes in passenger ships involved in migration, leisure, and war. The book under review is the story of what Plowman calls the "First Convoy" that carried Australians and New Zealanders to war in 1914 (pp. 6-7). It is about passenger ships (converted to troopships) to be sure, but it is also a solid history about mobilization, the marshalling of forces, planning, national policy, the human condition, reinforcements, and finally, the movement of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC) to the beaches of the Gallipoli peninsula on April 25, 1915. I would characterize *Voyage to Gallipoli* as a study of maritime transport and logistics, but this is also an "everyman's book," and there is something in Plowman's book for those interested in maritime, naval, and military history, as well as for those interested in the social and experiential history of war.

Plowman begins his book with the declaration of war in August 1914 and the seizure of German merchant vessels in Australian waters, followed by an explanation of the naval balance in the Pacific. The first troop movements rapidly followed mobilization on August 4, 1914, and brought Australian soldiers to garrison Thursday Island (the northernmost point of Queensland) against the German naval threat. On August 10,

the Australian government placed its naval forces under Royal Navy control and Winston Churchill was quick to ask whether the Australians could seize the wireless station on Yap, the Marshalls, Nauru, and New Guinea, all of which were German possessions. Within days, Australian expeditionary forces were launched, accompanied by New Zealand's navy. On August 29, a combined fleet of British, Australian, New Zealand, and French warships (including the fast battle cruiser HMAS *Australia*) landed soldiers on Samoa, which fell without a shot being fired. Plowman tells this story well by weaving participant narratives, ship's log entries, and newspaper accounts together with factual data from the official histories. The book contains a very large number of never-before-published photographs, which the author ties directly to the story on the page containing the photograph. Subsequent combined expeditions took Yap and New Guinea.

In "Gathering the Troops," Plowman summarizes how the ANZAC forces were massed for movement and presents excellent tabular data summarizing the number of men and horses that were assembled for war. These numbers and locations defined the problem, which was how to move these forces to the European theater of war. Marshalling the ships by requisition and contract began

as early as August 12, 1914, but it took until late September to get them reconfigured as troopships. Plowman's tabular data of each ship and its capacity are monumentally thorough. In the meantime, the Royal Navy lost track of where German Admiral Maximilian von Spee's Pacific squadron was and considered it a threat to allied convoys. Because of this danger the convoy departure was delayed for a month. While this delayed the Australians, the delay enabled the New Zealand convoys, safely escorted by British and Japanese warships, to catch up.

The First Convoy departed the staging base at Albany (in southwest Australia) on November 1, 1914, westward across the Indian Ocean. There were thirty-eight troopships and transports in the convoy, escorted by Australian, British, and Japanese cruisers. Plowman's descriptions of the conditions onboard for men and horses are quite interesting, especially the photographs of the expedient horse stalls set up on deck. There were problems in the convoy, which always traveled at the speed of the slowest ship in the group, with the *Southern* as well as with several other slow ships. In the middle of the voyage to Colombo, the first coaling stop, the convoy received word that several of von Spee's cruisers were loose in the Indian Ocean. The SMS *Emden* had been sighted off Diego Garcia and the convoy detached the HMAS *Sidney* to hunt down the German raider. On November 9, 1914, the *Sidney* caught up with the *Emden* off the Cocos Island. After a brief but bloody battle, the *Emden* was reduced to a blazing wreck run aground on North Keeling Island. After receiving word of the victory, the First Convoy celebrated by issuing all passengers drafts of beer. The convoy reached Colombo Harbor on November 15 and departed for the next stop, the British colony of Aden, two days later.

En route to Aden, chance circumstances, which changed the history of Australia and the First World War, intervened. The ANZAC had been destined for encampments on the Salisbury Plain, in England, where it would complete its training prior to deployment to France. However, earlier that month, the senior Australian army officers in the United Kingdom, Colonel Harry Chauvel and Major Thomas Blamey, visited the Canadian camps already established on the plain. The Australians were appalled by the atrocious conditions prevailing in the camp, which was almost totally a quagmire of slush and mud (p. 201). Accommodations in the Canadian camps were very poor and many men were sick. Chauvel argued that the ANZAC should disembark in Egypt, where mild winter conditions would be more

healthful and where outdoor training could be conducted more effectively than in the bleak winter conditions of England. His concerns fell on deaf ears, and Chauvel had to involve political figures to influence Lord Horatio Kitchener, the secretary of state for war. In the end, Kitchener was swayed by Chauvel's arguments as well as by the recent threatening entrance of the Ottoman Empire on Germany's side, and he agreed, on November 24, to change the ANZAC's destination to Egypt.

The convoy had left Aden on November 26 and the Admiralty notified it en route of these changes. The first ships arrived in Suez on November 30, joining the command of Lieutenant-General Sir John Maxwell, who was charged with the unanticipated billeting and supporting of some thirty thousand men. The Australians and New Zealanders occupied camps on both sides of the Nile River outside of Cairo. The Australian division's camp famously lay under the gaze of the Sphinx and the Great Pyramid. The Second Convoy left King George Sound on December 31, 1914, arriving in Egypt at the end of January 1915.

How this all affects the history of the First World War is tied up in the War Council's January 1915 decisions to break through the Dardanelles and seize Constantinople. The ANZAC in Egypt, by virtue of its proximity to Turkey, became the default land force that was committed to the campaign. Originally, Churchill envisioned an all-naval breakthrough of the Dardanelles and Kitchener envisioned a follow-on land campaign to clear the Bosphorus and occupy the Ottoman capital of Constantinople. In February 1915, parts of the ANZAC moved to Mudros Harbor on the island of Lemnos, near the mouth of the Dardanelles. Plowman's next-to-last chapter describes the restaging and movement of the ANZAC to Mudros Harbor in the same style and detail of his previous chapters. The final chapter, "To Gallipoli," completes the story with the ANZAC's movement from Mudros to the predawn amphibious landing on April 25, 1915, at Z Beach. Plowman's narration about planning and executing amphibious landings in 1915 will appeal to military and naval historians. The misplaced landings actually put the ANZAC ashore at a small cove north of Z Beach, which became known as Anzac Cove. Thus began the ANZAC's famous combat experience on the Gallipoli peninsula fighting an enemy that they knew simply as the Turks. The significance and efforts of the ANZAC going to Gallipoli (in modern-day Turkey) rather than to France have become part of Australia's foundation mythology and national identity.

Appendix 1 details each individual Australian transport ship, from construction to destruction (in some cases, they were torpedoed and sunk, while many went to the shipbreakers after the war). Appendix 2 details the New Zealand ships in the same manner. Plowman has unearthed a staggering amount of detailed information about the machines and the men involved in moving the ANZAC to its destiny on the Gallipoli peninsula. He reinforces this with a large selection of excellent and previously unpublished photographs. The result is an effective

and comprehensive treatment of the subject. Unfortunately, the work is unsupported by citations or footnotes of any sort, leaving readers of a scholarly bent wondering where some of the material came from. With that caveat out of the way, *Voyage to Gallipoli* is a lively and well-written narrative of maritime transport and logistics as these existed in 1914. I enjoyed the book very much, and it deserves a place on the bookshelf of anyone who is a serious student of the Gallipoli campaign or of the history of the ANZAC.

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