The material culture of food and war

Alison Wishart
Senior Curator
State Library NSW

Anzac water tanks, 1915
SLNSW PXE 1527
Portrait of Nicholas Appert (c.1841) and one of his canning jars (photo by Jean-Paul Barbier).
Peter Durand who preserved food in cans.
Red Cross booklet with instructions for making donations to the war effort and knitting patterns.
Frankston RSL sub-branch
Dear brother,

I am writing this letter to you since leaving [place] on [Sunday] morning. Today is exactly three weeks since we landed and though in my way we seem to have been here for ages, in another way the time seems to have slipped by very quickly. I am writing this letter in the tent. I have a nice little log-cabin in which I have rigged up a bed and chair by means of four perambulatory fins in an ammunition box. This leaves just room for me & a spare in bed. I am now fairly established and more or less settled in my cozy little cabin from our friends across the other side. I am free for the next two or three hours. Things are beautifully quiet. The artillery have left off for lunch and even the soldiers seem to have inordinately recovered of the wear and gone to sleep. So everything is peaceful for letter writing. I will go right back to the time when we were still on the German front & desultory.

(You will understand why much has been omitted)

My dear brother,

I am writing this letter to you since leaving [place] on [Sunday] morning. Today is exactly three weeks since we landed and though in my way we seem to have been here for ages, in another way the time seems to have slipped by very quickly. I am writing this letter in the tent. I have a nice little log-cabin in which I have rigged up a bed and chair by means of four perambulatory fins in an ammunition box. This leaves just room for me & a spare in bed. I am now fairly established and more or less settled in my cozy little cabin from our friends across the other side. I am free for the next two or three hours. Things are beautifully quiet. The artillery have left off for lunch and even the soldiers seem to have inordinately recovered of the wear and gone to sleep. So everything is peaceful for letter writing. I will go right back to the time when we were still on the German front & desultory.

Letters by Laurence W. Street, 1915.

SLNSW
MLMSS 1686 ADD-ON 2203 / Box 1 / Folder 5 / Item 1
2D: Photographs and artworks

Jack Hodgson [wounded at Gallipoli, shows a medal to his son - both in uniforms]

SLNSW
P1 / Hodgson, Jack.
3D objects
AWM:

6,854 items on “food” = 1.6% of collections online
4% of which are 3D objects
‘As fit as fiddles’ and ‘as weak as kittens’: the importance of food, water and diet to the Anzac campaign at Gallipoli

Allison Wishart

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Abstract

The reasons for the allied defeat at Gallipoli in 1915 have been much debated and disputed. Yet one factor which has not been seriously considered is the role of food. This paper argues that food, water and diet played a significant role in the Gallipoli campaign. It provides eight reasons why the provision of food and water at Gallipoli was logistically complex, sometimes unique to the peninsula and warrants special attention. It then goes on to discuss the physical and psychological effects of a monotonous, un-nutritious diet which depleted the immune systems of previously healthy men. The vast majority of the Anzacs quickly succumbed to the infectious diseases spread by the plague of summer flies. Once sick, providing the men with the same unappetising, un-nutritious rations just made them sicker. Gallipoli should be infamous not only for the poorly planned and executed military campaign, but as the place where the Australian Imperial Force evacuated twice as many men for sickness than it did for the treatment of wounds. In other words, the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force (MEF) did a better job of depleting the fighting strength of its own forces than the enemy. One of the main reasons for this was the failure of the MEF to provide its army with a

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A man in his dug out.
AWM C00815
Soldiers in Trench, Gallipoli [eating from cans]
MM50447, Museum Victoria

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SUPPORT HOME INDUSTRIES
Senior Curator, Elise Edmonds in front of the First World War diaries on display at the State Library of NSW, 2015.
Improvised grater, used for grating biscuits.

AWM REL00305 and 00911.
Food lexicon from Gallipoli

1. Axle-grease

2. Deacon’s diarrhoea or Drapkin’s diarrhoea

3. Sea-pie

4. concrete macaroons

5. 49ers
Water bottle
AWM REL07815

Army biscuits
SLV H28109
From the Frankston RSL sub-branch collection.

Badge for the NSW Division of the Australian Comforts Fund. SLNSW R758
Cartoons by Barnsdale which first appeared in the *Bystander* magazine and later on crockery used for bread and jam.

From the collection at the Broken Hill RSL Museum.
“Apricot again!”

by David Barker

Jam tin bombs on display at the Rocky Hill War Memorial Museum, Goulburn, 2016.
Painting showing how jam tin bombs were fired. Rocky Hill War Memorial Museum, Goulburn, NSW.
From “The Anzac Book”, p. 188.