

DIARY OF SERGEANT PERRY

Herewith is the Sergeant Perry's (on the photo to the left Perry is in his "arctic" costume designed by Shackleton) diary. He was another participant of the British intervention in 1919. He did not take part in combat, but wrote much enough to let us understand, that all attempts to create a powerful counterrevolutionary force in the Russian North, capable of overthrowing the Bolsheviks in Russia, were hopeless.



June 16 (1918) Left Newcastle mid great cheering and fuss. 2 planes circling over the boat. Looking for subs. Two destroyers hanging around.

June 19. Destroyers left.

June 20. Down with fever, caught off 6 coolies, I think. They died afterwards.

June 23. Arrived at Murmansk a Russian port on the Kola peninsula, Northern Russia. Saw the Glory (British ironclad which had been in Murmansk since 1916 - VK) + the Packet of Woodbines (Russian cruiser Askold. It was nicknamed so by the Allied soldiers at the Lemnos island in Greece shortly before the Gallipoli operation Askold was to take part in. Her five chimneys reminded the soldiers of 5-cigar Woodbine packs then rationed to them - VK).

June 25. Stood to arms, party of Russian soldiers acting suspiciously, al quit, they had killed their Commander. The ship is surrounded and taken over by sailors from the Old Glory.

June 26. Refugees have had an awful time of it by all accounts.

June 27. Visited the refugees hut and the tales they have to tell make a man's hair stand up.

July 1. Picked for a scouting party up the river. Captain proctor, Sgt□s Winning, Von Duve, Baker and myself formed the party.

Left Murmansk at midnight. Light as day. No darkness at all here. Up river in a motor boat for 28 miles. Changed into a smaller boat 4-10 a.m. and all-together did about 100 miles. On the way up we had sport, shooting seals and duck. Only met 3 people. We had to pull our boats up 2 rapids.

July 5. Arrived at Padoon, impossible to get up the rapids here, so take off from boats and load up two carts. 3 mile walk through the forest. Terrible time with mosquitoes. Nearly driven mad till we unpacked and found big nets which we practically lived under afterwards.

Arrived at the little settlement as far as we were asked to scout Restikent. People friendly except or one or two. Given a room in a hut, an absolute godsend. Each do 2 hours guard.

July 6. Awoke to find a breakfast of fresh caught salmon. Gee how lovely after bully and biscuits. An American Finn reported to us that the people had arrested him as a capitalist. Fed him up and let him go. But unfortunately he was shot, a way up the river.

Narrow escape from bushfire. Had to lie on a stone in the river.

July 8. Found gold quartz.

July 9. Started on a trip 40 miles further up the lake to where the American had been shot, but his murderers had cleared out. Returned 6 p.m. Went fishing on the lake.

July 11. Capt. P. went to Murmansk to report. Went as far as Padoon with him. Took two bombs to bomb salmon. Caught one. Shot a seal. Skin too tender.

7.45 a.m. Arrived at Restikent. Every patrol expected from up the lake. Mosquitoes better.

July 14. 4 a.m. on guard. (extracting gold).

July 16. Left for Murmansk for rations.

July 18. Returned and again went up lake. Climbed mountain. Lovely view of lakes below. Shot an Arctic hare and a flamingo.

Proceeded on night of 17 to Ivankule, up lake on River Nota, where two man had been shot. Two boats, containing 3 men each, were fired on. One man killed, one wounded. Believe murdered by White Guards. Survivors swam ashore and in a panic, took to the woods. About 30 shots fired.

Our Russian patrol remains on the spot carrying out further investigation.

9 a.m. Commenced to climb a 2000 ft mountain. Remarkable view but very cold. Snow and ice in abundance. Saw a reindeer. Shot one hare, one duck.

The fishermen discontented with the mean English act of bartering about 1 pound worth of goods for 1 ton of fresh salmon. Russians and Finns clamoring for rifles to defend themselves with. But they are Finnish.

Tobacco required for timbermen. Boss bought a boat for 2 and half bags of flour.

July 21. Winning, like a fool, got drunk on Vodka. One smell enough for me.

July 22. Urgent message to regain ship at Murmansk. Great rush but bad luck. One boat upset in the rapids.

July 24. Arrived at Murmansk to find the "Stephen" had left for Archangel.

July 30. We follow on by the "Telemon" and the "Ashult", now named the Glory Fourth and arrived at archangel.

Aug 1. Bolsheviks have cleared out and took all goods worth stealing.

Aug 3. People seem pleased to receive the British. Spent the night at Bakaritzia.

Aug 4. Transferred to barracks at Solomboola to train recruits: Russians, Finns, Poles, Chechs, Chinese.

Aug 6. Visited Archangel. Have to go about armed. All the boys getting disgusted with the food. The Russians are getting better fed than us. But that is the British way.

Aug 7. No mail. Things awfully dear here □ Give me back Blighty.

Aug 10. Great fun training Chinese.

Aug 12. Food getting better. After a lot of bothering we are getting a bit of sour bread and fresh meat for a change.

Aug 20. Called out at 4.30 a.m. with 10 others to raid the village of Bakaritzia, for arms. Very little found.

Aug 29. Saw the Russian Woman Leader of the Woman Death battalion. She spoke of the outrages on the women soldiers of her Battalion.

Aug 30. A Bolshevik started some shooting in the park. Captured after a chase.

Sep 1. Conscription supposed to be instituted among the Russians, but they will have little to do with it. From now on the British are going to feed the population.

Throughout the month the Yanks have been landing here. Also a Battalion of Scots.

The Yanks seem to have a lot to say about finishing the war. Wish they would finish quick.

Visited a cathedral here. Very beautiful inside. All the people either stand up o kneel. The service commences in the morning and goes all through the day. The congregation just goes in when they like and come out when they think fit □

The current value of the Rouble is 48 to 1 pound of English money. Yet if a man has 1 pound he can get 120 Roubles for it off people in the market. At least this proves the value of English finance here.

Oct 13. After capitulation of Bulgaria we are ready to believe anything as regards peace. So when the rumor came around today, that Germany had accepted "Wilson" terms, everybody went mad.

Gee it □s impossible to believe that such a thing has come to pass, and yet, even if it is so, Germany is getting out of it very light. Still we must wait and see how things turn out.

Oct 14. Concert by British NCOs at Trotsky Prospect. The Russians have a holiday in view of the happenings in Europe. They think it is as good as finished but we are that bewildered that we do not know what to believe.

Oct 15. Talking with a widely travelled Russian who has his family here. Pre-Bolshevik days he was receiving and living well on 100 Roubles a month wage. Now he is getting 2000 per month and it only just keeps him alive.

Oct 19. Sunday. Today the snow comes down whirlwind fashion, but a party of us, all in all, ventured out to have our photos taken (*apparently, the trip resulted in this photograph, see also the [memoirs of John Kelly](#)*).

7 p.m. The fall has stopped and it is just lovely out. The moon is shining, bright as day, and the whole scene is lovely. But the most entrancing scene is the big cathedral up at Archangel.

Oct 19. Then the front of the cathedral is made up of 4 massive paintings of groups of biblical characters. On top are 5 large domes coated with gold. The snow covering places here and there and the moonlight playing on the whole front of the place, make it a scene never to be forgotten.

Oct 25. News from France continues to be good and the ELOPE boys celebrate.

Oct 30. All ordered to stand too. Trouble at Bakaritza.

Nov 2. 6 spies shot on the other side of the river.

Nov 4. The river is full of floating ice making a very pretty scene. The heads think we are going to have trouble here from the Russian Matros who live in the same building. All openings barricaded with sandbags.

Nov 5. Rumor has it that the Bolshies have issued a proclamation that any Britisher or American seen out on the 10th, will be shot.

Nov 7. ☐ The boys have a jollification over the capitulation of Austria and Turkey. We☐re winning!

Nov 8. Saw 4 nurses walking with an armed guard to protect them.

Nov 9. Rumors of German finish. Another jollification.

Dec 1. River all frozen and a track made across.

Dec 2. Met Slip and Steve, Americans. Great nights.

Dec 11. The battalion of Russians after being clothed, fed and trained by our men, refuse to go up to the line. They stay in their barracks and refuse to come out. If they are not out by 2 p.m. our men are going to fire on them.

2 p.m. Orders on the phone for all Britishers in these barracks to stand to arms. I am supposed to be in town by three p.m. with a motor lorry to do some work, but our officer will not... (*something missing, probably, the author wrote that he had not been allowed to leave - VK*).

☐A shot over the building fairly had them groggy and they came running out of the front door, waving handkerchiefs or with their hands up.

2 British NCOs lined them up and whether the American MGs (machine-gunners ☐ VK) misunderstood their action or what, no one knows. At any rate they opened fire on the lot and

immediately the Ruskies lay in the snow. The British NCOs were shouting that they were English, but to know avail, another burst came and seriously wounded 3 Russians. But by this time the NCOs had made themselves understood.

There are now rumors that one in every 10 of the rioters are going to be shot.

Gee, it's bad luck for us who have done our bit for 4 years to be out in this rotten mix-up and I just fancy myself going to the front with a pack of men like that, who were in a solid building and had arms, yet at the first shot started to run (*read a detailed account of this mutiny in the 1st Archangel Regiment in the [memoirs of John Kelly](#)*).

Dec 24. I am invited out to a Russian house for Xmas. 8 p.m. Arrived there and went into a lovely house (inside) and was introduced to Madame and Mr. Alexandroff and son. Also to married daughter and Fablik (Pavlik? □ VK). They seem very nice people. Mr. A. was one time Mayor of Archangel. Madam Zonia (Soinia? □ VK) took great fancy to my Aussie hat and would insist on wearing it.

Happened to drop a word in Russian and from then had to talk all I knew. Sat down to dinner at 10 p.m. They ask us to carry on just as spending Xmas at home. Of course, that is impossible, but we get as near as possible.

The Xmas tree was there and lit with electric lights □ it looked lovely. Halfway through the dinner I was delightfully surprised to receive a present of handpainting on wood from Madame.

Midnight. Every glass was filled and the people at home seemed never nearer to me, that at that moment. And some home-sick coon asked me to sing home sweet home and I led off just for the boys. Of course after that I had to sing, so I sang a song for Billie "Absent". Although they understood a little English I think they appreciated it and the interpreter explained every song.

Dec 25. Xmas party. In all I did 8 and all of home. 3 a.m. We started dancing and I was learning Zonia a little ragtime, but my foot got too bad and so I sat out and improved my Russian and Madam Zonia's English.

Zonia was typically Russian in saying everything in a frank manner much to my embarrassment, but she is sincere in friendship I would think.

6 a.m. We leave, more or less tired and I go to sleep at the ASC after having spent by far the best Xmas in my soldiering travels.

Tonight Madame is invited to the ASC concert and dance. I am also invited to dinner.

6 p.m. A nice dinner with a surprise at the end in the way of a big Xmas stocking. Very thoughtful of our hosts.

8 p.m. Madame arrives with party. Russian band, fair music and a great display of all flags make it more like Xmas than ever. Very sorry I cannot dance. But Madame insists upon me escorting her round the room, as her partner, during intervals. (A Russian custom). Also asks me to sing. It is a big hall and quite a big crowd, but I manage "The Trumpeter" without breaking down.

Noticed a lovely dancer and she had noticed me or I was pointed out to her by Fablick. She wishes to be introduced. Of course I said, please, and we sat out a dance and she asked me to take her home; which I did with pleasure. Of course meeting a better class Russian than previously I am beginning to feel for them more.

2 a.m. We finished up OK and it has been a good Xmas.

Dec 26. Promised to help Cam at the YMCA. Arrived there and found I was needed straight away and I was kept busy helping to distribute presents of good cheer to the boys for 3 hours. My, what a time us Britishers had, it was glorious.

The only drawback to it all is, that we feel we ought to be home and one hears of nothing else now. Well, I know it would complete my cup of happiness, but for all that it is a joy, to come. Wish that joy would hurry.

7 Jan 1919. Spent the night at Alexandroffs as it was the Russian Xmas and had another lovely time.

Jan 12. Invited to a show at Vodka stores and there met Lieutenant Wesley ex-revolutionist of Finland. He has 60000 marks on his head and it was 1 a.m. when we finished, he wished someone to go home with him. So I went and till 5 a.m. we had an interesting talk.

Jan 12. 10 a.m. Woke and after breakfast set off for the barracks. Had not gone far before my fingers were frozen. So I rushed into a house and got them alright, as I thought, and set out again. My fingers began to tingle and I thought they were coming OK again. But after a while, I felt nothing so I hastily pulled off my gloves and found all my fingers white, they were frozen stiff this time. I got them into the snow and rubbed them hard. A Russian policeman asked to have a look at and got snow and rubbed hard for an hour. He undoubtedly saved my fingers except one which would not come to life. No wonder when it's 28 below zero.

Feb 24. Hickey came to wish us goodbye as he was leaving for England. Lucky devil.

For some time now I have been learning to skate and have got on so well that Capt. Proctor picked me up to play for the army against the navy. I am quite delighted.

Feb 28, Saturday. Arrived at the Skating rink 2.30. Game commenced at 3 p.m. Our side consisted of 3 English girls, 5 officers and myself.

It was a lovely afternoon for a game. Although cold, the sun was shining lovely and we soon got warmed up to the game which our side won fairly easily. It seemed that proctor had been trying me out for a big game tomorrow, the game is between an All British team and Russian.

Proctor was delighted at my performance and assured me of a place tomorrow. I was very excited as this was no ordinary game. It was for a cup and the team we were playing consisted of some of the best hockey skaters in the district. They are wonders on the skates and I have the windup a little.

Feb 29 Sunday. I arrived at the rink 2.30 and only two of them are there. Both of us are new at the game and are windy, but when the others arrived they managed to put us at ease somewhat. We were unfortunate in not having the services of the best Army player, who was ill.

I stayed in the dressing room till about 5 minutes before time to kick off and when I got outside I was surprised to see the crowd that was there.

All the British heads, Army and Navy, seemed to be there and quite an equal number of Russian supporters. We lined up and many were surprised to see an Australian in the team and I was glad to hear the shouts of encouragement.

There seemed more in this than the game. It seemed as if we must win for the honour of old Britain. Unfortunately, while standing still, I had frozen the tips of my fingers and it took me 20 minutes before I could get going properly. The first half was exceedingly good. We held our own well and the Russians were surprised to think they were not to have an easy victory.

Towards half time we were getting them well in hand. For my own part I was feeling OK now. Quite confident, in fact, as I had found a way of running round my opponent. This he got wild about and resorted to dirty play. As I am not clever on the skates, he usually gave me more than I could return. But he is getting me very wild all the time.

During the interval a French officer came to me and told me of ways I could repay his dirty tricks. So I, from this made sure that he was getting dirty.

The second half opened well, and we were pressing for some time. The Ruskies began to play very rough and we began to retaliate. About 20 minutes after the restart I received a pass from proctor, and tricking my man rushed straight in and scored.

The British element in the crowd went mad with delight. But we did not enjoy our lead for long. The Ruskies, in return, made a breakaway and after a scramble in front of our goal the ball rolled in. But we seemed to have them well in hand and pressed hard. Proctor and I did a sprint, passing the ball close and taking my clue from him I carried the ball well out while he went toward goal. I whizzed the ball to him and he with a lovely hit put the ball through.

More and more everyone got and the Ruskies tried all ways to equalise but could not.

Almost 10 minutes before time the Rusky back and the other side of the rink fouled me in a dirty and intentional manner and it was lucky I got off with only a bruised hip and knee. I got up and lost my temper and landed him on the chin. This was a signal for the crowd to show what they thought of the dirty play of the Ruskies. There may have been a nasty fight but officers who spoke both English and Russian quietened everything down and we finished the game British 2 : Russians 1.

Soon as the whistle went I asked the Russian officer to fight me fair but he said he would not as he was an officer and I was not. He apologized for his dirty trick but could not understand why all Englishmen wanted to settle their differences with their fists.

But the funniest thing of all was the dressing room after the match. There was a Canadian player there and an officer at that. And he said: "Say Aussie leave him to me I'll settle him." - I said: "No I'll get him." But he went up to this Rusky officer and said: "The reason you will not fight is because you are an officer, eh!" - "Yes", - said the Ruskie. "Well, - said the Canadian, - I am an officer and I will fight you in his place." But the Ruskie did not want to fight at all then. Quite a lot of British officers came up to me and told me I was justified in hitting the rotter.

But I was not thinking much of that after I was thinking how well we had held in beating the Ruskies at their own winter pastime.

Fine sport all the winter but I am now thinking of going home.

June 16. Just 12 months from the day of leaving England we get orders go aboard "Pretorian"

June 17. We pull out at 5 p.m. and soon Archangel and Russia is in the distance.

Material for this page was received from the Australian War Memorial