

From the Diary of Bishop John Francis Norton – 1925

Inscription....

*Diary kept for my dearest Mother
on the P. & O Steamer "Mongolia"
by John F. Norton
With the Australian National
Pilgrimage to Rome & Lourdes 1925.*

25th April, Anzac Day

To add to our misfortunes even the breeze - warm and all as it was began to blow from the South East, and as we were travelling North West we could not expect to get a breath, for the speed of the boat was neutralising the effect of the breeze.

This morning his Grace the Archbishop celebrated a Requiem Mass for the Australian Soldiers killed in the war. Under the leadership of Bishop Dwyer of Wagga the priests sang the Requiem music very creditably. The Mass was most impressive.

At sundown, just a few minutes to six, we all assembled at the stern. The ship's whistle blew a blast and all stood silently facing in the direction of Australia for two minutes. Then the Last Post was sounded and two Australian flags were hauled down. Though so simple, yet it was a very touching little ceremony. Fittingly enough Anzac Day was doubly celebrated in the neighbourhood of the Cocos Islands, which were about fifty miles to our starboard, or right hand side of the vessel looking forward. Here as you will remember the Australian cruiser "Sydney" ended the long raiding career of the German "Emden".

These little islands are the only land all the way from Freemantle to Colombo. In all those weary nine days we never saw even a passing vessel, except for some that may have passed in the night. The putting back of the clock about half an hour every day we went West, only seemed to make the days more interminable. The level, waveless ocean was without interest. Altogether there were days to which no one will look back with any feelings other than of thankfulness that they are past and gone.

