

PRIVATE JOHN LIVINGSTONE COVENTRY

No 6063
17th Reinforcements
27th Battalion
7th Brigade
AIF

Enlisted in Adelaide 28th September, 1916
Returned to Australia 13th July, 1919
Discharged in Adelaide 4th October, 1919

WORLD WAR 1 DIARIES AND LETTERS

(6th NOVEMBER 1916 to 19th MAY 1919)

NOTE:

1. There are **three** diaries: the first two are 10cm x 16cm x 0.5cm; the third is quite a lot thicker. All are written in pencil, in very well formed cursive. All have black paper covers, with lined paper inside, and two staples holding the lot together.
2. I have interspersed the letters written to Mary Dix chronologically

SUMMARY of LETTERS

- Nov 6th 1916 - 1917 Eight letters
- 1918 Seventeen letters
- 1919 (to 19th May) Six letters

NOTE: According to the number on the second to last envelope (35) JLC wrote a total of thirty six times in a period of nearly thirty one months. Five pieces must be "missing".

JLC married Mary Dix in Broken Hill in August 1920.

3. The diaries and letters are as written.

Note that all the correspondence is addressed to:

Miss Mary Dix
194 Argent Street [later Box 70B]
Broken Hill
N.S.W.

Letter Card 2

[Nov 6th, 1916]

Exhibition Camp
[Adelaide]
Monday night

Dear Mary

A card to let you know how things are. Well dear friend I must thank you for your kindness in giving me that parcel of good things which I enjoyed very much. I had a good trip down, and when I arrived here I got three days leave, so this is my first day in camp. we are having a concert here tonight while I am writing this, I am not able to tell you much yet about camp life but I will write you a long letter the first opportunity I get and tell you all the news. So I hope you will excuse me for sending this short letter. So I will close with best wishes from your sincere friend Jack Coventry P.S. If you write address it home to Albert Street Mitcham

Letter Card 2

[Nov 7th, 1916]

Mitcham Camp
Tuesday

Dear Mary

*A few lines to let you know how things are. well dear friend, we are leaving here in an hour's time to go on board, so I hope you will excuse this short note, I will write you a letter from the west if I get a chance. Many thanks for the beautiful presents you all gave me, and remember me to Mr and Mrs Billings and tell them I will write first chance I get and give my kind regards to Hazel and your father and accept the same yourself
from private J.L. Coventry*

DIARY NUMBER 1

1

Tuesday November 7th 1916

Left Mitcham Camp 3 P.M and marched to Mitcham station where we entrained for the Outer Harbour, We had a rousing send off from large crowds who lined all the stations on the Port Adelaide line, and were greeted by enormous crowds at Port Adelaide, who were lined up on both sides of the street, and the train, had to go so slow, through the main street that we were able to shake hands with a lot of the people in the streets, who were passing up gifts of sweets, cigarettes, and fruit to us, and also written messages wishing us a safe journey, and the best of luck I myself received two very kind messages, wishing me a God speed and a safe return.

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we arrived at the Outer Harbour and embarked on the Africa (Transport A 19) at five P.M. Saw Father, and Mother, two sisters, and many other friends on the wharf, but was not allowed to leave the boat to go down, on the wharf, to say good bye to them, although, we were close enough to speak to one another, said Goodbye to my other sisters, and two brothers, and also numerous other friends, and relations. And was also very pleased to see my old school teacher Miss E Liston who had come to see me off, at the Mitcham station before we entrained. After stopping up on deck until all our friends had left we went down below, and went to bed, at ten oclock,

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This was my first experience of sleeping in Hammocks, and was surprised [sic] to find how comfortable they were, as I slept all night, without waking once, and woke up feeling as fresh as a daisy.

Wednesday Nov. 8th 1916

Got up at 6 A.M. feeling splendid, and went on deck, and found that we had left the Outer Harbour, and were well out to see [sic], and could see Kangaroo Island, which we soon passed. I have been appointed Mess Orderly for the voyage for number 50 Mess on E deck. We passed the SS Dimboola inward bound, at 12.15 P.M. quite close as we could see the name on her side with the naked eye. At five o'clock, at night we noticed a large school of porpoises, which

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were travelling very fast towards the head of our boat, but after travelling with us for about half an hour they suddenly made off and soon disappeared in the distance: weather today is cloudy but fine, we will be passing through the Bight by night time, ship has a slight roll, but not enough to effect anyone.

Thursday Nov. 9th 1916

Rose as usual at six in the morning, weather is still cloudy but fine, we are passing through the Bight today, and the sea is choppy, but is not too bad and I am enjoying the trip immensely, have plenty of games on board including, boxing Gloves, punching balls, darts draughts

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cards, and numerous other games to pass the time. Have met several old school mates on board, with whom, I have spent many happy times. I like the sea life, and am feeling in splendid condition, I have just returned from hearing a good concert on deck which was greatly enjoyed by all who were present.

Friday Nov. 10th 1916

Today the sea is very rough and choppy, and a lot of our chaps, are sea sick, nothing much has occurred [sic] today except that a large whale was noticed in the distance, spouting, another concert was held on deck this evening, weather is fine but cloudy, and rather cold at night

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Saturday Nov. 11th 1916

On going on deck this morning, we found that the sea was much calmer, but the ship is rolling a good bit, on account of the swell. Several whales were sighted in the distance, and at twelve noon, we sighted Western Australia, and kept within sight of land for the rest of the day, but did not call in anywhere. Towards evening it began to get cold, and we were glad enough to go down below, but the sea kept calm.

Sunday Nov. 12th 1916

Went on deck this morning and found that we had lost sight of land, having passed Western Australia. Church parade was held at 10.30 this morning and then we were dismissed from duty for the rest of the day. Today is a beautiful day, fine and calm.

Monday Nov. 13th 1916

Today the sea, is as calm, as a mill pond, and it remained calm all day, with a nice warm sun shining. Another concert was held on deck this evening, but nothing else has occurred [sic], to mention.

Tues Nov. 14th 1916

It is quite a change today from yesterday, the sea is rough, and choppy, causing, the ship to roll a lot, and has remained rough all day, and it looks like getting worse tonight, and most of us are remaining below.

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Wednesday Nov. 15th 1916

Sea today, is still very rough after a very rough and cold night, but has got a little calmer by midday, but is still bad enough making the ship roll a lot. A very good concert was held on E Deck tonight by our own unit the 17/27th.

Thursday Nov. 16th 1916

Sea is a little calmer today than yesterday, but is still choppy. The first rounds of the sports competition commenced today, and very good entries have been received for the different events; to be decided in heats.

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Friday Nov. 17th 1916

The sea is rough again today. Sports Tournament is in full swing now, but I have not been to see any of the events today, as I have a bad attack of dysentery, tonight there is a concert on forward end of boat.

Saturday Nov. 18th 1916

Weather is a little calmer today, I am still suffering from dysentery. Our unit the 17/27th gave another concert tonight, but I didn't go to it, as I was not well enough. The Sports carnival advanced another stage today.

Sunday Nov. 19th 1916

Church parade, was held this morning at 9.30. Sea is calm, but ship is rolling a lot. Nothing much doing today, have been writing letters home today.

Monday Nov. 10th 1916

Sea today is calm, but not so good, as yesterday, nothing to record today except that a couple of whales, were seen spouting in the distance.

Tuesday Nov. 21st 1916

The sea is rough again today, and the weather is cloudy but fine nothing else to record except that a concert was held on deck this evening.

[**The following letter** is on two pages of light green lined paper. The YMCA stuff is in dark blue. Three place names have been crossed out with dark blue pencil by the censor. One I can read (*Western Australia*), the other two are not legible].

TALK CLEAN

LIVE CLEAN

FIGHT CLEAN

PLAY THE GAME

Adelaide Y.M.C.A. Army Department

*Somewhere at Sea
Tuesday Nov. 21st 1916*

Dear Mary

A few lines to let you know that I am still alive, and kicking. We had a good time coming down from the Hill. We started a concert giving when we left Railway Town, and kept it up just about all the way down, except for an interval now and again for refreshments. I must thank you, and your sister and father, for the beautiful presents you gave me, which I shall value very highly, and always think of you when I am using it. The refreshments you gave me were very acceptable, and we enjoyed them very much. Well we got back to camp at noon Saturday, and after getting things fixed up we were granted leave until Sunday night. Monday morning we found out that we would be embarking Tuesday afternoon and we all slept home for the last night. Well we left camp early Tuesday afternoon, and marched to the Mitcham Station, where we entrained for the Outer Harbour. We had a great send off at Mitcham, and there was big crowds on all the stations we passed through on our way to the Outer Harbour. The train was a special, and went right through, without stopping. We got on board

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about five o'clock in the afternoon, but we never sailed until midnight. I will try and give you an idea what life on board a transport is like. We all sleep in hammocks, and I find them very comfortable to sleep in, and sleep like a top. In the mornings we have to roll them up, and pack them away. I am mess orderly for our mess for the trip. I have a mate, and we draw all the rations for our mess, sixteen men in all including our two selves, and we are responsible for keeping all our plates, cutlery tables and floors clean, but we have no other duties to do so it is not so bad. There is a concert on board nearly every night, and plenty of sports Tournaments so the time doesn't drag, in fact it seems to go very fast. I was in hopes of being able to get a letter back from [Western Australia], but we never called in there, but we will be calling at [censored], so I will be able to get this back from there. I have also wrote[sic] a letter to Mr and Mrs Billings, so I expect they will show it to you as I have tried to make your [sic] letter a bit different in news, to what yours is. There is not much news to be got on board a transport. So I think I will close this letter now, as I will be writing again when we*

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get to [censored]. So I will close now, by wishing you all a Merry Christmas, and a bright, and prosperous New Year, from your sincere friend Jack Coventry.

My address is

No 6063

Private J.L. Coventry

17th Reinforcements

27th Battalion

7th Brigade

A.I.F.

On active service abroad

Wednesday Nov. 22nd 1916

Sea is still rough, and weather is cloudy but fine, have been writing, some more letters today so as to be able to send them back from Durban, which place we expect to reach in a few days time.

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Thursday Nov. 23rd 1916

Weather today is fine, and the sea is calm, every one on board is busy writing today, as the mail which goes back from Durban closes Saturday evening.

Friday Nov. 25th 1916

Nothing much to record today except that everyone is busy finishing off their letters, as the mail closes today, and there is a little excitement, at the thought

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of soon being able to sight land, and go ashore, to see some of the sights of Durban.

Sunday Nov. 26th 1916

Everyone on board is talking of Durban, and wondering how long we will be in port, and what leave we will get, and the more excitable ones, are constantly, on the watch to see if they can sight land, but we were told by some of the crew, that we would not arrive in Durban until about eleven o'clock (tomorrow) Monday morning. So we were satisfied then that it was no good looking out for Durban today.

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Monday Nov. 27th 1916

Monday morning has arrived at last, and all are excited at the prospect of being able to go ashore. We sighted land at about nine this morning, we would have sighted it earlier but for the haze, and mist hanging around. The first thing to come into prominence being the lighthouse on the Bluff, at the entrance to the harbor [sic]. At the same time we could see, coming into view, all the residences of the Europeans in the sides of the hills overlooking the sea, and they presented a beautiful sight, to us who had not seen land for twenty days. As we drew in closer we could see all the Large hotels, and Tourist resorts

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and also the beautiful beaches, and thick green shrubbery on the Bluff. As we continued to get in closer, we reached the breakwater, and passed in between it, and the Bluff, and entered the harbor. We had to go a long way round in the harbor [sic] to get a berth [sic]. We arrived at anchorage at 10.45 in the morning, but had to wait until Tuesday morning to get alongside the wharf.

Tuesday Nov. 28th 1916

We pulled in alongside the wharf at daylight, this morning, and on going on deck, the first sight we saw was all the coolies on the wharf, waiting to start coaling our ship which they

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did, soon after breakfast. It was very interesting to watch them at work, they carry the coal in round baskets, on the top of the shoulders, and balance against their neck. When emptying them, they tip the coal straight over their heads, without shifting the basket from the shoulders. It was good fun to watch the coolies scrambling for pennies which we threw onto the wharf, and when a penny was thrown down you would see nothing, but a heap of arms, and legs, as they all made a grab to get it. And it would take nearly five minutes to decide who had really got it

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There were many other interesting sights, to be seen, from the boat one of the most noticeable, being the costumes of the natives, which were nearly always of very bright colors [sic]. There were also many natives on the wharf selling pineapples, and oranges the prices they were charging were very reasonable, the price of pineapples being 3d each and mandarin oranges 4d a dozen. Another very amusing sight to us was the native police, who were on duty on the wharf, they wear a very neat uniform, and are very proud of it too, they carry handcuffs on their belts, a stick, and a waddy

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with a big knob, on it, and are not afraid to use it either. It is great fun to watch them chasing the native kiddies away from the boats, and the kiddies are very frightened of them, and run for their lives, when they see a policeman coming. At two o'clock in the afternoon we were all lined up on the wharf, and marched down to the Durban Town Hall, where we were dismissed, and granted leave until eleven o'clock at night. We found Durban a very interesting town of great scenic beauty. We had several ricksha [sic] rides around the different beauty spots and enjoyed very much, the

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novelty of riding about in this manner. The rickshas [sic] are drawn by, zulus, who are a fine race of men splendidly built, of great strength, and very interesting to us Australians, and are quite distinct

from the other natives in Durban. The ricksha [sic] men, wear all sorts of wonderful, and terrible looking costumes, including great big horns on their heads, which are beautifully polished. And they prance about like a lot of two year olds, while running along the streets. Another thing that struck me about [them?] was that they are all bare footed, and although the

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heat was something awful, they would keep up the pace of an average horse, and after a mile or two run, they would pull up, and not show any sign of distress at all. After visiting several places of interest my mates, and I took, a Musgrave Street Tram intending to go out to the zoo, but when the tram reached the top of the hill, overlooking the Harbor [sic], we were met, by several ladies of the Durban Cheer-up-Society who invited us up to their private house to have tea with them, and we availed ourselves of their kind offer. After we had tea, they brought, a football, and we

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had a game, with some sailors who were also there, and after wards, the ladies showed us around their beautiful garden. We much enjoyed the hospitality shown to us, and our heartfelt thanks are due to those ladies, for their kindness and the splendid reception they gave us. Among other places we visited, was the Wesley Hall, where they provide, free of all charge, to soldiers, tea and refreshments at all hours and they have places, where we were able to have a wash, and brush up free of charge. We also had a good time at the Y.M.C.A. Hut, and paid a visit to

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the great summer attractions at the Durban beach, where, there is a splendid surf bathing enclosure, and numerous, other attractions, too numerous, to mention. We also intended to pay a visit to the whaling station further around the bay, but the time was too short, so we had to leave it. While we were in Durban, The trams, (which are double deckers, and electric at that) were free of all charge to us and we could ride anywhere we liked without having to pay a penny. The zoo, and most of the other places of interest were also thrown open free of charge to us.

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In fact the kindness of the Durban people, will always be remembered by us with gratitude. But I am sorry to say the Durban business people seemed to have set themselves out to rob us, as they were charging ninepence each, for most of their cool drinks, and apples, were four shillings a dozen. Grapes 1/6 a pound, and post card views, that can be bought in Adelaide at sixpence a dozen, they were charging 2/- and 3/- a dozen for. And little books of views, that can be bought in Adelaide for sixpence, and one shilling each, were one shilling and two shillings each here

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but cigarettes, and tobacco were a good bit cheaper than in Australia. After having a very good time ashore, we returned to our ship, at eleven o'clock at night, and were not long in getting on board, and turning into bed, as we were all very tired and sleepy. The heat during our stay at Durban was 96 degrees, in the shade, but it was not like the clear heat we get in Australia, as it was very oppressive, and affected us more than what the heat at 110 would have done in Australia.

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Wednesday Nov. 29th 1916

Arose early this morning in the hopes, that we would get another chance to go ashore, but no shore leave was granted today as we expected to leave port as soon as we finished coaling. The Military Police had a rather busy morning rounding up the stragglers, but they got them all on board except one by dinner time, we spent most of the morning up on deck, watching the coolies finish the coaling, and saying goodbye to the different people, who came, to the wharf [to?] bid us goodbye. Several of the Cheer up ladies came down, to the wharf, and bought baskets of oranges

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from the natives, and threw them on board to us. We cast off, and pulled out from Durban, soon after dinner, and were sorry to say farewell to all those people, who helped to make our stay in Durban so pleasant, and were so kind to us during our short stay, and hope that some day soon, we will be able to renew, our friendship with them. The last we saw of Durban, was one of the cheerup girls, out on the end of the breakwater signalling with flags. Her parting signal was "Goodbye, and Good Luck".

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Thursday Nov. 30th 1916

Have left Durban behind, and am looking forward to our next port of call, which we hear will be Cape Town. We have been in sight of land all day, and the heat is still very severe, although it is not quite as oppressive as it was in Durban. It is slightly cooler this evening, and the sea is calm. Tonight we can see a revolving light house on the coast, but don't know, what one it is.

Friday December 1st 1916

We are still in sight of land, and sea has a slight swell on, which is making the ship roll a good bit. Nothing has happened to record

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today, and all are talking of Cape Town, and are wondering what chance, we have of getting leave there.

Saturday Dec. 2nd 1916

Have lost sight of land this morning, but expect to reach Cape Town, about midday. 9.30 A.M. We have just sighted the Table Mountains, and they are getting clearer, as we approach and other mountains are drawing into view, these being, The Lions, Head, and Devil's Peak. We arrived at anchorage, at 11.15 in the morning, but did not go alongside the wharf. A health inspector came on board, from the shore, and placed the ship in

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quarantine, so that meant that none of us, were allowed to go ashore, which was a great disappointment to us all. In the afternoon, a tug came out to us, towing coal barges and they set to work, and we took in about, three hundred tons of coal. We also took on board, a large quantity of fresh water from another steamer alongside of us. Towards evening, several boats, came out to have a look at us, including of course, those, who had oranges to sell, and post card views of Cape Town. They were charging us 1/- for eight little oranges, and 1/6 a dozen

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for post cards, but the reception we got from the Cape Town people, was the direct opposite to what we received at Durban. In fact the Cape town people were very careful to let us see, that we were not wanted ashore. Cape Town itself is a pretty place, nestling as it does at the foot of the table mountains, but it hasn't the beautiful green appearance that Durban had.

Sunday Dec. 3rd 1916

We are still at anchorage, but expect to leave port today. We have finished coaling, and taking in water, and there are several boats alongside selling oranges and views.

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11.30 A.M. we are just leaving port, and am not sorry to bid farewell to Cape Town, after the very cool reception we received there. Cape Town is fast disappearing from view we are in full view of land all the afternoon, and can see the wreck of a New Zealand transport, on the shore, everything went along quietly, until about eight o'clock, at night, when suddenly, an urgent message came through by wireless, and our ship turned right around, and made full speed back to Cape Town, and many wild rumours began to float around the ship that there were submarines about, and that one had sighted us, and some of the chaps were that excited, that they slept in their clothes, on deck, and wouldn't go below.

Monday Dec. 4th 1916

We arrived back at Cape Town early this morning, and found that we had returned for some papers, which were brought on board, and as soon, as we received them, we turned around and left again. There is nothing much more to record today, as the afternoon and evening were only a repetition of the day before. Weather today has been very warm, but is a little cooler tonight.

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Tuesday Dec. 5th 1916

Weather is a little cooler today, and the sea is calm, we are making good headway, the wind being behind us. Everything is quiet again after, the excitement of our sudden return to Cape Town. A very good concert has been held on deck this evening.

Wednesday Dec. 6th 1916

Everything is going on in the usual routine, and nothing has occurred [sic] that can be recorded sea has a slight swell on, but the weather is fine, but inclined to be hot. Another very good concert was held at the Stadium on deck this evening.

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Thursday Dec. 7th 1916

Sea still has a swell on, which is causing the ship to roll a lot, but the weather remains fine. The prizes have been awarded today, for the best kept messes, on the different decks. Our mess No 50 was awarded the second prize on E Deck, and the colonel congratulated us, for the splendid way, our mess was kept, and said, they had hard work to decide which was the best our mess or No 51 which was awarded first prize.

Friday Dec. 8th 1916

Sea is very calm today, but the heat is very trying below decks. The temperature is not so very high, but it

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is very sultry, and muggy, deck sports have been held this afternoon, but nothing else has occurred [sic] this afternoon worth noticing.

Saturday Dec. 9th 1916

Arose at six this morning, and the whole unit were marched up to have a bath, in a large canvas bath, which had been constructed on the forward deck, and which was filled with sea water. This afternoon, being Saturday, is washing day for the troops, and the boat looks like a laundry with all the washing hanging out to dry. Weather is still warm, and sultry, and very unpleasant between decks.

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Sunday Dec. 10th 1916

This morning it is the 11/29th's turn to parade for a bath in the canvas bath, and a serious accident occurred [sic] to Corporal J.H. Ford, who was just going to dive into the bath, when he slipped, and fell in, striking his head on the bottom, and injuring his spine, very seriously, and was carried into the hospital in an unconscious condition, and there is not much hope held out of his recovery. Towards evening, Corporal J.H. Ford's condition, got a lot worse, and his accident has caused, a deep impression, among the men on board, and many of them say

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they will not bathe in the bath again.

Monday Dec. 11th 1916

Corporal Ford died this morning at three o'clock. He has left a widow, and two children, arrangements, have been made, and the burial service was held at 10.15 this morning, on the officers deck. All the different units on board were lined up on their own drill decks, while the 11/29th, the unit to which Corporal Ford belonged, were drawn up on the Officers deck, from which the body was committed to the deep. The burial at sea was a most impressive, ceremony, the body was sewn up in

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canvas, and weighted with fire irons, and was draped with the Union Jack. After the burial service had been read, the body was committed to the sea. The buglers played the Last Post, and the firing party, fired three rounds of ammunition. The Ship was stopped while the body was being committed to the sea. A committee has been formed to hold an enquiry into the cause of the accident which caused Corporal Ford's death, and after taking the evidence of several witnesses, they found that the deceased met his death accidentally [sic], no blame being attachable to anyone, a concert was to have been

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held on E Deck this evening by the 17/27th but has been abandoned on account of this tragedy.

Tuesday Dec. 12th 1916

Weather is very hot today but the sea is calm, we are very near the equator, and will be passing over at about eleven o'clock this morning. A subscription list has been started, on board to raise funds, to assist the widow of Corporal Ford, who we hear is in distressed circumstances. The sum of £11/10/-, was raised among the men of our own unit the 17/27th which is not so bad considering we are only 150 strong.

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It is expected that there will be a considerable amount raised altogether, among the different units, to send to Mrs Ford, and which will be forwarded on to her when we reach England. Today is my birthday. I am 29 today, but except for the best wishes of my comrades, it is no different to any other day, at sea.

Wednesday Dec. 13th 1916

The heat today is still very oppressive [sic], and the sea is calm, The balance sheet has just been published, showing the total sum raised on behalf of the widow of Corporal Ford, which shows a grand

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total of £170/-, including the sum of £36/16/-, raised by the sale of his personal effects to his comrades. A member of our unit private E. C. Neave, has been admitted to the hospital today suffering from pneumonia, and is in a very serious condition. There is a lot of sickness on board, including, measles, mumps, colds, ex cetera. We are travelling without lights tonight, as we are now, in the danger zone, and expect to reach "Freetown", Sierra Leone, some time Friday.

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Thursday Dec. 14th 1916

The heat today seems to be a little more intense, even, than yesterday, but the sea remains very calm. Private Neaves condition, is still very serious, and they are having a very trying time with him on account of the intense heat. Several others out of our unit are in the hospital, but their cases are not considered serious. We expect to reach Freetown, Sierra Leone, tomorrow morning. We are travelling

with all lights out again; tonight. On account of the danger from enemy submarines, which are supposed to be somewhere in the vicinity.

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Friday Dec. 15th 1916

All the boys are on deck this morning, on the look out for land. We sighted land at 8.A.M in the distance. We arrived at anchorage, in Freetown, at 10.A.M. and found when we got in that there were eight other Australian transports there also, and two cruisers the "H.M.S. Highflyer", and "H.M.S. Kent". All the transports had Australians on board. It was a very interesting sight watching the shore, as we were, coming into port, the land being thick with palms, of all sorts, and tropical growth, which grew right down to the waters edge. We were not in port very long before

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we were surrounded by natives in little canoes, which are made by the natives themselves, the canoes are cut out of the timber in one piece, and are very beautifully made. Some of the natives only wore an old shirt, while others again, were quite naked. We found the heat very trying while in port, but it used to get a little cooler in the evenings. although it was nearly suffocating between decks. We are all wondering, how long we will be here, and whether we will get a chance, to go ashore to have a look around but, there don't [sic] seem to be much chance of that.

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Saturday Dec. 16th 1916

Woke up early, and went on deck, to have a look around, and there were many sights to interest us, including the many activities on the different boats, and also, the native boats, which were alongside of ours selling oranges, and bananas, their prices were fairly reasonable, oranges were fourteen for sixpence, and bananas were one shilling, a dozen, but were very large, the oranges here all have green skins, but are very sweet to eat. There was no leave granted to anyone, to go ashore, today, and the heat is still very oppressive, and several men have been stricken down with sun stroke, on the different

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transports here. One of my own mates, who enlisted in Broken Hill named Jack Thomas, is very ill in hospital and am afraid that it will go very hard with him. We hear that one transport, which has been in port here for some time, has lost five men through death from various causes, since, she has been here. We have to take on board, about nine hundred tons of coal while we are here, and as there is no other labor [sic] available we, have got to do the coaling ourselves. They have decided to work us in shifts, and we are to do three hours, on and nine hours off, until the whole job is finished. The first shift starts work tonight at nine o'clock.

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Sunday Dec. 17th 1916

We are still in port, and seem to be likely to stay here for a few days yet. The heat is very trying, and several of our chaps are sick through getting a touch of the sun. The ship is covered in coal dust, our men are still hard at work, coaling, and are doing a good job, considering that it is the first time, that a good many of them have ever handled a shovel in their lives, and some of them have big blisters on their hands.

Monday Dec. 18th 1916

We are still in port and the boys are still hard at work, coaling, and we are also taking in a quantity of fresh water

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as we are very short of this necessity. About one half of the men of each unit, are being granted leave to go ashore today, and I am one of the fortunate ones, who have been picked to go. We were all lined up on deck, at 10 o'clock, this morning, and were taken on board a barge, which was laying alongside, where we were packed like sardines, and had to wait, over an hour, for a tug to come out to tow us ashore. But at last our patience was rewarded, and we were landed about halfpast eleven, and had not gone many yards before we were, surrounded by natives selling bananas, oranges, and curios

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of all description [sic], to say nothing of dozens of others, who all wanted to act as guides for us. My mate and I picked up a good guide, who first of all took us right through the native market, where they were selling curios, of all sorts, and many strange, and awful looking preparations, which they tried to tell us were good to eat, but which we had no intention of sampling. After we had been right through the market, we started on a general tour round the town, and through the native quarters of the Town, and saw many sights to interest us one in particular was the names of the streets and signs over some of the

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shops, one street was named Kissy-Kissy street, and in it there is a shop, with the notice on it, Sympathetic undertaker, which we thought very amusing, another very amusing incident was a native woman who was sitting under a shop verandah, and she was nursing, a little piccaninnie which was quite naked, and wanted us to pay her one penny each and she would let us kiss her baby. But none of us were [sic] anxious to try it, and she got quite offended, until, I shook hands, with her and then she was as proud as punch, it was also very amusing to watch the way the native women, do their, washing, they certainly, get their clothes, very clean, but I wouldnt advise

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anyone else to follow, their example, as it must be sudden [*death?*] to any buttons, which may happen to be on the clothes. They do all their washing in a little creek which is down in a hollow, but right in the centre of the town, and from the road on top, we could stand, and watch them working in the creek. First of all, they carry all their washing down into the creek, in big bundles on their heads, and when they get there they strip off all their own, clothes, that is if they happen to have any on, then they tie, an old shirt or towel round their loins, stand in the creek themselves, throw all the clothes in also, soak, them in the water

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and then lay them in little heaps on large flat faced stones, which are standing alongside the water, and belt them with large waddies until they belt all the water out of them, and then they resoak them and repeat the performance until the clothes, are quite clean, when they lay them out on the grass to dry. Another place, we visited, was a shop, where they sell silken goods, of all kinds, and the prices they ask, for some of them are pretty stiff, but when you tell them it is too much, they will come down in price, and will generally finish up, by telling you to put your own price on the article, and will finish by taking about a third of what they asked

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in the first place. We also paid a visit, to the Public Gardens (which were up on a rise overlooking the town) or Reserve, or whatever else it may happen to be called. It was fairly well looked after considering the disadvantages, which they are under, there are plenty of nice shady trees, and seats, and also some tennis courts there, but the ground, was very dry, and thirsty looking. There are a few nice buildings in the Town, but the majority of them are broken down, dirty looking hovels, and it was surprising, the number of monkeys, we saw tied up in the different houses through out the town. While

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some of the natives are nearly naked others again, are dressed in European clothes, and look well in them too, as they are a well made race of people, while some of the young native women, have beautiful figures, and are real good looking, and always, have a pleasant smile, for everybody, nearly every building, seems to be a shop of some sort or another, and are all open to the streets, and one can see everything that is going on inside. Every native we meet in the streets seems to have something to sell, but I was surprised to notice that if you said no, you didn't want anything, that

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they would take no for an answer, and not bother you any more. The streets in the native quarters are very narrow, and twist, and wind in all directions, and are littered with all sorts of rubbish. They also have a railway in Freetown, but it is not a very inviting sort of a train to have a ride in so we did not try it. We all had to meet again, at 4.P.M. at the wharf to return to our ship, so after buying some fruit to take back with us, we all made our way back, to the wharf again, and were not sorry to get back on board, again, as it is the dirtiest town I

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have ever seen, and the heat was just about, as much as we could stand. I was glad of the opportunity to see what the life in Sierra Leone, was like, but I have no wish after once seeing it, to go ashore, here again. I forgot to mention, that before we left the ship to go ashore, we had to fill our water bottles, and take our haversacks with us, to put our midday rations in, which we were taking with us, as we were warned not to drink any of the water ashore, nor to buy, any eatables from the natives except fruit that we could peel. On account of the intense heat, we were allowed to

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leave our tunics off, and we went ashore in our shirts, with sleeves rolled down, and our felt hats turned down all round, with one handkerchief round our necks, and another one fastened up under our hats, as a protection against the sun. We arrived back at the ship in time for tea, and went to bed early, as we were all dog tired.

Tuesday Dec. 19th 1916

The heat today is still very severe, we finished coaling about ten o'clock, this morning, and had all the decks washed down by 12 o'clock midday. One of my mates, from Broken Hill, Jack Thomas, is still

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in the hospital suffering from heat apoplexy, and is to be put ashore, this evening, and sent to the hospital, as he is too ill to be taken on, with us when we leave port. Private E. C. Neave died this afternoon, at 4.30 P.M. of pneumonia. Jack Thomas was taken ashore in a semi-conscious state, at eight o'clock tonight. We all feel very sorry indeed at the loss of Private Neave who was a fine little chap, well liked by everyone on board, and also regret having to leave Jack Thomas behind, and sincerely trust that he will pull through his severe illness alright, and that he will

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be spared to rejoin us in England. We expect to be leaving port early tomorrow morning, and everyone is pleased, at the prospect of being able to leave this place, which is known, as the white mans grave, where everyone of us, is suffering from the very trying climate.

Wednesday Dec. 20th 1916

The heat today is still as bad as ever, we are just leaving port now at 7.30 A.M. and are glad to see the last of Freetown. Private E. C. Neave has just been buried at sea at 9.15 this morning, and we were all very sorry to lose a good comrade. Including our own ship, there was [sic] six transports

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left Freetown together, and we are steaming in single file, one behind the other with an escort of several cruisers. There was another burial at sea today, one of the Australians being buried off the transport Benalla at 1.30 P.M. this afternoon, we are travelling with all lights out again tonight, and will continue to do so, for the rest of the voyage.

Thursday Dec. 21st 1916

We are still steaming in the same formation, as when we left, Freetown, except that we seem to be zig zagging a good bit and there is an auxiliary cruiser on our right which is keeping with us. The heat is not quite

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so severe today. About midday a lot of excitement was caused on board, by the appearance of a large battleship, on the Horizon, which was making rapidly towards us, and our own escort head [sic] off towards it, and all sorts of rumors [sic] were floating about that she was a German boat, and that our escort was making off to do battle with her. But it turned out that the excitement was over nothing as our escort returned, and the battleship steamed off again, and we found out afterwards, that she was one of the ships that was told off to escort us, and

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that she was scouting in the distance. The heat is not quite as bad today, although it is still stuffy below decks.

Friday Dec. 22nd 1916

Weather is a little cooler today. We arrived in sight of land at 10 o'clock this morning, and came to anchorage, at 11.30 A.M. The name of the port we are in now is Dakar, and is the capital of the state of Senegal a French possession, on the North West Coast of Africa. Just outside the harbor [sic], we passed quite close to an island, with some very large buildings, which seemed to be built right to the edge of the sea, and there was also a large fort on the

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island. The island itself looks as if it has been through a heavy bombardment from the sea, as several of the buildings are in ruins, and there are several holes in the walls, which look like shell holes, but whether such is the case or not, I cannot say. As we did not even know, the name of the island. The port of Dakar itself looks to be a very nice place, but as none of us have [sic] been granted leave to go ashore, I can't describe the place too well as we are anchored a good way from the shore. But we are close enough to be able to discern a number

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of fine buildings, from the ship. The port looks very busy just at present, on account of the large number of ships, that are in harbor [sic]. There are our six transports our auxiliary cruiser a French warship, a mail boat and quite a number of coal steamers. There is also a light house, but it is on a hill about twenty miles from here, on another part of the coast, but it can be seen quite clearly from here. Our boat, this afternoon, is surrounded by natives in boats, who are diving in the water after coins. They are very clever at diving, and never fail to bring up the coins. The water here is very clear, and you can

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see them catch the coins in their hands, before it reaches the bottom of the sea. There is no fruit to be bought here, at "Dakar", but there is [sic] plenty of post cards for sale, and every boat that comes out seems to have postcards for sale. There is also a large fort, on a high peak at the entrance to the harbor, [sic] and we can see four very big guns on the cliff overlooking the harbor [sic]. We have taken on board, a 4.7 Gun, which has been mounted on the stern of our boat, and also, a naval gunners crew, to work it, and keep watch for any submarines, that may be about.

65

Saturday Dec. 23rd 1916

We are still [in?] port, and will be here for a few days yet. The natives are around our ship again today diving for coins. Leave, was granted this afternoon for those men who wished to, allowing them [to?] swim from off the side of the ship, providing they don't go more than 40 yards away from their own ship. Others again were allowed to go, for a row, in the life boats round the harbor [sic], but each boat was in [the?] charge of an officer, and they were not allowed to land and go ashore. In the evening we had a concert on deck to celebrate, Christmas Eve, as tomorrow is Sunday, and we couldn't hold it then.

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Sunday Dec. 24th 1916

Weather today is nice, and warm but not hot enough to be unpleasant. Church parade was held on deck this morning, and after that was over, we were free then for the rest of the day. Leave to go swimming was granted again this afternoon, and many men availed themselves of the opportunity to have another swim. A little excitement was caused this afternoon, by a young girl who looked to be about eighteen years of age, swimming across from the mail boat to our boat, and climbing on board, we found out then that she had a brother, and an uncle, on board our boat, and had swam [sic] across to

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bid them goodbye. After staying on board for about an hour talking to her relatives, she left again and swam back to the mail boat, an escort of our chaps swimming back with her. The life boats were at the disposal of the soldiers again today, and they all took it in turns to have a row round the ships in the harbor [sic]. Tonight is Christmas Eve, and many tales are being told by the boys, of previous Christmas Eves, spent in all parts of the Commonwealth some of the tales being very interesting, and well worth listening to.

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Monday Dec. 25th 1916

Today is Christmas Day. Voluntary Church parade, is being held this morning, at which most of the men on board attended. Our breakfast consisted as usual of porridge, followed by chops instead of the usual stew. But they gave us a good Christmas dinner, we had soup, roast beef, prunes, 4 ozs of Jam for each man. There is not much else to record today, except that the evening was spent spinning yarns, and talking of those at home, and wondering how they were spending their Christmas.

69

Tuesday Dec. 26th 1916

Today is Boxing Day. We are still in port, but expect to leave here tomorrow. A rowing match is being held today between crews from the different units on board, and a programme of sports is being held on deck this afternoon, and swimming was allowed again this afternoon between three o'clock, and half past four. A concert was also held in the evening on No 3 hatch. Several of the boats in port, have left here since we have been in port including the mail boat from which the young lady swam across to our ship. This boat leaving here yesterday evening.

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Wednesday Dec 27th 1916

We are leaving port at seven o'clock this morning, and are not sorry to get moving once more, as although we have been in port five days, not a man of us were [sic] granted leave to go ashore. And we are all anxious, to get the trip over, and get our feet on shore once more. The order in which we sailed out of the harbor [sic], was as follows Argylleshire, Afric, Port Nicholas, Benalla, and Borda; After getting away, from port our boat the Afric, took up third position, with the Argylleshire, and Benalla in front, and the Port Nicholas, and Borda behind us. On our left we have the Auxiliary cruiser, and away on our right, we have a large

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four funnel battleship, which is escorting us. After ten o'clock this morning a lot of excitement was caused on board, by a soldier jumping overboard from our boat. He is a Russian by birth, and a returned soldier having served with the Australians at Gallipoli. He has been in great pain through having something wrong with his ears, and this affected him, so much, that he declared his intention of

jumping overboard, and swimming to one of the other boats, to see if the doctors there could do anything for him to relieve the pain. I think this was his intention myself, as he had a life belt on when
72

he jumped overboard, and he made good headway for a while, towards the transport Benalla, and then he seemed to get into difficulties, with the backwash from the propellers and narrowly escaped getting drawn into them. A boat was quickly lowered from the Benalla and he was picked up in an exhausted condition, and transferred to one of our life boats which brought him back to our own boat, and he was carried into the hospital on a stretcher in a very bad condition, but is expected to get over it alright.

When the alarm "man overboard" was given, the ships whistle

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was blown, and several of the boats manouvered [sic] so as to pick up the man, and the cruisers which were escorting us, turned round, and came full speed up to us, when they saw us stop, to see what was wrong. As they were some distance away from us, when they saw us stop and put about, They didn't know whether we had been attacked by a submarine, or what had happened. Thus showing what a lot of trouble can be caused by one man. It was some time before we all got going again, in our old formation. At 12 oclock midday today we passed a very business like, looking cruiser, which was

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steaming towards "Dakar", and was flying the French flag, and she had a very sharp nose which looked as if shed [sic] could ram a big ship, and cut it in two. This afternoon passed off quietly, nothing having occurred [sic] to record except that we had a moonlight concert on deck, without any lights.

Thursday Dec. 28th 1916

We are still steaming in the same formation, as yesterday. The weather today is hot, and the sea is choppy. We are of course, sailing with all lights [out?] at night, and will continue to do so until the end of the voyage, now that we are in the danger zone, and no man is allowed to strike

75

a match, or smoke after dark. As it might be the means of giving away our position, to the enemy, if any of their submarines happen to be lurking around. There is nothing more to enter up today, as it has been an uneventful day, and evening.

Friday Dec. 29th 1916

After a very hot night we rose this morning to find the sea calmer, and a cool breeze blowing. At nine oclock this morning we were joined by four more transports and one cruiser, and as soon as these joined us, our auxiliary cruiser left us, and turned back, her work being finished. We are quite a fleet now, there being nine transports all full of Australian

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troops, one cruiser, and a French battleship, making eleven of us in all. There may be more in the distance, but I am sure of these as we are all within sight of one another. We are well within the danger zone now, and every man has to carry a life belt with him where ever [sic] he goes, and we have to sleep with them in case of an alarm at any time. We are also running short of fresh water, and we have to wash up our dishes after each meal, with salt water on account of being so short, and are only allowed a certain quantity per man each day.

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Saturday Dec. 30th 1916

Sea today is choppy, but the weather is fine, and cool, all the awnings have been taken off the decks now, we are in a cooler zone. The men all had to parade in uniform at half past nine, this morning to hear the sentence read out on a man who had been courtmartialled, and found guilty, on four different charges, and he was sentenced to two years hard labor [sic], and to be discharged from the army, not allowed to enter it again at any future date. Tonight Mr Bell the Y.M.C.A. representative, gave us, a very interesting, and instructive lecture, on his travels through, New Zealand, Fiji, Hawaiiin [sic] Islands, Canada

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America, and the San, Francisco Exposition, and the lecture, was greatly enjoyed by the men, who were present, and we learnt many things that may some day come in useful to us, and our hearty thanks are due to Mr Bell for the opportunity thus afforded us of learning something about some of the big industries of America, and Canada. He told us a lot about the big timber camps, and also the motor car industries, and the business life of New York, and also about some of the big sky scrapers and the methods of lighting and ventilations use [sic] in them. Another lecture will be given Monday night.

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Sunday Dec. 31st 1916

The weather is fine and cool today, but the sea is rough, and choppy, and the ship is rolling a lot. Our fleet presents a very imposing spectacle today as the cruiser "Kent" is in the lead, and the nine

transports are steaming in three rows of three each, behind her, and we are all well within sight of one another, but we can't see the French battleship anywhere, as she is away scouting in the distance. It is New Years Eve tonight, and the boys are all telling yarns again about previous New Years Eves and it is very interesting to listen to some of them, as we have men on board who can spin a good yarn when they like.

80

Monday Jan. 1st 1917

The sea is rough, and choppy today, and the ship has a bad roll on. The days are drawing in now, and when we get up in the morning at half past six it is just getting daylight, and it is quite cold enough to suit any of us, but I expect that every day it will get colder now. We are still steaming in the same formation, as yesterday, and we passed two mail steamers today, but where they were bound for, I am unable to say, as we do not know exactly where we are ourselves, on account of us changing course so often. A half holiday has been

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granted today, on account of it being New, Years Day, and a programme of sports was held on deck this afternoon, good entries were received for all the events, and it took the whole afternoon to decide them, on account of so many heats in the different events. Owing to the wind and cold tonight, Mr Bell was not able to resume his lectures on his travels, but we hope to have an early opportunity of hearing him again, as he has a way of telling us things, that we can almost imagine we can see the places he is talking about.

82

Tuesday Jan. 2nd 1917

Sea is still rough, and the weather is getting colder. Today is pay day, and the colonel has issued orders that sixpence, is to be deducted from every mans pay to pay for shortages of material used by us on the boat, not withstanding the fact, that in our unit, the shortages were paid for by the mess orderlies, as soon as they occurred [sic]. This order seems to us a very unfair one, because it seems as if we have got to pay for, shortages, with which we have had nothing to do at all. Of course they have promised that if there is any balance the money will be paid back to us. But most of

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us have said goodbye to our sixpences as we know, by experience that promises are not to be relied on. Mr Bell resumed his lectures tonight, and he told us a lot more about America and Canada, and the lecture was enjoyed every bit as well as his first lecture was.

Wednesday Jan. 3rd 1917

Sea is still choppy, and rough today, and the ship is rolling a lot. We expect to reach England in about six days time, and everyone of us will be glad [to?] see the end of this voyage. The weather is getting colder every day, now and the days are drawing in fast.

84

Thursday Jan. 4th 1917

Weather today is cold, and the sea is, choppy, causing the ship to roll a lot. It is seven o'clock in the morning before it gets daylight now. There is nothing occurred [sic] today worth recording, except that we can have lights below now, at night time, as all the port holes have been sealed up, but no lights are allowed on deck, and there is a heavy penalty, for any man who is caught smoking after dark, as the glow from a match might easily be the means, of disclosing the position of the whole fleet of us to the enemy, who are very likely close to us now.

85

Friday Jan. 5th 1917

The sea is still rough and choppy, and the ship is rolling very badly. All the mess orderlies were paraded on G Deck at two o'clock this afternoon, and the colonel made a speech and awarded the prizes, for the best kept messes on the different decks. My mess No. 50 was awarded second prize again No. 51 being awarded the first prize, and 49 mess got the third prize. It has got very cold tonight, and there are very few men on deck most of them stopping below after tea, and not going up at all.

86

Saturday Jan. 6th 1917

Sea is a little calmer today, but the ship is still rolling very badly. It was not daylight till half past seven this morning, and was very cold when we went on deck to have a wash before breakfast. At two o'clock this afternoon, there was a general parade, and every man had to be on parade in full marching order, with all equipment on, after the inspection was over, we had our universal kits issued to us, and we will keep them with us now, until the end of the trip. Mr Bell resumed his lecture tonight on G Deck and gave us a lot of useful information, about France and England especially

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London. Telling us about the best places of interest to visit, and also giving us some good advice as to the best places to stop at, and the best way to get about to see the sights. The lecture was appreciated every bit, as much, as Mr Bell's previous lectures, were, and our hearty thanks are due to Mr Bell for the splendid assistance and advice, which he has always been so ready to give.

Sunday Jan. 7th 1917

There was no church parade held this morning. As we are well in the danger zone. We have to wear our life belts constantly, whatever

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we may be doing. The sea is very rough, and there is a bitter cold wind blowing. Tonight we were joined by a number of Torpedo Destroyers which kept with us all night.

Monday Jan. 8th 1917

Today the sea is rougher, than ever, and when the ship rolls she dips right under the water on one side; while the sea is breaking over her bows. We cannot see the Torpedo destroyers this afternoon, so whether they have left us or not, I cannot say. We are all heartily sick sick [sic] of the voyage now, and will be glad, when we get ashore again. We

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expect to get into port some time tomorrow. There will be a lot of work to do when we get into port, arranging for the disembarkation of all the men, and kits, and a hundred and one, other things that crop up, when a large body of men are to be shifted about. There is nothing more to record today, except that the weather has got a lot rougher tonight, and it is very difficult to move about the boat, without holding on tight to anything which may happen to be handy.

90

Tuesday Jan. 9th 1917

The day we disembark has arrived at last. We have had a terrible night, at sea for our last night at sea, and not many of us are likely to forget it in a hurry. A lot of the men were complaining of the rough night we had just passed through, but they stopped complaining when our O.C. came down to have a talk with us, and told us that we could consider ourselves lucky, as it was only the rough night that saved us from being attacked by the enemy, as we had picked up a wireless message during the night, from a

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ship off the Lizard light house asking for help, and saying that she was being shelled by an enemy boat. As we were only two hours ahead of her, we could realise how lucky we were. We arrived in Plymouth Harbor [sic] at half past ten this morning, but we had dinner on board, and expect to get ashore early this afternoon. After dinner we were all lined up on deck in full marching order, and with our full kits up. After being on deck for some time we were dismissed again, as it was found, that we would not be going ashore for some hours, as we had

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to wait, until they got the men off the other transports that were in port before us. We had tea on board, which consisted of bully beef, and biscuits. Before leaving our boat, we were all issued with twenty four hours rations to take with us. We left the "Afric", and went on board the Ferry boat at about seven o'clock at night, to go ashore. When we arrived at the wharf, we disembarked, and reformed up in our platoons, on the wharf, and had to wait our turn, to entrain, for Salisbury Plains, our destination.

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We left Plymouth by train, at nine o'clock it was a moonlight night, but we had to travel with all the blinds drawn down, in the carriages pulled down [sic], as a precaution against betraying our whereabouts, in case any enemy airships happen to be about. At the Exeter Station, which was about halfway on our journey to Salisbury Plains, we were provided by the Mayoress of Exeter with hot tea and cakes, which we were very pleased to get, as it was a bitterly cold night travelling. We arrived at Amesbury Station where we had to leave,

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the train to march to the Salisbury Plains camp, at three o'clock in the morning. Where we got out of the train, we found that all the water, and mud laying about was frozen, and it was bitterly cold, but it was moonlight. After leaving our kits behind to be brought on by motor lorries, we set off to march to camp. We had to wear our full equipment, and after a few miles they began to get very heavy. We arrived at Rollestone Camp, at 6.15 in the morning after a three hours march, and were not sorry to reach our destination. As we had had no rest

95

or sleep all night.

Wednesday Jan. 10th 1917

We arrived in camp at 6.15 A.M. and were shown where our huts were, and each man was issued with a straw mattress and five blankets. Soon after seven o'clock we were all given a hot breakfast, of porridge, and sausages, which we all enjoyed, as it was a splendid breakfast, well cooked and we all had as much as we could eat, and was quite a treat after, what used to be issued to us on the boat. After breakfast they let us take it easy for the rest of the day. We have good huts to sleep

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in, each hut holding 30 men, and each hut has a stove in it, and we are allowed 60 lb of coal a day, to each hut. It is very cold here, and we need all our blankets to keep us warm at night time. We have lost all our officers, that came with us, and have a new lot, but expect to get our own officers back again before we leave for the front. Our N.C.O.s who came with us have lost their stripes, since they have been here, but expect to get them back again soon. We all hope they will too as they are a fine lot of chaps.

[There follows a couple of longish poems to conclude this little black notebook.]

DIARY NUMBER 2

1

Wednesday Jan. 10th 1917

Arrived at Rolleston Camp Salisbury Plains, at 6.15A.M. after travelling all night, from Plymouth. On arrival at Amesbury station, we found we had a three hours march to camp. On arrival at Rolleston Camp, we were provided with a good breakfast, and then were dismissed for the rest of the day, which gave us a chance to have a much needed rest. This is a very large camp covering many square miles, and everything is worked under a wonderful system of organisation. We saw our first aeroplanes today, as there were several flying around the camp, and are attached

2

to the royal Flying corps. We also noticed two large captive Balloons, which also belong to the camp.

Thursday Jan. 11th, 1917

Today the weather is bitterly cold, with a misty rain, and fog which lasted all day, have not done much today, except to write a few letters, in answer to those I received yesterday.

Friday Jan. 12th, 1917

Today is very cold, and there is mud, and slush everywhere. There was a fall of snow this afternoon, which lasted for about half an hour, and it was a pretty sight to many of us Australians, who were, seeing our first snow

3

fall. After the snowfall had finished, we were all paraded and marched down to the doctor for medical inspection, and to be inoculated [sic] against, Typhoid the inoculation [sic], was in the arm, and did not affect us, as bad as the two we had on the left breast in Australia. We received more letters from home today, and we set to work this afternoon to answer them so as to catch the outgoing mail. I myself received three letters which I have just answered, it has turned in frosty again tonight, and is very cold outside, went up to the Y.M.C.A. Hut for some stamps, but didn't stay long

4

Saturday Jan. 13th 1917

Got up this morning, to find everything frozen outside, even the mud was all frozen hard, and would crack under our feet. About ten o'clock the sun came out, and now it is lovely in the sunshine, but it is cool enough in the shade. We have all been allowed the day off on account of our arms, being sore, after the inoculation [sic]. This afternoon being general leave, a number of us took advantage of the opportunity, to walk into "Shrewton", a little country village, about two miles from here. It is a pretty little village, with narrow winding streets, and all

5

the cottages, and shops, have thatched roofs, and to my mind it looked very pretty, with its old fashioned buildings, without being in any way spoilt by modern architecture. After having tea in Shrewton, which was cheap and good we left again, about seven o'clock at night to return to camp Which we reached about eight o'clock. In Shrewton the Church of England, have a cheer up hut there for the use of soldiers, where they provide refreshments at all hours and also have a piano, plenty of reading matter, and several other comforts for the use of the soldiers.

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Sunday Jan. 14th 1917

Today being Sunday we had church parade in the Y.M.C.A. Hut, after which, we were dismissed for the rest of the day. In the afternoon, several of us took a walk over to Lark Hill camp, and had a look around there, returning to the camp in time for tea.

Monday Jan. 15th 1917

Today is very cold, and every little pool of water is frozen, and the mud is frozen as hard as iron. We have been drilling all day, and were very tired when our days work was done, as it is the first hard days training we have done for over nine weeks.

Tuesday Jan. 16th 1917

It is very cold again today. We have been told that we will be going on our four days leave to London next Friday, and all are anxiously looking forward to the trip.

Wednesday Jan. 17th, 1917

Today is similar to yesterday weather is freezing and don't [sic] seem likely to get any better. We had to let them know in our company orderly room today how much money we had to go on our trip with, and then we were told that all those who never [sic] had the 10/6 to pay their fares with would not be able to go, but I think we are all safe to go.

Thursday Jan. 18th 1917

Today is cold but fine, we have been drilling all the morning, and until nearly three o'clock in the afternoon, and then we were marched down to the recreation hut, and had a lecture from our captain, advising us where to go, while in London, and how to act, and also what pitfalls to keep away from, as he says, there are many rogues of all sorts, both men, and women, who set themselves out to rob soldiers especially Australians, who always have far more money in their pockets, than the English Tommies have. We are all getting to

9

bed early tonight as we have to be up, and off early in the morning, to catch the train from Amesbury.

Friday Jan. 19th 1917

The eventful day has arrived at last, we were all up at half-past five, and had breakfast at six, we were paraded, and moved off from camp, at seven o'clock, on our march of seven miles to Amesbury station, where we had to entrain for London. We arrived at Amesbury soon after nine o'clock, and left for London, at half past ten. We saw many interesting looking villages, as we passed through, the farming districts

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and as we drew nearer to London, we began to pass through the manufacturing towns. We arrived eventually at Waterloo Station, at a quarter to two in the afternoon and after leaving the train, we were all lined up on the platform, and then marched around to the Australian Military Headquarters at Horseferry Road, where we were given a lecture, and advice on different things of importance to us. After getting our instructions from there, we were dismissed, and told to meet again, at nine o'clock Monday night at the Waterloo Station, to catch

11

our train back to Amesbury. After we had been around to the Y.M.C.A. Hut at Aldwych, on the Strand, and had a meal, and booked our beds, we set off to see some of the sights of London. Among the places we went to see this afternoon, was Trafalgar Square where Lord Nelson's Monument stands, we saw the House of Commons, with that fine statue of Richard Coeur-de-Leone [sic]. We also saw Westminster Abbey, and London Bridge. About seven o'clock at night, all London was startled by a tremendous explosion, which lit up the skies, and everyone thought it was another Zeppelin raid.

12

of course London is in darkness, at night time, and that added to the confusion. We also saw a fire Brigade turn out, to what was supposed to be a fire, but which turned out to be a false alarm. We returned to the Y.M.C.A. and turned into bed soon after nine o'clock as we were dog tired.

Saturday Jan. 20th 1917

We rose soon after seven, and after, a hearty breakfast we set off to see some of the sights of London. Among the places we visited today were Madame Tussauds Waxworks, which is well worth seeing, some of the figures being so life like, that

13

many people make the mistake of going up, and speaking to them. We also visited, The Tower of London, and were greatly interested in the many historical things to be seen there, and also the dress worn by the Guardians of the Tower. We also went to see the London Art Gallery, but found that it was closed to the public, so we went and paid a visit to the Tait Art Gallery. We also went to the zoo, and museum after which, we returned to the Y.M.C.A. for tea. After tea, we stayed in, and had a quiet evening, retiring to bed early.

14

Sunday Jan. 21st 1917

Arose early, and after breakfast started out to visit some more places of interest, which we hadn't seen. We also had several rides on the Tube Railways, which are very comfortable, and will take you almost

anywhere, very quickly, and are very cheap to travel by. In the afternoon, we went out to Finchley, about nine miles out of London, and stopped and had tea there, with some friends we met in London, returning to London in the evening.

Monday Jan. 22nd 1917

Today being our last day in London, we spent most of it, in riding round, the city viewing
15

everything from the top of a bus, and it is one of the best ways, of seeing London. After tea we had a rest until it was time to set off for Waterloo Station, where we all met at nine o'clock. We left Waterloo Station on our return journey at twenty minutes to ten, arriving back at camp at three o'clock in the morning. Taking everything into consideration I can't say that I like London as the streets are narrow, and wind about, and the traffic is very thick, and at night time everything is in darkness, while the climate is absolutely rotten, there is a continuous fog hanging around while all

16

the time we were there, it was cold, and wet, and there was plenty of snow, about everywhere. But there is one thing I must mention, and that is the London Police, they are a fine body of men, very obliging, and can answer any question, you like to ask, and direct you to almost any place, in the whole of London that you like to go to, and they are very courteous, and obliging, to all strangers, who might happen to stop them, to enquire their way. Another great help to strangers are the boy scouts who are well trained and act as guides to anyone who might want their assistance.

17

Tuesday Jan. 23rd 1917

Woke up this morning suffering from a very bad cold, caused through travelling all night in the bitter cold and went on sick parade, and was ordered to bed by the doctor, with influenza, the weather today has been bitterly cold, and bed was the best place.

Wednesday Jan. 24th 1917

Today is cold, and frosty, went to see the doctor again today, and have been put on Light duties as my cold is still very bad.

Thursday Jan. 25th 1917

Today is similar to yesterday, the water taps, are all frozen, and also the water in the fire buckets inside the huts. I have been appointed duty orderly in No.4 hut for a few days to, give

18

me a chance to shake off my cold. It has got very cold again tonight, and everyone, is going to bed early.

Friday Jan. 26th 1917

Weather today is freezing, and there is ice laying everywhere, some of our chaps, have very bad colds, while others, have sore feet through wearing their overseas boots, which are very heavy.

Saturday Jan. 27th 1917

Today is similar to what it has been the last few days, and the intense cold is playing up with a lot of our chaps, myself included, who are not used to cold, and every day somebody is being sent to the hospital suffering from the cold.

19

Sunday Jan. 28th 1917

Today being Sunday, there is not much doing in camp, most of our chaps have gone into Shrewton, while others have taken a walk over to the Lark Hill camp. The weather is a little finer today but is still very cold.

Monday Jan. 29th 1917

The mail for Australia closes today at four o'clock, so I have been busy writing letters all day. There has been a slight fall of snow today, but it didn't last long.

Tuesday Jan. 30th 1917

Today is freezing again, and all the water taps, are frozen and there is ice laying everywhere. We received a mail from Australia today, and we were pleased to get letters from home once more.

20

Wednesday Jan. 31st 1917

Today is much the same as yesterday, and nothing has occurred [sic] to break the monotony. I am still hut orderly, but have no idea how much longer the job will last.

Thursday Feb. 1st 1917

Weather today is very cold. Everything is going along the same as usual. A small draft left here tonight to reinforce the 27 Batt A.I.F. Harold Chalmers, my cousin left with them.

Friday Feb. 2nd 1917

Weather today is a repetition of yesterday, and everyone is sick of the cold, and a very large number of our chaps are ill through the cold, as they are not used to this climate.

21

Saturday Feb. 3rd 1917

Today is fine, but the cold is still very severe, and there is snow laying everywhere. This afternoon being Saturday most of the chaps are doing their washing, while others have gone into Shrewton.

[**Note:** Letter is on lined beige paper, with YMCA and war insignia on each page. This is the paper most used by JLC.]

For God, For King & For Country

Y.M.C.A.

Y.M.C.A.

Y.M.C.A.

H.M.FORCES ON ACTIVE SERVICE

PATRON
Y.M.C.A. NATIONAL COUNCIL
H.M. THE KING

PATRON
MILITARY CAMP DEPT.
H.R.H. DUKE OF CONNAUGHT.

Feb. 4th 1917
Rollestone Camp
Salisbury Plain

Dear Mary

A few lines to let you know I am still alive and kicking. Well dear Friend, since I wrote to you last, we have had our four days leave to go to London. We had our leave a fortnight ago. We left Camp here at seven o'clock, on the Friday morning, and marched seven miles into Amesbury Station, where we had to catch the train for London. We left Amesbury at half past ten in the morning, and arrived at Waterloo Station London, at a quarter to two in the afternoon. After leaving the Station, we were all marched around to the Australian Military Headquarters, at Horseferry Road, where we were given a lecture on how to act, and where to go, and a lot more information, and then we were dismissed, with instructions to meet again at nine o'clock Wednesday night, at Waterloo Station to return to Amesbury. After being dismissed, several of us got together, and went around to the Y.M.C.A. Hut at Aldwych, on The Strand, where we made arrangements for our accommodation, and then set off to see London. You will no doubt be surprised to hear that I don't like London at all. It is a cold, wet, foggy place, the streets are very narrow, and wind all over the place, and at night time everything is in darkness, on account of air raids. The first night we were in London, we were walking down The Strand about eight o'clock at night when, all of a sudden, there was a terrible explosion in the distance, which lit up the skies for miles, and everyone said it was another Zeppelin raid, but we found out afterwards that a big munition factory had been blown up in East London, killing over a hundred men and girls, and severely injuring several hundred more. It was a terrible affair altogether.

3

Among the places I went to see was the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, House of Commons, The Tower Bridge, London Bridge, Trafalgar Square, Madame Tussaud's Waxworks, and museums, and many other places of interest but the time was too short to see everything properly. The trip is all over now, though, and we are hard at work training for the trenches, and I don't think it will be very long before we are in it now. To give you an idea how cold it is here every morning when we get up all the water taps are frozen, and there is ice laying everywhere, and it lays there all day without melting. Today it has been snowing all day, and there is about six inches of snow laying on everything, most of the boys are outside now, snowballing one another, and it is not bad fun either. Well Mary I don't think there is much more I have to say, as there is not

4

*much happens here. Remember me to your sister and Father, also to Mr and Mrs Billings, and tell them I am well except for a bit of [a] cold, so I will close now with kind regards to all
from your sincere Friend*

Jack Coventry

My address is, and this will always find me

No 6063

Private J.L.Coventry

17th Reinforcements

27th Battalion

7th Brigade A.I.F.

On active service abroad

Sunday Feb. 4th 1917

It started snowing about ten o'clock this morning, and kept on until about four o'clock, this afternoon, and now there is [sic] nearly six inches of snow laying on the ground, and most of us have been outside snowballing one another this afternoon, and it is a great thing to warm one up.

22

Monday Feb. 5th 1917

It has stopped snowing today but the snow, is still lying thick on the ground, and is likely to lay there for some time. It hasn't been quite so cold, since we had the snow.

Tuesday Feb. 6th 1917

Today it is bright sunshine outside, and looks very pretty shining on the snow. The next draft has been picked to reinforce the 27 Battalion, most of the new draft are Western Australians, and comprise the 16th Reinforcements of 27th.

Wednesday Feb. 7th 1917

Weather today is the same as yesterday, the draft left tonight for France to reinforce the 27th Battalion.

23

Thursday Feb. 8th 1917

Today is fine, but very cold and the snow is still laying thick on the ground. My cold has been a lot worse, today and have severe pains in left side.

Friday Feb. 9th 1917

Today is similar to yesterday and is very cold. Received a post card today from F.T. at Finchley my cold is still pretty bad, and don't seem to get any relief from the doctors medicine.

Saturday Feb. 10th 1917

Went on sick parade this morning, suffering from severe pains in the left side, caused from so much coughing, and have been ordered into "Fargo" Military hospital for treatment for Pleurisy. Arrived at "Fargo"

24

in the afternoon, and was put straight to bed, and put on milk diet, the pains got so bad at night, that I had to have poultices put on my side all night.

Sunday Feb. 11th 1917

Pains are a little bit easier today, but are still very bad when I cough, and I am still on milk diet, and in bed. The poultice was taken off my side this morning, and this afternoon, they painted my side with Iodine.

Monday Feb. 12th 1917

Have been a little better today, but got worse again at night, and had very little sleep.

25

Tuesday Feb. 13th 1917

Condition today is the same as yesterday, but had a very bad night, and no sleep at all.

Wednesday Feb. 14th 1917

Am a little easier today but have still got severe pains in the side, and am still on a milk diet.

Thursday Feb. 15th 1917

Had a pretty fair day today but am still in bed, and on a milk diet, but expect to be able to get out of bed soon.

Friday Feb. 16th 1917

Am a good bit better today got up for a couple of hours this afternoon, but soon got very tired, and went back to bed again at six o'clock.

26

Saturday Feb. 17th 1917

Am still very weak, but the pains have nearly left me now. Got up again for a couple of hours, this afternoon, several of my mates, were here to see me, so was able to have a chat and heard all the news from the camp.

Sunday Feb. 18th 1917

Up for a couple of hours again today, and am feeling a lot better, although I am still very weak. Several more of my mates were here today to see me.

Monday Feb. 19th 1917

Still improving, was up for four hours today, but the pains came on again at night, and I spent a very restless night.

27

Tuesday Feb. 20th 1917

Have been up all day today and am feeling a lot better, have started going to the dining hall today for meals.

Wednesday Feb. 21st 1917

Up all day again today, and am getting stronger, but still have slight pains in left side.

Thursday Feb. 22nd 1917

Up again today, and was outside for the first time, but couldn't stop out long on account of the cold damp air.

Friday Feb. 23rd 1917

Well on the road to recovery now, and am able to help wait on the other patients who are still in bed. Everyone of us received two packets of cigarettes today from the Australian red cross society

28

Saturday Feb. 24th 1917

The weather today is a little finer, and I was able to go out for a walk, today being visiting day, some of my mates were over to see me again. Have wrote [sic] several letters to Australia today.

Tuesday Feb. 25th 1917

Weather today is fine, but cold after a very wet night, and there is mud laying everywhere had two lady friends from London to see me this afternoon, and were [sic] very pleased to see them again. Expect to leave the hospital any day now as I can feel myself getting stronger every day. It has set in wet again tonight, and very cold too.

29

Monday Feb. 26th 1917

Several of us out of number twenty one ward, paraded before the colonel today to get our discharge from the hospital, and I have been put on four days light duties, when I return to camp. We will be returning to camp tomorrow, as we parade one day, and get discharged the next.

Tuesday Feb. 27th 1917

We paraded at two o'clock this afternoon before the medical officer, and were dismissed to return to camp. We returned and reported, at the Battalion orderly room, and were then sent along to our company orderly room, where we reported again, and were then

30

sent on to the head-quarters orderly room to report, as during our absence, we had been transferred to the headquarters company. After we had given our details there, we were told, we could go back to our own company again, and report, and we would be transferred back in the morning. After reporting back, we were issued with our kits, and blankets and sent along to number four hut, where we put our things, and then were paraded, to the camp medical officer for examination and were told to report again on sick parade in the morning.

31

Wednesday Feb. 28th 1917

Went on sick parade this morning, and told the doctor I was feeling pretty well, but that I was still very weak. So I have been put on light duties for today, and told to report again in the morning. I find that there has [sic] been a lot of alterations in the food since I have been in the hospital. The porridge in the mornings is cut out, and we get no milk in our tea now, and we get one slice of bread, for breakfast with our meat or bacon whichever it is. One slice of bread with our dinner, and two slices of bread, and margarine, and a little soup for tea, and tea, and biscuits for supper.

32

Thursday March 1st 1917

Today is very cold, I am still feeling weak after my illness, and went on sick parade, again this morning. After telling the doctor how I was, he placed me on light duties for three days, and told me to report to him again on Tuesday morning.

Friday March 2nd 1917

It is still very cold today, and there is a strong wind blowing which seems to cut right through one like a knife. I am on barrack duty today, and have been doing odd jobs in the quarter masters store, assisting to sort out sets of web equipment.

33

Saturday March 3rd 1917

I am still on barrack duty, and have been doing a few, odd jobs, about the huts, and C Companys lines, the weather is still very cold, and strong winds have been blowing all day.

Sunday March 4th 1917

Went up to see the doctor again this morning, and as my cold is not much better he has put me on light duties again and told me to see him again in the morning. Our long looked for letters from home came to light today, an Australian mail, being distributed to us this afternoon. I myself received seven letters, six being from

34

home, and one from Broken Hill. I have spent most of the afternoon, answering them, as the mail closes on the 7th.

Monday March 5th 1917

As my cold is no better I have been put on barrack duty again today. It is raining, and there is nothing but mud, and slush everywhere, and it is very cold but not quite so bad as the last few days have been.

Tuesday March 6th 1917

After a bitterly cold night we woke up to find everything frozen outside, and a bitterly cold wind blowing, I am still on barrack duty but am feeling a lot better today

35

Wednesday March 7th 1917

Woke up this morning to find that it had been snowing pretty heavily during the night, and there was snow, and ice everywhere. As it was too cold to go out on parade today, I was put on barrack duty again, but will be back in training again tomorrow. It has set in very cold tonight, and is raining very heavily, and you cant move for mud and slush outside.

Thursday March 8th 1917

Weather today is very cold after last nights rain, but the wind has dropped a good bit. Went on parade this morning, and have been detailed to go through my course of bombing instruction, We were marched out to the bombing school, and were given

36

a lecture on bombs, and the different explosives used in them, this morning; and this afternoon we were given practice at throwing dummy bombs for a while, and were then taken into the magazine, and were instructed in the handling, and charging of live bombs. The lectures were very interesting. We still have to go through our course of live bomb throwing, but will not be having that today, as there is not time. Tonight has set in very cold again, and it is starting to rain.

Friday March 9th 1917

It is snowing heavily today, and there is a strong wind blowing, which is driving the snow

37

in all directions. The weather is so bad, that we were not able to go outside to drill, so we were given our physical jerks in the different, recreation huts. At dinner time we had some more Australian mail handed out, I received two more letters from home, one containing a photo of my sisters, which I was very pleased to get. In the afternoon we had a kit inspection, and after that, a medical inspection of every man in camp was held. After that was over, we were all marched into the recreation hut, where our [O.C.? *I can't be sure*] had a talk with us on military work, and also about the work going on in France

38

in which of course we are all interested. Afterwards we were dismissed in time for tea. Tonight has set in very cold and it has started to snow again, and the wind is very strong, and cuts through one like a knife.

Saturday March 10th 1917

Today is very foggy, and misty, and it doesn't take long for one to get wet, outside. This being Saturday morning, there is the usual route march for every man in camp. We set off on the march at

about nine o'clock, and soon left the camp behind, There was a misty rain falling all the morning, and we could

39

not see very far in front of us on account of the fog. We passed right through Shrewton on our return to camp, arriving back at camp soon after twelve o'clock, and I was very tired, as it was my first march since coming out of the hospital, and the weather was all against us. The mud and slush was [sic] something awful, and we were splashed from head to foot with mud when we got back. After being dismissed, we all had to go to our huts, and remove, our boots, and socks ready to have, our feet inspected, to see whether the march had

40

affected any of us. This afternoon, we are all free, but as the weekend is so bad, very few of us ventured out, but spent the afternoon, and evening write [sic] letters home.

Sunday March 11th 1917

It has been raining all day today, and we found the huts was [sic] the best place. A few of our chaps went out today I myself wanted to go over to the Lark Hill camp to see some of the chaps I know there, but it was so wet and the mud and slush was so bad that I didn't venture out.

41

Monday March 12th

Weather today is very wet and cold. I have started on my musketry course today, on the elementary [sic] course, and we are receiving our instructions inside the huts, as the weather is too bad to go outside. We expect to be a fortnight going through the whole course.

Tuesday March 13th 1917

The weather is still very bad and don't [sic] seem likely to improve. We are still on musketry, and receiving our elementary [sic] course in the huts, but expect to be outside in the open tomorrow if the weather improves at all.

42

Weather is a little finer today we had an hours, physical jerks, out in the bull ring and then went on with our musketry which we were able to have out in the open today.

Thursday March 15th 1917

It is a little finer today after a very wet night, and we are out in the open again, we will finish our elementary [sic] course today, and will be firing on the miniature range tomorrow, it is raining again tonight, and is very cold.

Friday March 16th 1917

Weather is finer today. After an hours physical jerks, we returned, to the miniature range and

43

started our firing practices. The rifles we are using, are the same as the service rifles, except that they are fitted so as to take 22 long cartridges, we finished our shooting by tea time.

Saturday March 17th 1917

Today being Saturday there is the usual route march on, for everyone in camp. The weather today is fine, with beautiful sunshine, and it is a treat to be out, after what we have had to put up with all the week. We started off, on the march soon after nine o'clock, it is an ideal day for a march. We soon left the camp behind us, and at our first

44

halt for Smok,O. we were soon approached, by a number of people, who I think are gypsies, by their appearance, who were selling chocolates, and oranges, and they did a brisk business, among the lads while we were resting by the roadside. When we continued our march they followed us, keeping with us for several miles, and selling their sweets, at every opportunity. After passing through Shrewton, we turned towards camp again. We halted for another Smoke O. just outside of Shrewton, and while we were spelling by the road

45

side, a large number of soldiers from the Lark Hill camp passed by, going in the opposite direction. After they had passed, we set off again, and arrived back at camp, about twelve o'clock. When we were dismissed, we had to go to our huts, and remove our boots, and socks to have our feet inspected. After dinner my mate, and I took a walk over to the Lark Hill camp, as I wanted to find a cousin of mine and also some pals who are in camp there. I did not see my cousin as he was away at the officers school but saw some of the

46

lads that I knew. After spending the afternoon at Lark Hill we returned to Rolleston Camp in time for tea.

Sunday March 18th 1917

Weather today is just as fine as yesterday, and it is a treat, to be able to go about in comfort without overcoats on. After dinner several of us took a walk into Shrewton, and had a good time there, we paid a visit to the church there, and were very interested in studying the different memorial plates inside the church, and also the inscriptions. on some of the stones in the outside

47

walls of the church, which date back a couple of centuries or more, as also do the inscriptions on some of the tombstones in the church yard. We had afternoon tea in Shrewton, and then returned to camp, and spent the evening at the Y.M.C.A. Hut.

Monday March 19th 1917

Weather is very cold today, and there is plenty of frost about. We started our firing practices, on the big ranges today. I am in number two detail, and am firing on No1 Target. We were firing all the morning, and in the afternoon we took our turn marking, while the others did their shooting.

48

Tuesday March 20th 1917

We continued our shooting practices on the range today, but could only shoot for a short while on account of the rain, which was coming in showers at intervals throughout the day. The rest of the day was spent in lectures on the uses of the rifle and on trench warfare.

Wednesday March 21st 1917

We were only able to shoot for half a day today on account of a rather heavy fall of snow, but given fine weather we expect to finish our shooting by tomorrow night.

Thursday March 22nd 1917

Weather today is very contrary and is interfering which [sic] our shooting, which is

49

unfortunate, as we are going through our test shooting today. We were able to finish all except our snap shooting today and would have been able to finish altogether only for a snow storm which came up.

Friday March 23rd 1917

The weather is still very unsettled today, went out to the ranges, and fired five rounds each from the hundred yards range with the gas helmets [sic] on, and then each man fired five rounds at a disappearing target, which used to remain up for four seconds only. The usual medical inspection, was held this afternoon after which we were dismissed for the rest of the day.

50

Saturday March 24th 1917

Today is fairly fine but there is plenty of mud and slush. When we went on parade this morning [*I have typed this exactly as written – obviously quite a lot has been inadvertently left out*] that most of us had been picked out, and formed into an emergency battalion, and were warned to hold ourselves in readiness to be called out on very short notice, and sent to any part of the United Kingdom, and every man is to see that he has his full kit, ready, to march off at any moment should we be required. After we had been inspected, each man was issued with two hundred rounds of ammunition, and a service rifle, which we had to carry with us on

51

the route march this morning. We took a different route this morning, we left the camp by the usual road until we struck the road leading to Stonehenge, which we turned into following this road, along past the back of the Fargo hospital, and on towards Stonehenge, on our way we passed at different spots two tomb stones, which had been erected to mark the spots, where two airmen had met their deaths while flying over Salisbury Plains. Just before reaching Stonehenge we turned off, and headed towards Lark Hill, and when we reached the main road

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we turned again, and headed towards our own camp. We arrived back at camp again soon after twelve o'clock, and were dismissed in time for dinner. After dinner we were paraded again at two o'clock and after being inspected, we were dismissed again, and warned that no man was on any account to leave the camp, as we were likely to be called out at any moment.

Sunday March 25th 1917

We were all called out this morning at six o'clock, and went out on parade with full packs up, and ready to march off anywhere,

53

After having the roll called, and every man being allotted to his right place we were instructed how to put on our packs and also told what to put in them, and how to fall in we were dismissed for breakfast [sic]. After breakfast we were paraded again at half past nine with full packs, and after being

inspected, kept standing about all the morning we were told that no orders had come through yet, and so were dismissed again for dinner. We were paraded again this afternoon with full packs up, in the mud and slush, being dismissed again in time for tea.

54

Monday March 26th 1917

We are still in the emergency battalion, and waiting for orders to move out at any moment for an unknown destination. Every time we go on parade, we go out with full packs on prepared to march out without seeing the inside of our huts again. No orders have come through yet, and so after getting a lecture we were marched off to our huts. This afternoon we paraded again at half past one, and were taken out to the Bull ring where we put in the afternoon at bayonet fighting, bomb throwing, and extended order drill, until five o'clock.

55

Wednesday March 27th 1917

Went on parade this morning without our packs, and after the route march, we were all paraded, and the men for the next overseas draft were picked, about one hundred and twenty being picked from our company to reinforce the 27th Battalion in France, I and most of my mates are picked to go. In the afternoon we were paraded to the Battalion quarter masters store, to have a waterproof sheet, and long waterproof cape issued to us. Also those men who had not gone through their gas training were told to start tomorrow.

56

Wednesday March 28th 1917

Today is very cold, and there is plenty of snow about everywhere. After the usual morning route march, we were marched out to the gas school, where we were given a very interesting lecture on the different gases in use at the front and also the different effects they have on the human body. We were also instructed how to put on the Gas helmets [sic], how to disinfect them, and were given some practice in drilling marching and extended order drill, while wearing the gas helmet [sic], and also the box respirator, and the care of same.

57

Thursday March 29th 1917

Today is cold but fine, we are out at the gas school again today and are having another lecture on Gases, and also gas shells and the methods of using them. We also had some more practice at putting on the helmets [sic] in sudden gas alarms, and also extended order drill, and doubling for one hour at a stretch with the helmets [sic] on. This afternoon we finished our two days course of instruction, and tomorrow we will be taken over to the [I can't read the beginning of the name]---ington camp at Lark Hill to go through the gas chamber, tonight has set in very cold again, and it is snowing, rather heavily and is very unpleasant outside.

58

Friday March 30th 1917

Weather today is fine, but there is plenty of snow laying everywhere. We were marched over to --- Camp at Lark Hill this morning, and went through the gas chamber there, we went through in batches of ten at a time, each batch remaining in the gas chamber for about four or five minutes, with helmets [sic] securely fixed. While in there we felt no ill effects from the gas at all and were able to breath freely with helmet [sic] on, but when we came out, we had an idea then, how strong the gas was, as our numerals

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which were quite bright when we went into the chamber were nearly [*invisible?*] when we came out, after only a few minutes exposure to the gas. After we had all been through the chamber, we were marched back to Rolleston in time for our dinner. In the afternoon, we had the usual kit inspection, to find out if any of us, were short of anything, and those who were short, had, their things issued to them later on after kit inspection, we were paraded to the medical hut, for the weekly medical inspection after which we were dismissed.

60

Saturday March 31st 1917

Went on Parade this morning, and found that we had been picked out for the new emergency battalion, which was formed this morning, and after being, drafted into our right Platoons, and sections, we were marched down to the armoury, and each man had two hundred rounds of ammunition issued to him, which we had to carry in bandoliers, slung over our shoulders, after we had drawn our ammunition we were marched over to the miniature range, and issued with a service rifle each. We were then drawn up on the Battalion parade ground, in our right platoons, and

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were then inspected, and warned to hold ourselves in readiness to move off at any moment to an unknown destination should our services be required. After standing on the parade ground until, 12 o'clock noon, we were moved off and taken for a march along the road to Shrewton, and returned about one o'clock. We were then dismissed and warned that no man was on any account to leave camp and every man was to see that he had everything that he was likely to require, on active service. This afternoon was spent in washing our clothes so that we would have clean things to take with us.

62

Sunday April 1st 1917

There was no church parade for us this morning, on account of being on the emergency battalion. The emergency battalion fell in on the parade ground at ten A.M. and were inspected, and the muster roll was called, we were dismissed again a little before twelve o'clock. We had this afternoon free, but were not allowed to leave our lines. Went up to the Y.M.C.A. to the Cheerio Tea, and spent a very enjoyable hour there, While we were there I joined the Fellowship movement whose object is social meetings, among the soldiers, and friendly intercourse, and help one to the other. The rest of the evening was spent in writing letters

63

Monday April 2nd 1917

Went on parade as usual this morning in marching order without packs, and after the usual hours route march, we were all marched on to the bull ring grounds, the draft for overseas was finally picked out then and we were detached from the others, and marched off a little way, the roll was then called, and every man who was short of any equipment or hadn't finished his training had to say so. We were then given a course of instructions in extended order drill and also in bomb throwing, until 12 o'clock, when we were formed up and marched back to dinner.

64

After dinner, we were given a lecture on France, and trench warfare, and then those who were short of equipment, were taken down to the Battalion Quarter Masters store to get whatever they wanted.

Tuesday April 3rd 1917

This morning those of us who had not thrown a live bomb, were taken out to the bombing grounds to go through our course. We had about a couple of miles to go, and in some places the snow, was up to our knees in depth. After going through our course we returned to camp in time for dinner. Most of the afternoon was spent in getting everything in order ready to move

65

off as soon as we are notified. We have just been told that we will be moving out tomorrow night for certain.

Wednesday April 4th 1917

Got up at the usual time this morning, and after parade we were dismissed to our huts, to get the blankets and things that we will not be taking with us; put together and handed into the Q. M. Stores. After that was done, we had a medical inspection, and lecture, and the afternoon was spent quietly in our huts, we had tea at the usual time, and paraded on the Battalion parade ground at half past six, fully equipped, ready to move off. After receiving a farewell speech from the Commandant

66

we moved off on our march to Amesbury at 7.15. We arrived at Amesbury station at about nine o'clock, where we were given a hot drink of tea, and some cake, and entrained for Folkestone at 9.35. We arrived at Shornecliffe [at] 4 A.M. in the morning, and marched around to the place, where we were billeted, arriving at our billets at 4.30.

Thursday April 5th 1917

Arrived at our billets at Folkestone at half past four this morning, and we all turned in for a couple of hours sleep. At seven o'clock we were given a good breakfast and at nine o'clock we paraded ready to move off down to the wharf, to embark, On

67

our march from the billets to the wharf we passed through Folkestone, which is a very pretty place, and has some beautiful buildings in it, and we were given a hearty send off by the people we passed on our way. After very little delay we got on board the transport, and left the wharf at ten o'clock to cross the channel, we did the trip over in an hour and a half, there were several other transports with us, and we were escorted by three torpedo boats, we passed a number of transports, and hospital ships which were returning, in fact the channel presented a very busy appearance, as it was full of shipping. We

68

arrived, at Boulogne, in France at half past eleven, we disembarked and march[ed] off to a big rest camp, on (one blanket hill), where the big Marconi Wireless station is situated. After dinner we rested for the rest of the day, and night.

Friday April 6th 1917

At nine o'clock this morning we lined up and moved off on our return journey to catch the train for "Etaples", on our march to the station, we passed through the greater part of the slums of Boulogne, and all the French kiddies, would run alongside of us, asking us for Bully beef, badges, pennies, and all sorts of things they wanted for

69

souvenirs [sic]. At the station we were all put on board the trains, which consisted of one engine, and about thirty freight cars. We pulled out from Boulogne at ten minutes to twelve midday, on our journey to Etaples, the country we passed through, was very swampy in places, and we passed through several towns, which all seemed to be full of soldiers, and we saw several Australians in some of the towns. We arrived at Etaples at about half past two in the afternoon, and we were marched up to one portion of the camp, where we were issued with a rifle, bayonet, pull through, and rifle sling. We were then marched

70

off, up a long winding hill to the Australian base camp, where, we were inspected, and then detailed off to our tents. It was here that I met several old pals, and find that they are also in the 27th Battalion. We are resting here tonight but expect to move off again tomorrow.

Saturday April 7th 1917

Rose fairly early today, and after breakfast, we were paraded and inspected, and were then dismissed. After dinner we [were?] issued with 120 rounds of ammunition, 1 steel helmet [sic], 1 blanket. 1 pair sheep skin gloves. 1 rifle cover, 1 tin oil, 1 tin dubbin, 1 cake soap, later on my mate and I took a walk around the camp, but were not

71

allowed to leave the camp. There is not much more to record today except that we will be leaving here again tomorrow.

Sunday April 8th 1917

Rose early this morning, and lined up, and moved off to the station, and entrained at half past nine, for "Albert", our next place of call. On our way we passed through several villages, that had been destroyed by the Germans, and also a lot of country which was nothing but blown up trenches. We reached Albert Station at half past two in the afternoon and were then marched up to the "Albert" rest camp for Australians. We did nothing for the rest of the day, so after we had been fixed up with our quarters, several

72

of us took a walk into the town to have a look around. The town is in a terrible state of ruin, owing to the heavy bombardment, and in the whole of the place there is hardly a building which is not in ruins. A very prominent ruin, is the cathedral, which originally was a very fine building but is now, a mass of ruins. On the top of the steeple, which is full of shell holes, is a very fine statue of the virgin Mary which is hanging right over from the top head downwards, and the wonder of all is that it does not fall in the street, as it is hard to understand how it hangs there at all.

73

There is also a big motor works there, with a great number of motors in it, but all are hopelessly ruined, there are a few civilians in the town now, and a few of them have opened up business again, in the ruined shops. In the afternoon we also [saw?] a fight in the air between two of the enemy [*I can't read the word – it looks like taube*] machines and several of ours, and one of the enemy machines was brought down. After a very interesting afternoon we returned to camp in time for tea, and were told that we would be moving up to join the battalion tomorrow. It set in very wet and cold in the evening, and we were all glad to turn into bed early to get a good rest.

74

Monday April 9th 1917

Weather is showery today, we have all been issued with 48 hours rations to carry with us, we have to march today to join up the battalion. After dinner we all had instructions, in the use of the box respirator, and then went through the gas chamber with the respirator. We all lined up, and moved off at half past two in the afternoon, on the march to join up the battalion. On our way we passed through part of the battle area on the Somme, and passed several cemeteries, where hundreds of our soldiers are buried, and also several ruined villages. And every little distance, we would pass the lonely looking graves, of soldiers who were

75

buried where they had fallen, and the whole country is one mass of blown up trenches, shell holes, and big dug outs, while there are hundreds of dud shells of all sizes laying around everywhere. We arrived at Scotts Redoubt, and joined up our battalion in time for tea. On our arrival we were given a hearty welcome from the boys of the 27th, who were very pleased to see us. Have met several old school mates in the battalion and spent a very interesting evening listening to the tales of the trenches, and the different stunts our boys have been through. After being issued with our blankets, we all turned into bed early, as we were tired after our march.

76

Tuesday April 10th 1917

Arose early this morning and after a good breakfast, we were all paraded and inspected, and were then dismissed until after dinner when we were taken over to the ranges, and put through a firing test. On our way back to camp we were taken over, and shown an enormous mine crater, which was blown up under the German lines, and was the beginning of the British offensive last year. The crater is of tremendous size and very deep, and the officer told us that it caused enormous losses to the Germans and one can quite believe it after once seeing the crater. On our return to camp, our duties were finished for the day.

77

Wednesday April 11th 1917

This morning we were taken out to the football grounds where we were put through different kinds of drill to see how we shaped and the test must have been satisfactory, as we were taken back in time for dinner, and were dismissed for the rest of the [day?], and we spent the afternoon, in writing letters. And having a good rest in our huts, as we are expecting to leave, at any time now for the front line. We have all been instructed what to carry with us when we leave for the front. We are getting pretty good rations here, and if we get as good when we move up to the front, we wont have any cause to complain.

78

Thursday April 12th 1917

Today has been a fairly easy day, we have been resting nearly all day as we will be leaving for Bapume tomorrow, and as we have a long march with full packs up, we need all the rest we can get today. We received an Australian mail today, and were pleased to get our letters before leaving here. Nothing else has occurred [sic] today, and we all turned into bed early for a good nights rest.

Friday April 13th 1917

Left Scotts Redoubt this morning on our march to Bapume. As we have a long way to march with full packs up, we are carrying our midday rations with us.

79

On our march, we passed through the vast Pozieres battlefields, and as far as one can see it is nothing but, one mass of shell holes and blown up trenches, and where Pozieres was, there is not a brick or stone left, and at several points we came across a few blackened stumps, which used to be large forests of trees. And nearly every shell hole, is some poor soldiers grave, marked only by a little wooden cross made out of pieces of box and in some cases you will see graves, with a cross laying on them, composed of old shells, and others again have just got the soldiers rifle stuck in the ground bayonet first at his head. At 12.30 P.M. we

80

halted by the roadside for our midday meal, after an hours spell we resumed our march, and passed through Bapume about three o'clock in the afternoon. Bapume is a very large town, but is in the same state of ruin, as all the other French towns we have seen. Bapume is the scene of some of the heaviest fighting our boys have had to go through, and one can quite believe it, when one looks at some of the German trenches, dug outs, and vast barb wire entanglements. We passed right through Bapume, up past the cemetery, to our camp; outside the town altogether. Before I close today, I must mention the cemetery, as it is different to

81

any I have ever seen before. Every grave has a headstone, and a large number of them, are all metal, with beautifully coloured artificial flowers, which are all metal, while a great number of others have buildings on top of them with beautiful stained glass windows in them, but sad to relate a lot of them have been ruthlessly mutilated by the Germans, and part of the cemetery was taken by the Germans, who buried their own dead in it. We finally arrived at our camp, were allotted to our tents, drew our rations, and were fixed up by five o'clock. After tea we all retired to bed early, as we were all tired after our long march.

82

Saturday April 14th 1917

There is nothing much doing today as we are all resting, after our march but expect to move forward to the trenches at any time now, The weather is wet and it is difficult to move about on account of the mud, and slush, and so the majority of us remained in our tents all day, and retired to bed early.

Sunday April 15th 1917

Today is showery, and the mud is something awful, we are all getting as much rest as we can today, as we are moving up to the front tonight, on barb wire laying fatigue, and as we have a long way to go, and have to be back again in the morning

83

we are taking all the rest we can get. We set off from camp, at about five o'clock in the afternoon, and marched out about two miles, when we arrived at a spot where a battery of artillery were stationed. We halted here for about an hour as we were too early for the job we had on hand. While we were here the battery opened up fire, and, this being our first experience, of heavy guns in action we were much struck by the tremendous flash and report, and also, the concussion, when fired. After our spell we moved forward once more, and passed through two ruined villages, eventually arriving at "Neworie!" [*can't quite read the writing of this word*]. It was here that we were told off into parties, some to unload

84

the barb wire, and iron pegs, and screws, while other parties, carried them forward, to the spot where the engineers, were hard at work putting up the barb wire defences in front of our lines facing the Germans. After all the timbers had been unloaded all hands set to work to carry the stuff up to the line, as it was necessary to get the job done before daylight. It was very unpleasant work, carrying as we had a long way to go, and the track was one mass of shell holes full of sticky mud into which someone, was constantly slipping, and would need assistance to pull himself out again. To make things worse it was a dark night, lit up only, by the flares, from the German trenches, and every time

85

a flare went up we would have to stand still, so as not to let the Germans see what we were at. This was the first occasion, on which I have seen any dead Germans, there being several laying dead [sic] along the track we were carrying the wire, and my first experience was when I trod on one of them, laying right in the track, and which I did not see on account of the darkness. After several trips up with wire, we got the job finished, and all got, back safely, to the starting point, where we all had a spell, and then set off on our return journey, and were half way back to Bapume before daylight. We arrived back at camp in time for breakfast, dog tired, and hungry, and after a good feed we all turned into bed and slept all day.

86

Monday April 16th 1917

We are all stiff, and sore, today after our long march, and all night wire carrying, we have done nothing all day today except rest, and all turned into bed early tonight, there is only one thing to irritate us, here and that is there is a large German gun away in the distance somewhere, which amuses itself by dropping large shells around us at intervals, and which our people don't seem to be able to locate, but I am pleased to say they are not doing much harm, and even if they were, we are all too tired to take much notice of a few shells bursting near us.

Tuesday April 17th 1917

Today is a little finer than yesterday, but there is plenty of mud

87

about. We are still resting, and have no duties to do today, several of us took a walk into Bapume, this afternoon, and took a look around, but there is nothing much to see as everything is in ruins, so after buying a few things at the canteen, we returned to camp again.

Wednesday April 18th 1917

After breakfast, today, we were told off as a fatigue party, and marched off to the railway station, where [we] were engaged in unloading timber, and iron for huts, while we were there several shells from a German long distance gun burst near us but nobody was hurt, one shell in particular, burst very close, to a large railway engine standing in the yard, but except for throwing up a lot of earth it did no harm. We finished the job, and returned to camp about four o'clock, and were finished for the day.

Thursday April 19th 1917

Today we are on road fatigue cleaning up the roads in a little village just outside our camp, about half past two in the afternoon, we were all formed up and taken back to camp and were then told to get everything packed up ready to move forward to the front line tonight. We got everything fixed up, and started away from camp about seven o'clock at night, I have been drafted into the bombers section and

we had to carry a box of bombs, to each two men. We arrived, at the trenches, and took up our positions, about two o'clock in the morning, on our arrival

89

a number of us were told off for outpost duties, the bombers section to which I belong told off to no 3 outpost. We took up our post at half past two, there being seven of us altogether, this being our first time under fire, we felt a bit strange, but soon settled down to it, and it wasn't long before [we?] got used to the scream, and burst of the shells and the flares sent up by the Germans would light up the country for miles and just about made it impossible for anyone to approach us without being seen.

Friday April 20th 1917

Things are quiet today, and there is not much doing except for a few shells bursting around us, but none of them are [sic] very close. We take it in turns to keep watch, we do one hour on, and two off, and except for the ones on

90

watch, all the others keep down out of sight, so as not to give our position away, to any of the enemy aeroplanes which are flying overhead. In the evening our rations were brought out to us by a fatigue party.

Saturday April 21st 1917

Today is similar to yesterday, there are still a few shells bursting around us but we take no notice of them as they are not doing us any harm. This evening, we have been relieved from our post, and we returned to our lines. We are having a fairly easy time in the front line, except that we all have to take our turn on the firing step of the trench on watch, especially at night time, and no man is allowed to take his equipment off, or sleep at night time.

91

Sunday April 22nd 1917

After being on the alert all night in case of an attack by the Germans, we all turned into bed after breakfast, and slept all day. We all have little dug-outs, in the side of the sunken road we are in, and in the daytime, every man except those on duty have [sic] to keep down under cover, so as not to be seen by any German aeroplanes flying overhead. One thing that is strictly forbidden, is to light a fire in the trenches, as the smoke can be observed by the Germans, a long way off. I was agreeably surprised at the quality and quantity of the rations issued to us in the firing [line?], and also the variety as we have ham, bacon, cheese, cold meat, jam, margarine, dried fruit, oranges, bread, bully beef, sardines, cigarettes, matches, tobacco, and cocoa, and milk.

92

Monday April 23rd 1917

Things were fairly quiet again during the night, except for the usual issue of shells from the German batteries which don't do much harm. After breakfast, we turned into bed again and slept nearly all day in spite of the shells bursting overhead. Tonight we are on outpost duty again, and moved out, and took up our old position, on No 3 outpost at ten o'clock at night taking over 24 hours rations with us.

Tuesday April 24th 1917

Today is rather lively the Germans are sending over a lot of shells some of which are bursting a bit too close to be comfortable, but I am pleased to say that none of us have [sic] been hit although, several flying pieces of shell have landed in

93

our trench, and there is also a fair amount of sniping going on, as well as a machine gun, which opens fire across our post at intervals, and it is not safe to show oneself above the parapet of the trench. In the evenings we see plenty of our own men, as there is [sic] always fatigue parties, patrols, and scouts moving out past our post, and they all have to be challenged [sic].

Wednesday April 25th 1917

After a rather lively night things have quietened down a lot, this morning although, the Germans, are still sending a lot of shells over, some of which are bursting that close that they are throwing dirt over us. We are getting relieved again tonight, and returning to the sunken road which is our front line of trenches.

94

The Germans are sending over a large number of light explosive shells today some of which are bursting too close to be pleasant, and sending showers of dirt over us, and we have to keep under cover all day. Tonight a party of us went out on patrol to watch the German lines, we climbed through the German barbed wire, and crept up some distance inside to a point, from which we could observe the German lines, after being there some time we returned safely to our own lines, and made our report to head quarters.

Friday April 27th 1917

There have been several german airoplanes [sic], flying over our positions today, and our machines [sic] guns have been busy keeping them from

95

coming too close. This afternoon my mate, and I, had a very unpleasant experience, as a high explosive shell burst in our dug-out while we were laying down inside, and buried the two of us, my mate had his overcoat laying loose alongside of him, and it was riddled with holes, and everyone said we were two very lucky chaps to be alive, as neither of us got a scratch, while two of our mates who were some distance away got wounded. We just manage [sic] to scramble out of the mess, ourselves, and then had to set to work with shovels to dig our equipment out as it was all buried even our hats, and rations. It gaves [sic] us a bit of a shock, but we soon recovered.

96

About nine oclock at night we went out, and took over number three outpost again.

Saturday April 28th 1917

We had a pretty heavy bombardment from the german lines, which he kept up all night, but things slackened off after daylight, although he has been sending a lot of shells over all day, some of which have been bursting very close to our post, and sending showers of dirt into our trench, and Fritz, has also been sniping, with rifle, and machine gun fire, and it hasn't been safe to show ourselves over the parapet so, we have had to keep under cover all day. We were relieved from our post again tonight, and moved back, to the front line,

97

from which our company was relieved by C. Company, and our company moved back into the second line, known as the supports, where we took up our positions, and quickly settled down in our new position.

Sunday April 29th 1917

Today we have been put through a heavy bombardment by the germans, and we seem to get a lot more shells around us back here in supports, than what we did up in the front line and we have to be careful not to show ourselves in the daytime, on account of so many german airoplanes [sic] being about, so we sleep in the day time in our little dug outs which are just big enough for us to crawl into. Tonight we had our first experience of gas as Fritz sent over a number of gas shells, but no one was affected by it.

98

Monday April 30th 1917

Fritz gave us another bombardment of high explosives shells today, and also a fair percentage of gas shells, but none of us were [sic] affected, as we were well prepared, but had to wear our box respirators for some time till the gas cleared away. The high explosive shells did some damage to our trench, but no one was seriously hurt. Towards evening our batteries opened fire on the german trenches, and did a lot of damage to them.

Tuesday May 1st 1917

Things are quiet today, after the continual roar of the guns last night and we are glad of it, as the roar and flash of guns, of all sizes, and the bursting of the shells, which came our way from the german lines, which lasted all night, was

99

a pretty severe strain on us chaps who have never been under fire before. Tonight, our platoon are [sic] on fatigue carrying up rations to the front line and it was rather exciting as we had a good box to carry them, and Fritz was shelling the track we had to pass along, but we delivered the rations, and all got back safely.

Wednesday May 2nd 1917

Things have been fairly quiet today, and we have been resting quietly all day tonight we are carrying rations again to the sunken road in front of our position, and Fritz gave us a pretty warm time while we were out, but we all managed to get back safely, the part of our trench up near the road has been battered about by shell fire, and we had to shift the platoon which was holding that part

100

Thursday May 3rd 1917

Things were very lively again all night and we had more than our fair share of shells, but they have been farely [sic] quiet all day, we are all detailed, as a fatigue party, to go out putting up barb wire defences in front of our lines. Tonight, we left our position and moved forward to the front line, from where we had to carry the wire, and posts and screws, to put it up with. The job we have on is very dangerous as there is a bright moon shining, but everything is so well organised that there is no confusion; as we carry the wire and posts out, the engineers are putting it into place, and there were

many narrow escapes, as Fritz had his flares going all the time, and he was sniping from several different points, and, it meant that we

101

had to be constantly on the alert, and several times had to drop into shell holes, to dodge his fire, but in spite of the shell fires [sic], the job went along quickly, and quietly, and by two o'clock in the morning we had finished the job, without any casualties having laid about eleven hundred yards of barb wire defences. After everyone had got together, we moved back to our old position in supports, and had a good hour to spare before daylight broke.

Friday May 4th 1917

We have been resting all day, after our barb wire fatigue, but we have to stand all night tonight, as our side are putting up a heavy barrage of shells on the Germans' lines previous to a hop over by our boys in the morning.

102

After a very heavy bombardment which lasted all night, the Australians hopped the bags over the top, this morning and attacked the Hindenburg line, we ourselves had to stand by in reserves but we were not wanted, so did not move forward. The barrage put up by our artillery was something intense it was one continual flash, and roar all night, and the concussion, shook the whole country for scores of miles. The guns were firing from several miles back behind our position, but the concussion was so strong that we had to deepen our trench, and all lay in the bottom of it for safety, all told there were 1700 of our guns playing along a few miles frontage of the Hindenburg line and the wonder is that it was

103

possible for any human being to live through it, our boys after a very severe fight gained their objective at Bullecourt, and held it too in spite of numerous counter attacks by the Germans.

Sunday May 6th 1917

The fighting is still severe around Bullecourt but our boys are holding on in spite of all the Germans are doing to shift [them?], the Germans have done a thing today that we shant [sic] forget in a hurry that is they have sent over gas among our wounded who are laying out in no man's land, and they are shelling the stretcher bearers, causing heavy casualties among that brave body of men. We are on ration fatigue again tonight carrying up to C. Company in the sunken road in front of us but we all got through safely.

104

Monday May 7th 1917

Another heavy bombardment was sent over into the German lines in the early hours of this morning and helped our boys to strengthen their position. We have had several big shells land in our position today causing several casualties among our chaps but on the whole things have been fairly quiet.

Tuesday May 8th 1917

We gave the Germans another bombardment during the night, and they are doing the same to us today, but without doing much harm, tonight we are on ration fatigue again, and have to carry right up into the fire zone, and we had a hot time, as we had over a mile, and half to go, and were under heavy shell fire all the way, and it is marvellous that we never got cut up but we all got through safely.

DIARY 3 is the same dimensions, same sort of black cover, but twice the thickness

1

Wednesday May 9th 1917

Relieved from supports early this morning, and came back to a position in a sunken road the other side of "Nuriel" [or it could be Newriell] where we rested all day, and left after dark to return to Bapume. After a long march we arrived at Bapume at day break in the morning, and after a drink of tea, which we badly needed we turned in for a sleep, with all our clothes on, only removing our boots, as we were too knocked up to bother about how we slept, after our long tramp, over broken ground, covered in shell holes, full of mud, and slush, and the roads were nearly as bad.

2

Thursday May 10th 1917

After a few hours rest we all turned out at ten o'clock this morning, and had our packs, and two blankets issued to us. Then we had to fix our full packs to our equipment and line up in full marching order, ready to move off to the railway station, just the other side of "Bapaume", where we were to catch a train, which is to take us part of the way back to our rest camp at "Scots" Redoubt". On arrival at the point, where we were to catch the train, we found that we had some time to wait, so we all removed our equipment, and sat down, and made ourselves

3

comfortable, and had dinner while we were waiting; About two o'clock our train which is known as the "Anzac light Railway", came along, and we all got on board and off we went. During our ride in the

train, we passed through, where some of the heaviest fighting in the Pozierres region took place, and one wonders after seeing the place, how it was possible for any man to come out of it alive, as it is one mass of shell holes, and blown up trenches, and there is not a square foot of ground, that has not been blown up by shell fire. At another spot there is the remains of a large saw mill, alongside

4

of what was once a large forest, but which is now, a blown up piece of country, with only a few blackened tree stumps and smashed machinery. This spot has evidently been an artillery stronghold as there is [sic] the remains of several big guns here. In fact right along the track from Bapaume to the place where we left the train, it is nothing but blown up trenches, and dug outs, and we passed several cemeteries, where our dead are buried, each grave having a neat little cross on it. On arrival at "Bezentine" we left the train, and set off to march the rest of the way, about 3 miles to our camp and arrived in time for tea.

5

We paraded at ten o'clock this morning in full marching order for kit inspection, but after waiting around for some time we were dismissed again, and were free for the rest of the day, and the majority of us took the opportunity to have a general clean up, and try and get some of the mud from [the] trenches off our clothes, mend them, and get our hair cut, ready for general inspection tomorrow. An Australian mail came in today, and was handed out, and we were all pleased to get some letters from home.

6

Saturday May 12th [*at this point JLC stops putting in the year*]

We paraded at ten o'clock this morning, and were inspected by the C. O. and then taken out on the green, and given a lecture on the Mills Bomb. This afternoon we were free, and some spent the afternoon playing football, while the rest of us took the opportunity to write a few letters home. Another mail came in today, and was distributed including those I got yesterday this makes nine letters I have received in the last two days.

7

Sunday May 13th

We had church parade, at ten o'clock this morning, after which we were dismissed for the rest of the day. This afternoon I wrote some more letters, and also received four more letters from home. The Australian mail that came in was so large, that it takes some time, to sort it all, and we are getting our letters a few at a time, as soon as they have a batch sorted they hand them out to us.

8

Monday May 14th

Today we paraded as usual at ten o'clock, and did physical drill until dinner time in the afternoon, we were practicing [sic] bomb throwing. We expect to move further back, from this area, any day now, for a spell, as this is not very suitable, on account of the broken nature of the country and the large number of dead, who are buried round here, as at one time this was the scene of very heavy fighting, and as the weather is getting warm, the smell from the blown in trenches and dug outs, is not very pleasant.

9

Tuesday May 15th

We paraded again at ten o'clock this morning, and did physical drill until dinner time. This afternoon we were on bomb throwing again till four o'clock. It has started raining again today, and set in steady by tea time, and looks as if we are in for a few days of it, which is very disappointing as it looked as if we were going to get some fine weather for a while.

10

Wednesday May 16th

We had kit inspection this morning, and every man had to hand in his winter clothing, as the weather is getting pretty warm now. The articles handed in were Sheep skin jacket, Cardigan jacket, two pairs of Gloves, waterproof cape, all changes of underclothing, which will make our load a lot lighter to carry when on the march, we also handed in one blanket; after the kit inspection was over, we all went around to the armourer sergeant to have our bayonets sharpened on the grinding stone. This afternoon was

11

a general holiday for all hands, and there is a football match on between our battalion the 27th and a team from the 28th Batt. Which was won by our boys. It has started to rain again tonight, and looks like setting in.

Thursday May 17th

Today we are on fatigue, and we set off at eight o'clock this morning for "Montorban Quarries" about four miles from our camp where the Royal Engineers dump is, to load up a train with timber, iron et cetera. It is a miserable wet morning with a drizzling rain, and the roads are in an awful state

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with mud, and slush. On our arrival, we found that we had about thirty large trucks to load, and we had to push them up about five hundred yards to the dump, and then we set to work to load them, and had made good headway by dinner time. After an hour for dinner we set to work again, and had the job finished by half past three, when we set off on our return to camp, and arrived back in time for tea. After tea we turned into bed early, as we were all tired, after our hard day's work.

13

Friday May 18th

We are moving back today, and all paraded at half past nine this morning in full marching order, and moved off at ten o'clock; on our way we passed through the town of "Albert" and several French villages, which looked very pretty at this time of the year, as all the trees are green, and the few fruit trees in the gardens we passed, were out in full blossom. The whole country is green now and there are some very pretty spots in some of the villages we passed through. We did about a nine mile march altogether with ten minutes spell

14

every hour, and arrived at our new camp, at a little village called "**Senlis**" [*I can't read it clearly so not sure if this is the spelling*], at three o'clock in the afternoon. Some of our chaps are billeted in the village, but our company are camped in huts a few yards outside the village, and in the evening, we went for a walk through the village, it is rather a pretty little place and there are a few civilians in it, but they are all elderly women, and young children, and a few old men all the others are away fighting the Germans.

15

Saturday May 19th

We paraded this morning for kit inspection after which we were dismissed for the rest of the day, and we went into the village again, and had a good look around. There are several canteens in the village and every cottage seems to have something for sale, and they charge fairly stiff prices for some of their things. A thing that strikes us Australians very forcibly is the way the farm houses are built. The farm itself is the same as any other French farm, it consists of a hollow square of buildings comprising dwelling house, barns, cowshed, pig-, styes [sic] and stables with a commodious

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manure heap occupying the whole yard, except for a narrow strip around the edge; In the middle of the happy hunting ground, of numerous roosters, hens, and an occasional pig, also a very stagnant pit full of green slimy water drained from the stables, pig styes, [sic] and anywhere else, where slops may have accumulated. You will also find several wells, which are in all sorts of unexpected places, such as in a kitchen or a stable, under a verandah or in any odd corner, where you wouldn't expect to find one.

This afternoon we were on fatigue building a mess hut, and canteen for the sergeants.

17

Sunday May 20th

We were paraded at ten this morning, and taken down to the village, and were given a bath, after which we were taken around to the laundry and each man was given a clean change of underclothing. All the work in the laundry is done by German prisoners and there is one thing they can do and that is wash clothes. We then returned to camp, and were dismissed in time for dinner. There is no parade this afternoon. So I have spent the afternoon writing letters. After tea it has started raining again, and looks like a wet night.

18

Monday May 21st

It is raining this morning so there was no parade for us, but it cleared away by dinner time, and we paraded at the usual time this afternoon. There is a fair amount of farming going on around "Senlis", and I noticed that here, as well as the other parts of France that I have seen, that the French people, still use the old single furrow plow [sic], but it is a different kind of implement to those that are in use in England, as they are a kind of double plow [sic], with one mould board in the air, while the

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other one is in the soil, and every time they come to the end of the row, the whole plow [sic] reverses, when they turn round, and the mould board that was in the air goes into the soil, and the other one comes up.

Tuesday May 22nd

Weather is finer today. We have been drilling most of the day, and in the evening took a walk up to the Y.M.C.A. Hut in the village to buy a few things, and also to write a few letters, and spent the evening there.

20

Wednesday May 23rd

We paraded this morning as usual, and were sent up to headquarters on fatigue filling bags with straw for bayonet fighting, and in the afternoon, we went out, and assisted the engineers to put them up in position.

Thursday May 24th

We paraded as usual this morning, but this afternoon is a half holiday for everyone, as the battalion sports are being held, and everyone turned out to see the different events, after an enjoyable afternoon, all returned to camp in good spirits in time for tea.

21

Friday May 25th

This morning we were all marched up to the miniature rifle ranges, to go through some shooting practices, and returned to camp in time for dinner. I was taken ill rather suddenly at dinner, and had to go up and see the doctor, who said I had trench fever and put me strait [sic] to bed with a high temperature of 102.2. Towards evening I got worse and spent a very restless night, having a splitting headache, and severe pains in back and legs.

22

Saturday May 26th

This morning when the doctor came around to see me, he ordered me strait [sic] away to the hospital, and I was taken away at ten o'clock by motor ambulance, down to number fifty six, casualty clearing station, where I was put strait [sic] away to bed with a high temperature, and was put on [a] milk diet, with out any other food at all. In the afternoon I got very much worse, and spent a very bad night, not being able to sleep at all on account of the severe pains in the limbs and head.

23

Sunday May 27th

Was a little easier this morning but still a very bad head, and am not able to take any nourishment. In the afternoon my temperature rose again and I had another bad night.

Monday May 28th

I am a little easier today, and am able to eat a little food. Several other chaps from our battalion, are also in this hospital suffering from trench fever, and are in the same ward as myself. This afternoon I became worse again, and passed another very bad night.

24

Tuesday May 29th

This morning when the doctor came around he gave orders, for me to be shifted to another ward, where I should be able to get more attention, and more comfort, and after getting shifted, I found that I was able to get more rest and take a little food.

Wednesday May 30th

After a good nights rest I feel a lot easier this morning but my temperature is still very high. The heat here is a little trying the last few days, and that is against us. I got a little worse this afternoon, but was able to sleep a little during the night.

25

Thursady May 31st

I am a little better today, and the pains, are going away gradually, but come on again at night time have been getting a little more food to eat, but have very little appetite.

Friday June 1st

Much about the same today, still have a high temperature, and get severe pains in the legs, and body at night time, and am not able to sleep too well.

Saturday June 2nd

Condition is about the same today. The weather is cooler and I was able to sleep a little better.

26

Sunday June 3rd

Was able to sit up in bed for a while today but was not allowed to get out of bed, am able to sleep a little better now.

Monday June 4th

This morning the doctor marked me for evacuation, down to one of the stationary hospitals at "Rouen", and we were taken by motor ambulance, to the rail head, and put on board a hospital train at about five

oclock, in the evening and arrived at "Rouen" station in the early hours of the morning. We were taken out of the train here, on stretchers and put into motor ambulances

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and taken on about a quarter of an hours run through "Rouen" to No 11 Stationary hospital (Scottish Branch) where we were soon put to bed and made comfortable.

Tuesday June 5th

We have all been made very comfortable here, and have been treated very kindly by everyone here; when the doctor came around, and examined us, he put me on [a] milk diet, and special medicine to reduce the fever, and after the doctor had gone I went to sleep, and woke up a few hours later feeling a lot better. We were very tired, and needed a sleep, after travelling all night.

28

Wednesday June 6th

Condition has improved today but I still have a very high temperature.

Thursday June 7th

Just about the same today have no appetite, and have been sleeping nearly all day.

Friday June 8th

Am a lot better today, but am not able to get out of bed yet, and am still on [a] milk diet.

Saturday June 9th

I am a good bit better today, and the doctor has taken me off [a] milk diet and put me on to a light diet, but have not much of an appetite.

29

Sunday June 10th

Am still improving but not well enough yet, to get out of bed. The treatment we are receiving here is excellent, and too much praise cannot be given to the doctors, and nurses, and the rest of the staff, for their kindness and attention to the patients under their care.

Monday June 11th

Still on the mend, and am feeling better every day. The heat has been very trying the last few days, but we are fortunate in having such beautiful surroundings as our wards are all in big marquees, out in the garden of what was once

30

a gentlemen private residence and there are beautiful green trees and lawns all around us, while the road from "Rouen" which passes right by this hospital, has a beautiful double avenue of trees, which are looking their best right now, and have a very rich green foliage. This avenue extends for several miles, in a strait line, and is so tall, that at all times of the day, the road is protected from the rays of the sun, and another thing I noticed which I think is a great advantage, is that the electric cars, instead of running on

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the road itself, have a special track between two rows of trees right on the side near the footpath leaving the whole of the road free for vehicular traffic.

Tuesday June 12th

My condition has so far improved, that the doctor allowed me to get up for a couple of hours today, but I soon got tired, and was glad enough to get back to bed again, as I was so weak, but I slept a lot better, after being up a while. This afternoon a very good concert was given by the staff on an open air platform, which was greatly enjoyed by everyone.

32

Wednesday June 13th

Today is very warm. Got up again this afternoon, and remained up, until tea time and felt a lot better.

Thursday June 14th

Up all day today, have been put on [a] full diet now. This afternoon I took a walk around the gardens, and then sat down on one of the garden seats, in the shade, and had a quiet read.

Friday June 15th

Up again today, and am feeling a lot better, able to walk about in the garden but soon get tired, and have to sit down and rest.

33

Sunday [sic] June 16th

Up all day again today and remained up until supper time; am able to walk about anywhere now.

Sunday June 17th

Went to church service this morning. In the afternoon I sat out on the garden seat reading until tea time, After tea I went again to the evening service, when there was a scotch [sic] minister preaching and enjoyed his address, very much.

34

Monday June 18th

The weather today is very hot. This afternoon all the blue suits from this hospital were invited up to one of the convalescent camps, where the Y.M.C.A. Ladies Committee entertained us to afternoon tea and everyone of us was given, a packet of cigarettes and a box of matches, fruit and all sorts of good things to eat, After which we went into the large concert hall where they had a splendid concert party waiting to entertain us. After which we all had the free use of the billiard tables, reading, and writing rooms, with free

35

stationery. We returned to the hospital about half past seven tired, but happy, after a splendid outing, and were soon in bed, and asleep.

Tuesday June 19th

The heat today is very trying, this afternoon we were entertained to a tea party here in the gardens, the tables were all laid, out on the lawns, and were loaded with fruit, and all sorts of nice things to eat, and after we all had, had enough tea, there were all sorts of games, and sports, and prizes, were given to the winners of all the different events, and we all had a splendid time

36

and our hearty thanks are due to the nurses and the doctors, for their kindness as they were the organisers of it, and paid for everything we had out of their own pockets.

Wednesday June 20th

The heat today is very trying, and I have been taking it easy all day, reading in the shade of the beautiful trees here. Towards evening it was a little cooler.

Thursday June 21st

I have quite recovered now, and expect to leave the hospital any day now, for the convalescent camp.

37

Friday June 22nd

When the doctor came around this morning he marked me for the convalescent camp as I have recovered sufficiently to leave the hospital, and there were several others marked out also, we paraded with our papers to the colonel at half past eleven, and then were dismissed for our dinner. We paraded again at half past one, at the clothing stores, and had our uniforms, and kit issued to us, and we left the hospital at half past four in the afternoon for no 2 Con Camp, which we reached about five o'clock. On

38

arrival at the Con Camp we were issued with our blankets, and shown to our tents, and were then free to go to bed if we wished.

Saturday June 23rd

This morning we all had to parade to the doctor to be examined after which we were dismissed for the day, and I took a walk around the camp which is a very large one. The Y.M.C.A. has a splendid building here, with a big lecture hall a billiard room, canteen, and reading and writing, also a library, and the building has a large verandah with draught

39

tables, and plenty of seats, and one can sit out there and watch the cricket, as it overlooks the cricket grounds. Instead of the bell tents, we have large marquees [sic] tents to sleep in with the iron bedsteads, and biscuit mattresses. Each regiments [sic] has their own portion of the camp and outside each tent they have their regimental crest worked in different colored [sic] glass chips, and there are scores of these designs in glass and present a very pretty sight, as they are all in a line between the different rows of tents and are splendidly finished. This afternoon we

40

were all taken down to "Rouen" to a free picture show, in one of the big theatres there, and enjoyed them very much. We marched there, and back, arriving back at the camp in time for tea.

Sunday June 24th

Went to church this morning the service being held in the Y.M.C.A. hut. This afternoon, I obtained a pass and took a walk down to the hospital to see some of the chaps I had made friends with there, and also to see the nurses, who invited me to stay and have tea with them, had a good time and returned about eight o'clock.

41

Monday June 25th

We all had to parade before the doctor again this morning, when he marked most of us, to go to Buchy convalescent camp and will be leaving here tomorrow morning.

Tuesday June 26th

We paraded with our blankets this morning at nine o'clock for "Buchy". We marched into "Rouen" where we entrained for "Buchy" leaving about midday, and arriving at our destination about half past four in the afternoon. After being allotted to our tents in E. Company's lines we were taken up to

42

the dining hall to tea. We were able to be present at a very good concert, which was given in the dining hall commencing at half past six, all the items were given by men in the camp who have got together a first class concert party.

Wednesday June 27th

We were all paraded before the doctor, and classified this morning, the men being put into different classes according to their condition. After the doctor had finished with us, we were dismissed for the rest of the day, and spent the

43

afternoon watching the cricket match, each company has their own team, and they have some very good cricketers among them too. There is cricket every afternoon for those who care to have a go at it. I wrote to the base today to have my letters sent on to me.

Thursday June 28th

After breakfast we went for a route march down a little country road, where we halted for a smoke-O, and then returned to camp, and were dismissed. This afternoon there were some sports being held, so it was a half holiday for everyone. Late in the afternoon

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it began to rain, so the rest of the sports had to be postponed until next week. Tonight there was another concert given by our own concert party and it was much enjoyed.

Friday June 29th

It has been raining nearly all day today, and we didn't go on parade, it cleared a little by tea time. Tonight there are some boxing contests being held in the dining hall and some very good bouts were decided between boys from the different companies.

45

Saturday June 30th

We paraded this morning as usual, but this afternoon is a half holiday, and there are several cricket matches being played between the different companies. After tea a companion and myself took a walk down a country road for about a couple of miles, this road is thrown open to us after five o'clock every night, and many of the boys avail themselves of the chance of this walk. The country around here is very pretty, there are some very pretty avenues of beautiful trees, and also wild flowers in abundance, and there are wild strawberries growing along the roads.

46

Sunday July 1st

Went on church parade this morning, and after church we were dismissed for the rest of the day. I went for another walk again this afternoon. I have been put on the dining hall staff today, there are eight of us in our lot, and we sweep up after each meal, and are exempt from all drill.

Monday July 2nd

Started work in the dining hall this morning, this hall is a very large one, being able to seat about two thousand men at a sitting and it takes two sittings to each meal to feed them

47

all. Went for a walk again after tea, and got a good few strawberries which we enjoyed as we don't see much fruit.

Tuesday July 3rd

Weather today is very unsettled. Another good concert was given in the dining hall this evening.

Wednesday July 4th

Weather is fine today this afternoon was a half holiday and the rest of the sports were held this afternoon, and afterwards the prizes were distributed by one of the nurses from the hospital to the successful competitors. Quite a number of French soldiers, and there [sic] families came to see the sports.

48

Thursday July 5th

It has been raining again today, but cleared up towards evening, another concert was given in the dining hall tonight and was every bit as good as the previous ones. Tomorrow there is a programme of boxing contests to be held in the Stadium, and there promises to be some very good bouts, as the lads are training hard.

Friday July 6th

Things have been quiet here today, after we had cleared away the tea things, my mate and I obtained a pass each, and went in to the village of "Buchy"

49

which is about two miles from here. It is a very pleasant walk; there is a splendid road all the way, and on one side there is a splendid avenue of beach[sic] trees nearly all the way. On each side of the road, the French people were hard at work gathering in their crops all the work is being done by old people most of whom are women, and also by little children. Nearly all the work is done by hand and it is surprising the amount of work they get through in a short time. The village of "Buchy" is a quaint little place,

50

very much like an English village except for one thing, that is that where as in England, all the buildings in an English country village have thatched roofs here in France they all have red tiled roofs. In the village itself, things are very quiet, there is the usual market square, which will be found in most French towns, and villages and every little shop, seems to be an "Estaminet" or refreshment room of some description. There were also a couple of fruit shops where we could buy cherries and strawberries, and also a barbers shop, where all

51

the shaving, hair cutting & cetera is all done by French girls and it is very nicely fitted up. We went into a little tea shop where we had fried eggs, and chipped potatoes, with coffee, and bread, and butter at a very reasonable price. After tea we went for a final look round, and then set off on our return to camp. We arrived back in camp just in time to see the finish of the boxing tournaments, and then had a game of cards with several of the boys, and went to bed about the usual time.

52

Saturday July 7th

Weather is splendid today. This afternoon being a half holiday, there is a cricket match on, and most of the boys have gone to have a look at it, while those who got passes have gone in to "Buchy".

Sunday July 8th

Today being Sunday, church parade was held in the dining hall at ten o'clock this morning; in the afternoon, several of us went for a walk down the road past here. There are quite a number of French people use this road of a Sunday afternoon. I think

53

most of them, come along to have a look at the camp, and there are always a fair sprinkling of French soldiers among them, who are home on leave from the trenches, and their blue uniforms look very neat, as also does the little caps they wear; and the camp seems to be a great attraction for them, and those who can speak English stop, and tell us all the news.

54

Monday July 9th

This morning we had to go before the doctor for examination, and a good few were passed as fit to proceed to their base, while others myself included were classified B, which means that we remain here for a further spell. Another good concert was given in the dining hall, tonight and there was a large attendance, these concerts are very popular among the men, and deserve every encouragement, as all the items, are given by convalescent patients, who put in a lot of time and work to make them a success.

55

Tuesday July 10th

Things are quiet today, and the weather has kept fine although it threatened to rain several times during the day. I received a batch of letters tonight, which had been sent on to me from the base post office, and was very pleased to get them, as I have had no letters since I left the battalion nearly eight weeks ago.

Wednesday July 11th

After we had finished our work in the dining hall this morning, I spent the time till dinner, in answering the letters I received from home. This afternoon

56

Miss Lene Ashnell's concert party gave us a splendid concert in the dining hall, which we all enjoyed very much, the concert finished in time for tea, and after tea, I spent the evening writing letters, as I have a lot to answer.

Thursday July 12th

Today is a half holiday, and there is another cricket match on, cricket is very popular here, and there are several real good teams representing the different companies, and some very good matches are played, and all the boys take a keen interest in their own particular team. Another concert was

57

given in the dining hall tonight by the camp concert party, and was every bit as good as the previous ones.

Friday July 13th

Things are quiet here today, the usual boxing contests were held this evening, But I did not go to see them as I was busy writing letters.

Saturday July 14th

The usual cricket matches are being held this afternoon but I went for a walk, down the road for a couple of miles it is such a pretty road with hills on either side, and wild flowers in abundance, and the weather was perfect.

58

Sunday July 15th

Church parade was held at ten o'clock this morning after which we were free for the rest of the day. Went for a walk again this afternoon, returning in time for tea.

Monday July 16th

Weather has set in wet again, and there is plenty of mud about. Another very good concert was given in the dining hall tonight.

Tuesday July 17th

Weather is still unsettled and there is plenty of mud about. Received another batch of letters from the base tonight.

59

Wednesday July 18th

Nothing much doing today weather is a little better but there is still plenty of mud.

Thursday July 19th

Weather is very bad again today, it has been raining nearly all day, and we can hardly move about on account of the mud, another concert was given in the dining hall tonight but several items were interrupted by noise of the rain on the iron roof which made it very difficult to hear, what was being said on the stage and the different turns were given in between the showers, as while a shower was on, it was impossible to hear anything

60

Friday July 20th 1917

Weather has cleared up a little, but it is still very dull and looks as if we are likely to get some more rain. My mate and I both got a pass this evening and went into "Buchy" for a walk, while we were in there, we went into the cemetery to have a look at some of the graves, we had heard so much about, as they are so different to anything that we have ever seen in Australia. There was one in particular which we had our attention drawn to, it was a little girls grave, it had a beautiful headstone, and what looked like

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an archway of very pretty flowers besides some most beautiful wreaths of flowers, the flowers beautiful and fresh, but on examining them closely we found that the whole of the flowers were made of Glass beads, all done in beautiful colors [sic], and it must have taken thousands of them to finish it. Besides being a wonderful piece of work, which very few people would know wasn't the real thing unless they went up and examined them closely the same as we did. After having tea in Buchy, we returned to camp again about half past eight.

62

Saturday July 21st

Weather has cleared up again and it is beautiful and fine today; This afternoon being a half holiday there is another cricket match on, and it proved a very good go too. After tea several of us went for a walk, but returned early and had a game of cards till bedtime.

Sunday July 22nd

Church parade was held at ten o'clock this morning in the dining hall after which we were free for the rest of the day. Some of the chaps had a game of cricket this afternoon, but my mate and I went for a walk.

63

Monday July 23rd

Today has been very quiet, weather is fine again. Another good concert was given in the dining hall tonight, and was greatly enjoyed by all present.

Tuesday July 24th

We all went to see the doctor again this morning for classification, and the majority of us were marked A and will be leaving here for our base any time now as we are well again, and fit for active service.

64

Wednesday July 25th

We paraded before the colonel this morning for inspection, before leaving here for the base, we have just seen it posted up in orders, that we will be leaving for the base tomorrow morning. So today we are having an easy time of it. I have just met a couple of chaps out of my own battalion who have just come into this camp from the hospital and have been hearing all the latest news of our own battalion, and its doings since I left them.

65

Thursday July 26th

We handed in our blankets at half past six this morning and moved off to the Railway station where we entrained for Le Havre our base. Before the train left we were issued with bully beef, biscuits and cheese, to keep us going till we arrive at our destination. The train moved off at twelve o'clock, and we passed through some of the prettiest country in France. Everywhere the French people, were busy gathering in the harvest, while in other parts they were busy plowing [sic], the plows [sic] were the old single

66

furrow sort, while a few of them were using double furrow plows [sic], and they worked their horses in single line, not abreast like we do in Australia. One man I saw had four horses in his plow [sic] and they were all in single file one behind the other with a boy leading the front horse. In one part we passed through, there were acres of beet growing which is used for sugar making. We also passed through a number of pretty little villages also a few fair sized towns, and arrived at Havre, at half past three. On leaving the station we found we had

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nearly six miles to go to reach our camp, on the way we were all taken into one of the Y.M.C.A. huts where we were given a drink of tea and something to eat, and had about half an hours spell, as it was very hot marching and we were all pretty soft after our illness. We arrived at our base, and after being allotted to our tents, we were issued with our blankets, and then went up to the bath house where we had a steam bath followed by a cold shower. After we had tea we went and had a look around and met several of our mates who have just returned from hospital.

68

This morning we had to go before the doctor, for examination and he classified us all A class, which means, fit for active service, and we are to do ten days training in the bull ring, before we leave here to join up our battalion. At half past nine this morning we had to parade at the medical hut to be inoculated [sic] and after that was done we were taken up to the Q. M. Stores where we were issued with our rifle, bayonet, ground sheet, web equipment, oil bottle pull through, and water bottle. In the afternoon I went

69

over to the Y.M.C.A. Hut, and did some writing; and after tea out on the grounds in front of the mess huts, a rather novel entertainment was given by Padre Gault, one of the Australian army chaplains. This padre is very popular among all the boys and he has a way with him, that endears himself to them all. The nature of his entertainments are as follows, first of all he gets all the boys together, and says to them, "now boys get your smokes out and light up, and sit down, and make yourselves comfortable, anyone without smokes

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hold up their hands, and he throws out cigarettes right and left, while they are lighting up, he gets the band to play a selection, and after that the fun begins. He holds competitions on different subjects such as "The best book I have read"; "My favourite poet"; "Limerick competitions", and others. The competitors send in written copies, of their efforts at poetry, Limericks, and the padre reads them out to the crowd, and he lets them decide which is the best, by voting them in or out, and then at the finish he awards

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the prizes, which are all given by the different branches of the Australian comforts fund. Some of the efforts at poetry are very amusing, but the majority of the budding poets, whose efforts are the reverse from good, get a sudden death vote to their efforts before they are half through, the reading of them.

Saturday July 28th

Went on parade this morning and answered the roll call and were then dismissed, as our arms are very sore after the inoculation [sic], and we are not able to do much with them. At ten o'clock we paraded to the Q. M. Stores

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where we were issued with everything that we were short of in the clothing line. This afternoon, my mate and I took a walk down the road past the fourth division camp to the cricket grounds, where there was a match being played. Along the road, which is a very shady one, there are numerous fruit barrows, which are run by refugees, and there are also a couple of fancy goods stalls, where they sell silk cards, cushions, and many other silk goods. In the evening Padre Gault held another competition. It was limericks on the M. P. and some very witty pieces were given about them.

73

Sunday July 29th

Went on church parade this morning and then were dismissed for the rest of the day. After church I was talking to some new arrivals, who have just come across from England, and found out from them that my brother was over here, in the fourth division, so I took a walk over to their camp to see him, and we were both very pleased to get the opportunity to meet again as we had not seen one another since I left Australia. In the afternoon my brother came over to our camp, as the band was giving an open air concert, on the grounds

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in front of the mess huts, and quite a large number of French people came up to listen to it. In the evening my brother and I went to church together, the service being held in the Y.M.C.A. hut at the third division camp. While we were there, we met Captain Chaplain Perry who used to preach at the little church at Waikerie, on the river murray [sic], where my brother comes from, and he also used to play football a few years ago for the Norwood football team. It began to rain again tonight and looks like being a very wet night.

75

Monday July 30th

We start on our ten days course in the bull ring today. The bull ring is right on the top of a high hill overlooking Le Havre, and to get to it, we have about a two mile march, up hill all the way, as the road winds around the hill until it reaches the top, it is shady all the way, and we pass through a beach [sic] forest about half way up the hill. Our first day was an easy one as we had gas lectures, gas drill, and went through the gas chamber. We have our dinner at the bull ring, and there are dozens of French

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people there, with their fruit stalls, but the prices they charge are very stiff, I think they must take us for millionaires. We all form up again and leave the bull ring at four o'clock in the afternoon to return to camp and tea is at five o'clock. My brother came over to our camp this evening, and we went to the Christian fellowship meeting at the Y.M.C.A. hut, in the second division camp. While we were there we resumed our acquaintances with several leaders of the Y.M.C.A. who we had not seen since we came to France, and spent a very pleasant evening with them.

77

Tuesday July 31st [1917]

Today is what is known as economy day. We don't go to the bull ring today, but stop in camp strike our tents, and do any odd job that wants doing. On account of it being very wet, and muddy we didn't touch the tents but left them standing. About ten o'clock the weather cleared a little, so we were all taken for a bit of a march up into a beautiful beech forest. Padre Gault came with us, and when we got there he gave us all cigarettes; the band played a selection, and then he read us selections out of different books, the readings were much

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enjoyed, and we returned to camp in time for dinner. It rained again in the afternoon, and we were not able to do anything except stop in our tents out of the rain and mud. Went over to the fourth division again tonight and went with my brother to the Y.M.C.A. service at the third division camp, and had a good time together. My brother told me that he is on draft, and expects to be leaving to go up to the trenches tomorrow night.

79

Wednesday August 1st

Weather is still unsettled we paraded at the usual time but were dismissed again as it was raining. We paraded again at ten o'clock, and as it had cleared a bit then we set off for the bull ring. On arrival at the bull ring we piled arms, removed our equipment and did physical jerks till dinner time. In the afternoon we did rifle exercises until four o'clock, when we returned to camp. After tea went over to see my brother again, and he told me they were leaving in the morning to go up to the trenches. We spent the evening at the Y.M.C.A. and said goodbye, as I won't be able to see him in the morning.

80

Thursday August 2nd

Today is too wet to go up to the bull ring, so we went for a route march, the country round about here, is very pretty, and there are good roads for marching, on our way we followed the electric tramline right into Montevilliers which is a fair sized town and, there are some very pretty spots on the road in we marched right through the business centre of the town, and returned by another route, which was bordered on either side by green hedges, and on one side it was shaded nearly all the way by beautiful

81

green trees. We returned to camp in time for dinner. In the afternoon we were given a lecture in the Y.M.C.A. hut on the usual military matters the lecture was given by several of the instructors from the instruction staff at the bull ring, after the lecture was over we were dismissed. After tea I went to the Y.M.C.A. hut to write some letters, and stopped, and went to the fellowship meeting afterwards.

Friday Aug. 3rd

It is raining again this morning and we did not leave to go to the bull ring until ten o'clock, when we got there, we had a spell for a while

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and then they took us for a route march through some of the prettiest, and hilliest part of the country overlooking Le Havre, and the port, and we had a splendid view, both of the town and the shipping in the harbor [sic]. It was very warm marching and we had two spells on the way, and arrived back at the bull ring at a quarter to one for our dinner. In the afternoon, we went through a course of bomb throwing, and also had a lecture on the parts and chemicals used in the Mills bomb. We returned to camp at [the] usual time, and went to the fellowship meeting at night.

83

Saturday Aug. 4th

We did not go to the bull ring this morning, but had a lecture instead. After dinner my mate and I got a pass each, and went into Le Havre. We walked to "Rouelles" station which is a few minutes walk from the camp, and caught a train, from there it is six miles into the town, and the fare by the train is only one penny each way, which is very cheap for France. Le Havre is a fine place and a busy one too, there are some fine buildings, and shops, every bit as good as any I saw in London, and there are any amount of fancy goods shops, where you can buy

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beautiful silk goods at a very reasonable price, providing of course that you are not a soldier, but they all seem to charge twice as much to a soldier as what they do to anyone else. We went into a picture show, but the programme was a very second rate one. The Salvation Army has a refreshment room in the centre of the town where we were able to get bacon and eggs, bread and butter, and coffee, for a franc and a half. Right in the centre of the town too, there is a square of green trees, and it is surrounded by flower stalls, and present [sic] a pretty

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sight. We also saw, a stall kept by a French woman, who had both her hands off at the wrist, and she was holding wool and knitting needles, and knitting a sock when we saw her, a thing which I would have thought impossible if I hadn't seen it myself. They also have electric trams running in all directions, through the town. The majority of the cafes here, have their little tables and chairs out on the footpaths in front of their shops with a canvas cover over them. After having a good look around and enjoying ourselves very much we returned to the railway station, and caught the train back to camp at eight thirty.

86

Sunday Aug. 5th

Went on church parade this morning, this afternoon the band was playing for a while, but they had to cut the concert short on account of the rain. I spent the afternoon writing letters home, In the evening I went to the seven o'clock church service, after which I went to bed early, as we will be all day in the bull ring.

Monday August 6th

Went to the bull ring at the usual time this morning we were on bayonet fighting today first of all we had practices with dummies, and parry and thrust practices, and then we came to the bayonet charging, advancing on trenches, capturing them and then, advancing on the next one, and sticking our bayonet into dummies, set in the trenches. We had to go over in waves, one wave supporting the other. When it came to our turn to go over, we went over the top alright, stuck our bayonets into the suspended dummies as we advanced, and when we came to the trench we had to jump in and stick a dummy [at?] the same time; the trench was six feet deep, and there was about a foot of mud, and slush in the bottom, and when we jumped in, my

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left leg shot from under me, and I fell in a heap, and when I tried to get up I found I couldn't move as I had dislocated my knee, and I had to be lifted out put on a stretcher, and taken straight to the hospital. When they got me there the doctor examined my knee and found it was worse than they thought at first. He said it was synovitis of the knee, and put me strait [sic] to bed, and they bandaged my knee as tight as they could, to reduce the swelling, and I passed a very bad night as I was unable to get any sleep.

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Tuesday August 7th

My knee is badly swollen this morning, and I cannot move the leg at all, when the doctor came around he had a look at it, and said to keep it bandaged, and that I was to keep it as still as possible and rest it. It is causing me a lot of pain and am not able to sleep at all from it.

Wednesday August 8th

Had a very restless night and hardly any sleep, when the doctor came around this morning and saw my knee he advised a back splint to be put on from the foot right up to the hip, to keep the leg strait [sic], and prevent it from

90

bending, and going out of shape. The splint is very uncomfortable as it keeps the leg rigid, and I have to keep on my back all the time. Tonight they gave me a sleeping draught as I couldn't get any rest at all, but after taking the draft I got a little rest but not for long as my knee was throbbing too bad [sic].

Thursday August 9th

Had another restless night have still got the back splint on my leg, and have a good deal of pain with it, as I am not able to turn the leg to get any ease. Got a little easier tonight, and was able to sleep a little.

91

Friday Aug 10th

My leg was paining me so bad today that they took the back splint off, and it was a little easier afterwards, and I was able to turn on my side, and got a little sleep for a couple of hours.

Saturday Aug 11th

Had another restless night, and my leg is that bad that I am not able to move it at all. The bandages are tight, but they have to be like that to keep my leg from twisting. Had to have another sleeping draught tonight to help me try and get some sleep.

92

Sunday Aug 12th

Had to have my knee bandaged afresh this morning and then have the back splint put on again, to keep my leg strait [sic]. A little easier tonight, and had a fair sleep.

Monday Aug 13th

A little easier today, but the leg is quite useless and if I want to shift it from one side of the bed to the other I have to catch hold of it with both hands and lift it over. It has got very painful again tonight and there don't [sic] seem to be much chance of getting any sleep tonight with it.

93

Tuesday August 14th

Had another bad night, and am feeling pretty crook on it, this morning the knee has swollen up more than it was before, and they had to take all the bandages off and rearrange them, which gave me a little ease, and I was able to sleep a little better tonight.

Wednesday Aug 15th

Had a fairly good night, last night, and feel a lot better for it today, and my knee is a little easier, but have still got the tight bandages, and splint on. Pain came on again tonight but was able to sleep for awhile.

94

Thursday Aug 16th

Had a visit today from one of the Y.M.C.A. Ladies, who comes up about twice a week to visit the Australians. She comes from the Y.M.C.A. hut at the second division camp, and when I got into conversation with her I found that she used to live in Mitcham about twenty years ago, the place where my home is. And we had a great talk about the old identities of Mitcham. The ladys [sic] name was Miss McGeorge, and she used to be at Barr Smiths years ago. My leg is fairly easy today but gets very troublesome at night and again in the early morning.

95

Friday Aug 17th

When the doctor came around this morning he had a look at my leg, and told the sister that they could take the back splint off my leg, but to keep the knee bandaged, and that I was to keep very quiet, and rest the knee as much as possible, and not to get up on any account.

Saturday August 18th

My leg is improving slowly and the swelling has gone down a little, but I cannot move it yet and have to keep the tight bandages on.

96

Sunday August 19th

The knee is just about the same today. Miss McGeorge was here again today from the Y.M.C.A., and brought some more eggs for us. The weather is very unsettled again with heavy showers of rain.

Monday Aug 20th

A little easier today but the swelling has not gone down much, Had a visit from my cousin Murray Pamment this afternoon, and was rather surprised to see him, as I had no idea, that he knew I was here, as the last time we met, was at Rolleston Camp, on Salisbury Plains, and since then, we have both been up to the

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trenches, but we were fighting on different fronts, and both of us have since, been in hospital with trench fever. He is leaving again tomorrow to go back to his battalion. Had a batch of letters sent on to me from our base today, it is over two months, since I got the last ones, and I was very pleased to get them after waiting so long.

Tuesday Aug 21st

My leg is improving slowly, and am able to move it a little but have to keep it as still as possible. This afternoon I have been answering some of the letters I received yesterday.

98

Wednesday Aug 22nd

Leg is a little easier today, and seems to be on the mend now, but will take some time before it is right again. Wrote a few more letters this afternoon.

Thursday Aug 23rd

Still on the mend, and the swelling is going down slowly, rain has set in again, and it gets very cold at night time.

Letter – No number

Somewhere in France

Dear Mary

August 23rd 1917

A few lines to let you know How things are going. Since I wrote to you last my luck seems to be right out altogether. While we were in the line I was alright except for a few narrow escapes, but we had only been out for a few days; spelling, when I was stricken down with trench fever, and had to be sent away to the hospital in the ambulance. I was five weeks in hospital, with the fever, and was then sent to a Convalescent Camp, to recover my strength again; and I was there for four weeks, from there I was sent back to my base, to put in a few days training before going back to join up my battalion. I had just about finished my course, and was expecting to go back any day, when one morning they took us out to practice [sic] a bayonet charge.

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We had to advance and capture a trench at the point of the bayonet, jump into it, and hold it. Well it had been raining like the devil, and there was about a couple of feet of mud and slush in the bottom, and the trench itself was over six feet deep, and when we jumped in my left leg shot from underneath

me, and I fell in a heap, and when I went to get up, I couldn't move, and found that i had dislocated my knee, and when they got me out they sent me straight away to the hospital, and here I am; I have been here nearly three weeks, on the broad of back, and cant move my leg at all, and I think it will be some time before I am alright again. I had a letter from Mr Billings the other day, and will answer it in a few days, as I am not able to write much yet as I cant sit up, So I will close now with kind regards to all from your sincere friend

Jack Coventry

Friday Aug 24th

It has been raining nearly all day, and the pain in my knee is very bad, and I think it is the bad weather that is causing it.

99

Saturday August 25th

Knee is improving slowly, but haven't got much use in my leg yet, and can't straighten it. The weather is still showery and cold. Miss McGeorge from the Y.M.C.A. was here again today to see the Australians.

Sunday August 26th

My leg is paining very badly today, but the swelling has gone down a good bit, The weather has been rotten all day it has been [word left out - *raining*?] continually all day without a break.

100

Monday August 27th

Weather is still very bad, and it has been very windy, with heavy showers, throughout the day, Tonight it has started blowing a gale, and is very cold. The swelling in the knee has just about gone down now.

Tuesday Aug 28th

It is very windy today, and there have been a few showers of rain. Last night the wind was so strong, that the big marquee, that is used as a dining hall, was completely wrecked, by the wind, and the tent pegs, were all torn out of the ground. We all thought that the ward

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we are in, which is also a big marquee, was going to go. But the ropes held alright. The knee is getting along well now, and I am able to move the leg now.

Wednesday August 29th

The weather is very unsettled today with strong winds blowing. Condition is about the same, and the knee is fairly easy.

Thursday August 30th

Knee is still about the same and am still confined to my bed. The wind is still blowing very strongly, and blowing the marquees about, and testing them pretty severely.

102

Friday August 31st

The wind has dropped a little today, and we have had several showers of rain. Am having a little trouble with my knee again, but I think the weather is the cause of it.

Saturday Sept. 1st

Weather today is splendid, the high winds have dropped and it is quite a treat to have it calm again. Am feeling pretty well today and the knee has been fairly easy.

Sunday Sept. 2nd

The weather today is splendid and it seems a pity to be lying in bed [*on*?] a day like this, but the knee is too bad, to be able to get up.

103

Monday September 3rd

Am still in bed, but am fairly easy, and am able to sleep fairly well, but think it will be some time yet before I will be able to walk, as all the strength seems to have gone out of my leg.

Tuesday September 4th

Seem much about the same today, but am still in bed have been told that there is a chance of me being sent across to England if my knee doesn't improve, as there will be a hospital ship going across in a few days time.

104

Wednesday Sept. 5th

Just about the same today, the knee doesn't seem to alter at all, a draft of patients from the hospital are [*sic*] leaving today for Blighty, but they are all walking cases. I have been told that I will be leaving for Blighty with the stretcher cases in a couple of days time. I only hope it is true. I have not been too well today, as I have had an attack of dysentery, and it has left me very weak.

Thursday Sept. 6th

Just about the same today there doesn't seem to be any change in the condition of my knee. Have been told

105

that I will most likely be leaving for Blighty tomorrow.

Friday Sept. 7th

They came around this morning and warned us that we would be leaving for Blighty today, and we had to be ready by half past ten this morning. At eleven o'clock we were all in the motor ambulances, and left to go to the boat, it was a good way from the hospital to the wharf, we were taken right alongside the boat, in the ambulances, and carried straight [sic] on board, and put to bed and made comfortable.

The name of the boat is the "Essiquibo", and she is painted

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grey the same as the warships, and has a gun mounted on board of her, for defence as the German submarines are sinking every hospital ship, they get the chance to. Soon after we got on board we were given a splendid hot dinner, and afterwards each man had a presentation box given to him, with the compliments of the directors of the shipping company, and when we opened them we found each one had a pipe packet of tobacco, a large packet of Virginia cigarettes, and a box of matches. We were also supplied with a number of magazines, and

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papers to while away the time as we will not be leaving port until it is dark, and that means ten o'clock tonight before we move out.

Saturday Sept. 8th

We left Le Havre about ten o'clock last night, and crossed the channel safely, arriving outside Southampton at an early hour in the morning, where we anchored until daylight before going into the harbor [sic], we went in and went alongside the wharf, between nine, and ten o'clock, and [sic] soon started to get us all ashore, the trains come right alongside the boats, and we were all carried ashore, on the stretchers, and places [sic], in

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special reserves on the railway platforms, where we [were] waited on by ladies, who provided us with sweets, and cigarettes, there were several hospital trains in the station going to different places and it was some time before they got us all away; At last it was our turn to be put on the hospital train, all the colonial troops going on the same train. The hospital train was splendid [sic] fitted up and we were made comfortable, and had a hot dinner given to us, and the attention, throughout the trip in the train, which lasted about four hours, was excellent, as we had both nurses and

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orderlies on the train to attend to us. We arrived at Victoria Station about half past two, and were quickly put in the motor ambulances, and dispatched to different hospitals, the batched [sic] I was in being sent to the Southwark Military hospital East Dulwich Grove London L.[S?] E. about five miles from Victoria station. On our way there we passed, the Marble Arch, and went right through Hyde Park, On arrival at the hospital we were quickly, sent off to the different wards, I myself, being sent into E 2 ward, and we were soon in bed, and felt pretty tired after our trip across from France.

110

Sunday Sept. 9th

When the doctor came on his rounds this morning he had a look at my knee, and ordered it to be massaged. This afternoon was visiting day and there were a good few people; relatives of the patients, were here, a lot of the chaps seem to have their relatives living near here, and there were also a couple of old ladies, who come right round the ward giving plums and pears to all the patients, they seem funny old ladies, the way they stand at the foot of ones bed and laugh at him, I suppose they think they cheer us up; we don't mind as it amuses them and don't [sic] hurt us.

111

Monday Sept. 10th

Just about the same today, have to keep in bed, but I am very comfortable, and have plenty of books to read. There were a good few visitors in this afternoon, I have just been having a yarn with another Mitcham boy Cliff Stovey [*not sure if this is the spelling*] who is in this ward, and who I hadn't seen for a good few years.

Tuesday Sept. 11th

Still in bed but am very comfortable, had my knee massaged this morning. Today is inspection day. The specialist was around this morning he comes around every Tuesday, and he ordered, the radiant heat treatment for my knee.

112

Wednesday Sept. 12th

Went downstairs to the radiant heat room this morning to get the treatment for my knee it is to have half an hour every day, of this heat and to be massaged as well. When I came back I had to get back to bed again, as my knee is not strong, enough to stand any walking yet.

Thursday Sept. 13th

Went down again this morning to have my knee treated, and went to bed as soon as I got back. Had some visitors round the ward again, this afternoon, and they brought around some fruit, and papers for us. A lady by

113

the name of Mrs Hunt, who comes in pretty often to visit the boys, has been showing us some patterns of fancy work and she has promised to teach any of us who care to, how to do some, so I am having a shot at it too.

Friday Sept. 14th

Much about the same, had the treatment as usual for my knee; Mrs Hunt was here again this afternoon, and started us going on our fancy work, and we were surprised to find how easy it was, and, have mad [sic] good headway with it.

114

Saturday Sept. 15th

Had the treatment as usual this morning, but have to go back to bed as soon as it is over. There were a good few visitors here, again this afternoon, and the time seemed to pass very quickly, while we had someone to talk to.

Sunday Sept. 16th

Today being Sunday, I did not have to go down for the radiant heat, as they do not treat us on Sundays, but will go again tomorrow as usual. There was quite a crowd of visitors here this afternoon, and some of them are very nice people indeed, and do all they can for us.

115

Monday Sept. 17th

Had the radiant heat again today, and I think it is doing my knee good, as I am able to move about with a stick now, and I think when the specialist comes tomorrow, that he will allow me to get up.

Tuesday Sept. 18th

Today is inspection day, and when the specialist came around he had a look at my knee, he said I could get up, and have a walk, around the garden and see how it went. So after dinner I got up, and had a bit of a walk around, but soon got tired, so I went and sat out on the balcony in the sunshine, then, until tea.

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Got up after breakfast this morning, and stopped up all day, had a walk around the grounds, this afternoon, and filled in a form to get a monthly pass so as to be able to go out each afternoon, from 1.30 till 6.30, the same as the other chaps.

Thursday Sept. 20th

Up all day, again today, could have got my pass, but did not go out, as I had visitors, Mrs Hibbs, and Miss Ida Martin, who is one of the girls in the womens army, she is in the pay corps, and is home on leave from France, and have been invited out to Mrs Hibbs tomorrow to tea.

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Friday Sept. 21st

This afternoon another Australian and myself got our passes, and went out by motor bus to Clapham Common to the home of Mrs Hibbs, on an invitation from her and Miss Ida Martin, after lunch they took us for a motor ride through one of the prettiest spots in London, and we spent of [sic] couple of hours in a very pretty garden on a hill overlooking London, called the Rookery, and as it was a clear day we had a splendid view, and could see the Crystal palace in the distance. We returned to Mrs Hibbs home for tea, and afterwards returned to the hospital after an enjoyable afternoon.

118

Saturday Sept. 22nd

We got our passes again this afternoon, and went for a walk down to Peckham Rye, which is about ten minutes walk from the hospital. While we were [there], we went into the Tower picture show for a while, all the picture shows are free to us. Afterwards, we had tea at one of the tea rooms, and returned to the hospital at six o'clock.

Sunday Sept. 23rd

We were out again this afternoon we met our two lady friends at the plow [sic], and they took us out to Madame Jarvis's home to tea, we met a lot of people there, who were very kind

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to us, and we spent a very enjoyable afternoon, and had tea there, afterwards, two of the ladies, came right back to the hospital with us.

Monday Sept. 24th

We were out again this afternoon and went for a bus ride through Brixton, Capham [sic] Common, and right around, and were surprised at the number of allotments, and the splendid sample of vegetables that were being grown by the holders. The germans came over London tonight, in an air raid, and our guns opened fire, and there was a great deal of noise, with so many guns firing, and all lights had to be put out, and everyone take cover from the shells.

120

Tuesday Sept. 25th

This morning we heard all the news of the air raid, there were a few people killed, and about twenty injured, besides the damage that was done to property by the bombs. I did not go out this afternoon, as there were some ladies coming in to see us. Another air raid has started tonight, and seems pretty bad but we do not know yet what damage has been done.

Wednesday Sept. 26th

Have just seen the paper, and the air raid we [had was?] very severe, and a lot of damage, was done, and about 17 were killed, and thirty injured, the guns all round here were firing, and the people in

121

London itself, took shelter in the tube stations in hundreds. This afternoon, Mrs Hibbs called round here, and took me to her sisters place, to tea, at Camberwell, and I had an enjoyable time.

Thursday Sept. 27th

There was no air raid last night and so we had one night of undisturbed sleep. Went out again this afternoon, down to Peckham, and went to the Tower picture show where we spent a couple of hours; and had tea, before returning to the hospital. There was another air raid tonight we got the alarm quite early, and had to put out all the lights in the hospital before seven.

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Friday Sept. 28th

The air raid last night was a failure, as our anti-aircraft guns, and machines, beat the germans back from the coast. This afternoon my pal, and I went out to Mrs Hibbs home, and after dinner there, and Miss Ida Martin took us up to London, and we had a good look around, and saw most of the big shops in Regent Street, and Oxford St, and had tea in town, and returned to the hospital about half past seven. The german machines are right over London again tonight, and our guns are firing from all directions at them.

123

Saturday Sept. 29th

When we got the papers this morning we found that the germans had been right over London, and done a lot of damage, besides killing about twenty people, and injuring thirty seven. This afternoon Miss Ida Martin and myself, went to see a football match not far from here. After the match we returned together to the hospital gates, where we said goodbye, as she will be leaving to go back to France on Monday morning, to return to duty, she is in the army, pay corps, and has been home on leave.

124

Sunday Sept. 30th

There was another air raid last night, but not much damage was done, as our guns gave the germans too hot a reception, and they cleared off again. This afternoon a couple of others and myself, went up to London, and had a good look around, it was a beautiful day, and quite a treat to be out, while we were at Trafalgar Square we met one of the Y.M.C.A. men, who got a number of us together, and took us by tube to the Palladium Theatre, where they had a number of seats

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reserved for wounded soldiers; There was an orchestral concert, on, and they were giving selections from grand opera, and also several vocal items the orchestra was the finest I have ever heard, there being over 60 performers. After the concert, we had tea in town and then caught a tram back. On our way back it was pitiful to see the hundreds of women, and children who were waiting at all the tube stations, for a chance to get down for shelter in case an air raid alarm was given, and some of them had been waiting for hours.

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Monday Oct. 1st

Today the germans tried a daylight air raid, but they got such a hot reception they turned and cleared, and no damage was done. Went out again this afternoon, but returned to the hospital in time for tea.

Tuesday Oct. 2nd

This morning is inspection morning, when the specialist saw my knee he said it was getting along alright [sic]. We had new passes issued today, and new times are from half past twelve till half past five. This afternoon my pal and I, and Mrs Hibbs, and another

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lady friend, went up to London to Cupids Cinema; as we had an invitation there and spent a very enjoyable afternoon there, and we all returned together in the evening, there was another air raid alarm given tonight but don't think there is anything to be alarmed at.

Wednesday Oct. 3rd

Went out again this afternoon down to Peckham Rye, and went to the Tower Pictures, returning to the hospital again in time for tea, I don't think there will be any air raid tonight as it is very cloudy, and looks as if it might rain any minute.

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Thursday Oct. 4th

There was no air raid last night, two of my mates are being transferred to Harefield today, and two more are going on their furlow [sic], I myself had to go down to the discharge office at two o'clock this afternoon, and the doctor told me that he would be transferring me to one of our own hospitals soon; it was too late to go out after I left there, so I stopped, and did some writing until tea time, and after tea I went on with a cushion cover I have been making.

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Friday Oct. 5th

Went and had the radiant heat treatment this morning as usual, This afternoon I had to report at the discharge office at two o'clock, when I was issued with my kit and some things that I was short of, and told that I would be leaving here, tomorrow morning for the Australian Auxiliary Hospital at Harefield. After I had got fixed up with my things I went out for a walk, and returned again in time for tea, and spent the evening in writing, and getting my things ready to move.

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Saturday Oct. 6th

We had to parade at the discharge office at nine o'clock this morning and after we had been inspected by the orderly officer we were told to parade again at half past ten, ready to leave for Harefield. We paraded again at half past ten, and after waiting until eleven o'clock we were sent back to our wards, to wait and get our dinners before leaving, we had just got back to our wards, when they rang up on the phone for us to go down again, and when we got down there they told us that

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we could have our dinners first and be ready to go at half past twelve, so back we went to our wards. At last at half past twelve we left by motor car for Paddington Station, it was a long way from the hospital, and we had a nice ride through Brixton, Chelsea and Hyde Park, on our way, eventually arriving at Paddington, and catching the half past one train for Denham, on arrival at Denham, we found that we were about three miles from the hospital, and in a very pretty part of the country. After a short wait, a couple of motor ambulances came out

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and took us to the camp which we reached about half past three, and after being kept waiting nearly two hours in the admission room we were issued with our blue suits, eating utensils and taken to our different wards, after which we were given our tea. After tea I had a look around, and met several of our own chaps who are here, this is known as the No1 Australian Auxiliary hospital, and the patients are all Australians as well as the nurses, doctors, and all the staff.

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Sunday Oct. 7th

This morning we had to stay in our wards until the doctor came round as he wanted to see the new patients, when he came around he examined all of us, and several including myself have been marked for the X Rays, and will be Xrayed tomorrow morning, this afternoon, was visiting day, and a good few visitors were here from London. Several of us went for a walk this afternoon, and returned in time for tea at five o'clock. It set in very cold tonight and we spent the evening reading in front of the fire.

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Monday Oct. 8th

After breakfast we went for a walk around the grounds, and went down to the Xrays room at half past ten and had my leg Xrayed. This afternoon I went around to the Red Cross recreation rooms, there is a fine writing room with everything provided for the convenience of the patients, and also a canteen where we can buy almost anything, and a splendid library, and also a billiard room with five tables, after spending a little time in each several of us took a walk into the concert

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room where there was a picture show, starting a [sic] half past two, and is free for everyone and we spent an enjoyable couple of hours, and in the interval we were regaled [sic] with tea, and cakes by the red cross ladies. In the evening there was a concert in the concert room given by a visiting concert party, and was enjoyed by everyone, each item being encored, time and time again, which was a great encouragement to everybody. After the concert was over we had a game of cards until bed time.

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Tuesday Oct. 9th

This morning we had to parade to the dentist to have our teeth examined, after which we were free for the day, in the afternoon we took a walk into the village of Harefield it is a quiet little place, and there seemed to be nearly as many hotels as houses, we also to [sic] a walk down to the little church in the hollow at the foot of the village, and saw many things to interest us; the church is a very old one, and many of the graves date back to the early part

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of the seventeenth century. We also paid a visit to the part of the churchyard where the Australians who have died in this hospital are buried, there are about forty or fifty graves of our Australian comrades here, and each grave has a neat little headstone, with the name number, and unit of the soldier, and nearly all of them have beautiful artificial wreaths, in glass cases on them. Another good concert was given in the concert hall tonight, by a party, from the staff of Headquarters, at Horseferry road.

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Wednesday Oct. 10th

Today we had no medical parade to attend so were free all day. I met my pal Crassie (who came away from Broken Hill with me) and who I hadn't seen for six months, and he is on the staff here, so we spent the afternoon together, and had a great pitch [?] telling one another all that had happened since we saw one another last. Tonight I went to a lantern lecture on Rome, which was given in the concert hall and enjoyed it very much as the lecturer made it so interesting.

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Thursday Oct. 11th

It has been raining all day today and I did not go out but spent the day in the ward playing cards. Another concert was given in the concert hall tonight.

Friday Oct. 12th

It is still raining today and is very muddy out of doors. I spent the afternoon in the recreation room, reading some of the Australian papers they have there. After tea there was a very good program of pictures given in the concert hall, and was greatly appreciated by the men, and we spent a very happy two hours there.

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Saturday Oct. 13th

Today when the doctor came around he marked me for the medical board, and has recommended me for B2B which means if I get it that I will have a chance of getting a trip home to Australia, as I will be unfit for active service for six months. The weather has cleared a little and I went for a short walk this afternoon, but was not able to go far, so returned, about lunch time, and played cards till tea time. After tea there was another concert in the concert room, and was quite as good as the others that I have heard here.

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Sunday Oct. 14th

Today is a fine day, and this afternoon, another chap and I went for a walk down the road to the left of our camp, and a fine view of the surrounding country can be had from this road. Along this road on both sides are black berry bushes, and many other kinds of berries, and the blackberries, are ripe here just now, so we had a good go at them. We returned to camp in time for tea, and when we got back, we found that there were hundreds of visitors from the city there. There was no concert tonight on account of it being Sunday, but a short church service was held.

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Monday Oct. 15th

It is raining again today, and the ward is the best place, as it is bitterly cold outside. We spent the day playing cards. There was another concert tonight and was greatly enjoyed by everyone. These concerts help to pass the time for the boys as it is rather dull here, all day with nowhere to go, and the concerts are a splendid way for the men to pass the evenings.

Tuesday Oct. 16th

This morning when the doctor came around he told me that I would be going before the board this afternoon. At two o'clock this afternoon, several others, and myself who have

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to go before the board, went down to the board room, and when it came to my turn, they examined my knee, but could come to no decision, so they just signed the papers, and left them blank. After we got away from the board, we went round to the concert hall as there was a picture show on, and in the interval the red cross ladies regaled us with cigarettes, tea, and cakes, after the pictures were finished we returned to our wards in time for tea, after tea there was another concert in the concert room, by a visiting party, who had a great reception from the boys. I received a large batch of letters today.

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Wednesday Oct. 17th

There is not much doing today it has been raining all day, so we spent the day in playing cards. There was another concert tonight and was real good.

Letter

No number

*No 1 Australian Auxiliary Hospital**Harefield Park England**Oct. 17/[19]17**Dear Mary*

I have just received today, that splendid parcel that you and Mrs Billings have sent, me, and I hardly know how to thank you both for all the good things that were inside. Everything arrived in good order, except that the butterscotch got a little damp, but it was

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none the worse for that. I think a little bird must have told you what I wanted, as they were the most acceptable things you could have sent me, The cigarettes and tobacco are a treat after the rubbish that they issue to us over here, and the paper envelopes, and playing cards, were just what I needed; The socks chewing gum and in fact everything else was very acceptable especially the packet of playing cards as they are one of the best things for passing the time

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in hospital with. I am glad to say that my knee is fairly well now, and I am able to walk about with a stick all right but cant manage too well without. I dont think I will ever be able to get my leg quite straight again, but that doesn't worry me much as there are thousands of poor chaps a lot worse off than I am. I have been marked B2B by the doctor here, that means I will be unfit for service for six months, and I have to go before a medical board tomorrow

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and if they confirm what the doctor said, I will be getting a trip home. So I hope to be able to see you all before very long, if I have any luck. I dont know that there is much more I can tell you this time, except to thank you once more for the splendid parcel, So I will close now, with kind regards wishing you all a Merry Christmas and a bright and prosperous New Year from

*your sincere friend**Jack Coventry***Thursday Oct. 18th**

It is raining again today, and the consequence is that we have to content ourselves by remaining indoors all day, playing cards. There was another concert tonight all these concerts are given by different, visiting parties some of whome [sic] come a long way to entertain us. I received another batch of letters from the base Post office today, and answered them straight away as they had been some time finding me.

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Friday Oct. 19th

It is a little finer today, but looks as if it might rain again at any moment. This afternoon I had to go before another medical board, who examined me again, and who marked me B1B, so I expect I will soon be shifted to Weymouth now. We spent the rest of the afternoon in playing cards until tea time. After tea there was a very good picture show given in the concert room, and was greatly appreciated, as it was an exceptionally good program they put on. After the pictures were over, we were soon back in our wards, and in bed as it was very cold. After we had turned in the orderly corporal came and notified two of us that we would be leaving for Weymouth tomorrow.

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Saturday Oct. 20th

We paraded at nine o'clock this morning, and handed in our hospital kits, and were told to parade again at ten o'clock ready to leave. We paraded at ten, and we [sic] taken by motor ambulance to the Denham Station, where we caught a train for Paddington Station London. On arriving at Paddington we were just in time to catch a train for Weymouth, which we eventually reached after a five hours ride in the train. We were met at the Weymouth Station by motors, and taken to the camp where we were soon allotted to our huts, and given a good tea.

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Sunday Oct. 21st

We paraded this morning, and handed in all our particulars, and then had to parade again for classification by the medical officer, the majority of us, myself included were classified B1B after the M.O. had finished with us we were free for the rest of the day. This afternoon we went on pass parade at two o'clock, and after being inspected we were granted leave to go down the town. We had a good look around, and spent the afternoon on the promenade, along the sea front. We returned to camp in time for tea, and spent the evening in the Y.M.C.A. hut in this camp.

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Monday Oct. 22nd

This morning we all had to parade to the dentist, after which we were allotted to the different companies, that we were marked for. We have to parade twice a day, and then we are free for the rest of the day. It has been raining nearly all day today, so the best place was in our huts, and we passed the time playing cards.

Tuesday Oct. 23rd

This morning we were paraded to the Q.M. Stores, and issued with a few things that we were short of. This morning we also had to remain in our huts from 10.30 until eleven, to be examined by the doctor for re-classification, and several of

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us were marked B.1.B.R.C. which means that we will be transferred to the Monte Video Camp for treatment. Tonight there was a concert given, in the Y.M.C.A. hut, by a party from London, and was greatly appreciated by those present.

Wednesday Oct. 24th

This morning on parade, we were told that we would be leaving for the Monte Video Camp, and were inspected by the medical officer, to see who were fit to march there, as it is only about two miles from here; and several of us were told that we would be going by motor, as it was too far for the men on sticks to walk. We paraded with our full packs at half past one, and were marched down to

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the discharge office; from where we were despatched to Monte Video. We arrived at Monte Video about three o'clock, and were issued with our blankets, and allotted to our huts, and were settled down in our new quarters in time for tea. After tea we turned into bed pretty early as it was bitterly cold outside

Thursday Oct. 25th

This morning we were taken up to the Quarter masters store, and [issued?] with a full kit of clothes & cetera, and then were paraded at half past ten o'clock, to the dentist to have our teeth examined, after which we were finished until dinner time. This afternoon we paraded as usual at half

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past one, but after hearing the orders of the day read out, we were dismissed again. This evening a very good concert was given in the gymnasium by a concert party from one of the London theatres, and was one of the best concerts I have had the pleasure of hearing, and I have heard a good few lately.

Friday Oct. 26th

This morning several of us had to go on a dental parade, to have our teeth seen to, I had one drawn and am having another one filled, the dentist has put a tempory [sic] filling in, and I have to go again and have it finished on Monday, I went to a picture show tonight in the Y.M.C.A. hut.

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Saturday Oct. 27th

There is nothing much doing today we had the two parades as usual. This afternoon another chap and myself, got a special pass from two o'clock until, a quarter past eleven, and as it was a fine afternoon we took a walk into Weymouth, and had a good look around, we had tea at the Y.M.C.A., in the town, and then, went to a picture show that is being run by the Y.M.C.A. near the Westham camp, and spent an enjoyable evening there, after which we walked back to our own camp again, arriving back about eleven o'clock.

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Sunday Oct. 28th

Today is a beautiful day, and this afternoon, another chap and I took a walk in the opposite direction from the town and our camp, right into the county, it is mostly lanes, that wind about a lot, in this part, and they are bordered by hedges composed of blackberries, and other kinds of bushes as well, as the blackberries are in season just now, we had a good tuck in, as there were blackberries as far as we could look. We returned to camp again about four o'clock, and listened to the band which was playing in front of the camp, until tea time.

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Monday Oct. 29th

This morning we went on parade as usual, and were taken up to the gymnasium, for inspection by the medical officer in charge, and were marked for different exercises according to what our complaints were. After leaving the gymnasium several of us had to report to the dental hut to have our teeth seen to. There was nothing much doing this afternoon, but in the evening we went to an entertainment at the Y.M.C.A. hut, first of all they showed a few good pictures, and then they were followed by a concert, given by the Banks Building ...ir [no idea what the word is].

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Tuesday Oct. 30th

This morning we were taken up to the gymnasium, and went through the exercises allotted to us, which lasted about half an hour, and were then dismissed. Tonight there was a good program of pictures put on at the gymnasium, so I went up there.

Wednesday Oct. 31st

Went on parade as usual this morning, and six of us were put on camp picket for the day, tonight went to the Y.M.C.A. hut, at six, and there was a sing song with all the latest songs thrown on to the screen, by the boys until seven o'clock, and then a concert was given by the Ramblers.

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Thursday November 1st

Was mess orderly today, so had no parades to attend. Another very good concert was given in the Y.M.C.A. hut tonight by Mrs Woodell's party, commencing at seven o'clock; so to keep the boys amused while they were waiting for the party to arrive, they had another sing song with the lantern similar to what they had last night.

Friday Nov. 2nd

Went on parade as usual again today, the weather has been a little calmer the last few days, but it has started raining again this afternoon. Went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. Hut tonight.

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Saturday Nov. 3rd

Went on the morning parade as usual. This afternoon my mate and I obtained a late pass each and went into Weymouth. It was a pleasant afternoon, and we went for a walk right around the harbor [sic]. We had tea in town, and went to the Jubilee Hall, in the evening, there was a very good vaudeville, and picture show on there; after which we returned to camp.

Sunday Nov. 4th

Went into Weymouth again this afternoon, and had a good time it was rather cold, and inclined to rain, but it kept off until we got back to camp.

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Monday Nov. 5th

Today has been very quiet nothing out of the ordinary has happened. There was a very good concert at the Y.M.C.A. Hut this evening, and I went to that.

Tuesday Nov. 6th

Today has been the same as yesterday, except that we all had to go before the doctor today to be reclassified, the majority of us were left the same as we were marked before, and will continue with our exercises at the gymnasium. There was another good concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut tonight, by a party from Bournemouth.

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Wednesday Nov. 7th

Nothing has happened today to alter the ordinary routine of camp life. Went up to the Y.M.C.A. Hut tonight as the[sic] was another concert on.

Thursday Nov. 8th

It has been raining all day today. Tonight there was another concert in the Y.M.C.A. Hut by Mrs Courdell Barrett's party.

Friday Nov. 9th

The weather has been a little finer today, but very cold, put in time today in writing letters; Tonight there was a good cinema show at the Y.M.C.A. Hut and also another one at the gymnasium.

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Saturday Nov. 10th

We had the usual parades today. This afternoon, my pal and I obtained a pass and went into Weymouth. We spent the afternoon walking round, and had tea in town, and afterwards we went to the Jubilee hall, where there was a good cinema, and variety show on.

Sunday Nov. 11th

We had church parade this morning, after which we were free for the day, went into Weymouth again this afternoon and met a couple of lady Friends, who took us for a walk around to Portland; we had an enjoyable afternoon returning to Weymouth in

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time for tea. After tea we spent a couple of hours on the promenade, and went to the evening service, at the Holy Trinity Church, returning to the camp about nine o'clock at night.

Monday Nov. 12th

Had to go up for classification again this morning, and then had to parade in our huts afterwards for kit inspection. This afternoon went on parade as usual, but were not kept long before we were dismissed. Wrote some more letters this afternoon. In the evening there was a good concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut, by a concert party from Bournemouth.

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Tuesday Nov. 13th

Things are just about the same as usual today. Went into Weymouth this evening with my pal, and met our two lady friends, and went to the Jubilee hall together.

Wednesday Nov. 14th

Today is pay day, we were paid this morning, and then were dismissed. Another good concert was given in the Y.M.C.A. Hut tonight, and was enjoyed by all.

Thursday Nov. 15th

Things are much the same today, It has been raining nearly all day. There was another good concert by Mrs Cowdell Barretts party in the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

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Friday Nov. 16th

It has rained all day, again today; but nothing out of the ordinary has occurred [sic]. Went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. hut tonight.

Saturday Nov. 17th

The weather is a little finer today; there was the usual muster parade this afternoon, after which we were free for the rest of the day. Did not go into the town today but stayed in camp and went to the Y.M.C.A. Pictures in the evening.

Sunday Nov. 18th

Went on church parade this morning and were dismissed then for the rest of the day, but did not go out anywhere.

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Monday Nov. 19th

Went on parade as usual this morning, and we were taken up to the gymnasium for the weekly classification by the doctor, and was told to continue with the exercises I am on. Went to the pictures at the gymnasium in the evening.

Tuesday Nov. 20th

Nothing out of the ordinary has occurred [sic] today. Went to the concert at the Y.M.C.A. hut tonight.

Wednesday Nov. 21st

Today is the same as yesterday and nothing has occurred [sic] out of the usual routine. We had a sing song night at the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

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Thursday Nov. 22nd

Nothing has occurred [sic] today worth recording. Mrs Cowdell Barrett's concert party gave another good concert in the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

Friday Nov. 23rd

Things are much the same today. Went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

Letter
Number 9

No 2 Command Depot
Monte Video Camp
Weymouth England
Nov. 23rd 1917

Dera Mary

A few lines in answer to your very welcome letter which I received about a week ago. I also received a letter from Mr Billings by the same mail, and was surprised to hear that they had not received my previous letters, so from now on I am going to number

2

Them and also yours so that you will know whether you get them or not. This one is the ninth I have written you since I left so you will know whether you have got them all or not. I am pleased to say that I received that splendid parcel that you, and Mrs Billings sent me, and wrote straight away thanking you both for your kindness so I hope that you got those letters alright. This letter that I am

3

Answering now is dated July 15th and has only just reached me as I have been moving about a lot, and it takes some time to reach me. You said in your letter that you had wrote [sic] two letters to me a little while before this one but I am afraid they must have went [sic] down on the boat that you said had been sunk, as I never got them, the last letter I had from you was about

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three months before this one, I think there must be a lot more boats sunk than what we hear of over here. I was sorry to hear you had cut a piece out of your finger, but still I was able to read the letter alright, I started to write this letter in ink, but had to throw it away as the knib had a nasty habit [of?] kicking, so had to use the pencil instead. I was glad to hear that you had such a good time at the

5

Returned Soldiers Ball, so dont forget to let me have one of your photos of the dress you wore for the occasion. I was surprised to hear that you were learning pen painting and trust that you will get on with it alright you will no doubt be surprised to hear that while I was in hospital I learnt to do fancy work from one of the lady visitors who used to come around teaching it, and did some very

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nice things too, so you will have a rival in fancy work now, as I know you do a lot of it yourself. I was surprised to hear that they had a cheer up hut in Broken Hill, but feel sure that the soldiers will appreciate it, having somewhere for their recreation. Conlon seems to be very lucky always getting plenty of work. I dont know whether you knew or not, but a brother of his came away with us in the same reinforcements.

7

I hope you wont mind me saying so Mary, but I was very pleased to hear that it was off with McGregor, as he was not good enough for you, you deserve a better fate than to be tied up to a chap with his disposition. You said you had been having a lot of rain. Well Mary you ought to see it in this God forsaken country, I would be sorry to see a dog of mine live here, they have nine months

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rain, and the other three months it snows, and you know, how I like the winter, I would give all I possess to be able to feel the hot sun we have in Broken Hill if it was only for a few minutes. I was pleased to hear that you had so many good things given to you on the 23rd, I wish I had been there to supper with you, And have some of that jelly you was telling me about, but not Peaches they leave after affects you know.

9

I was pleased to hear that business was bucking up a bit, and hope it will continue to improve. I am glad to say that I am well, except for my knee that still gives me a bit of trouble, and I cant walk very far without a stick, but still I am not grumbling as there are plenty of men worse off than I am. Things are pretty serious over here just now with the Australians

10

They have been through all the heaviest fighting around Ypres this last couple of months, and it stands to reason our casualties have been pretty heavy, and it means if we dont get a lot of reinforcements soon that one if not more of our divisions will have to be cut up to reinforce the others. I have been lucky ? myself to have missed it, but it was not my fault, that I wasn't well

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enough to be in it. My brother was in it all, and I am sorry to say that today, I have had my letters to him, returned to me; and a letter from headquarters telling me that he is wounded and missing; and nobody knows, better than I what that means, but still I am hoping for the best, and I mean to move heaven, and earth to find out what has become of him. As I cant say

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anything in my letters home about it, until I do find out. Well Mary I think I will have to draw to a close now, with kind regards to your Father, Hazel, and yourself, also to Mr and Mrs Billings and the little ones from

your old friend, and pal

Jack Coventry

PS Still use the old address don't alter it

Jack

Saturday Nov. 24th

The weather has cleared up and it is a beautiful day today had the usual muster parade this afternoon. Did not go out today, but stayed in camp and went to the Y.M.C.A. pictures in the evening. The Y.M.C.A. secretary has put through an enquiry for me today, to find out where my brother is, he has been wounded.

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Sunday Nov. 25th

Went on church parade this morning, after which we were dismissed for the day, went for a short walk this afternoon, and returned to camp in time for tea. This evening I went to the service in the Y.M.C.A. hut; in the evening, and heard the Chickereel Ladies Choir, who were assisting at the service.

Monday Nov. 26th

Went on parade as usual today, and were all classified by the doctor and I was told to continue with the exercises. There was another good concert at the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

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Tuesday Nov. 27th

Things are much about the same today. Went to the gymnasium tonight, and heard a good concert given by a party from Bournemouth.

Wednesday Nov. 28th

Today is much the same as yesterday, Went to the song service at the Y.M.C.A. in the evening.

Thursday Nov. 29th

The weather has set in wet again today. There was [sic] the usual parades. In the evening Mrs Cowdell Barretts party gave another good concert at the Y.M.C.A. These concerts are very popular with the boys this party comes here every week.

168

Friday Nov. 30th

It has been very wt again today. Went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

Saturday Dec. 1st

Had the usual parades today, did not go out this afternoon. But went to the pictures at Y.M.C.A. in the evening.

Sunday Dec. 2nd

Went to the Church service at the Y.M.C.A. this morning and were then dismissed for the day. Went for a walk this afternoon and returned to camp in time for tea. In the evening went to the service at the Y.M.C.A.

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Monday Dec. 3rd

Went on parade as usual this morning, and went up again for our weekly classification, but was told to keep on with the exercises. In the evening I went to the concert in the Y.M.C.A. given by the "Ramblers" concert party.

Tuesday Dec. 4th

Today is much the same as yesterday, went to the pictures at the gymnasium tonight.

Wednesday Dec. 5th

The weather has cleared a bit today. Spent the afternoon writing letters. Went to the pictures at the gymnasium again tonight.

170

Thursday Dec. 6th

Today is much the same as yesterday. Mrs Cowdell Barretts concert party was at the Y.M.C.A. again tonight, so I went up there.

Friday Dec. 7th

Nothing much doing today. Went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

Saturday Dec. 8th

Went on parade this morning and we were all marched up to the gymnasium to be classified by a visiting colonel, after waiting there until a little after eleven, we were dismissed, and told to parade again at two o'clock in the afternoon.

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and we would be put through then. Well we went up this afternoon, and were all examined, a lot of the men being marked B.2.B., which means that they will be boarded for Australia. Did not go out anywhere today, except to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. in the evening.

Sunday Dec. 9th

Went to the Church service at the Y.M.C.A. hut this morning. There was also a fall of snow, but it did not last long, but it set in very cold this afternoon with a very strong wind blowing from the sea. Went to the evening service at the Y.M.C.A. which was assisted by the Chickereel Choir.

172

Monday Dec. 10th

It has been bitterly cold today with sleety rain, went up for reclassification again this afternoon, but was told to keep on with the exercises at the gymnasium, in the evening went to the concert at the gymnasium given by a party from Bournemouth.

Tuesday Dec. 11th

The weather has cleared a bit today, but it is bitterly cold out of doors, spent the afternoon writing letters home. There was another good concert in the Y.M.C.A. Hut this evening, given by a concert party from Bournemouth.

173

Wednesday Dec. 12th

Today has been a fine day after several days of very disagreeable weather. Received a large batch of letters from Australia today, also one from my brother George who had been reported wounded and missing, this was the first batch of letters I have had for six weeks and were the best birthday present I could have got as today happens to be my 30th birthday. Spent the afternoon answering some of the letters that I received, and in the evening went to see the picture show at the gymnasium, and had a good time.

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Thursday Dec. 13th

Things have been pretty quiet today, wrote some more letters this afternoon, went to the concert at the Y.M.C.A. hut in the evening, which was given by Mrs Cowdell Barretts party.

Friday Dec. 14th

Today we all had to go to the gymnasium for reclassification by a visiting colonel, who marked a lot of men B.2.B. and they will be boarded for Australia. The majority of the remainder were told to keep on with their exercises. In the evening there was an extra good program of pictures put on at the Y.M.C.A., and the majority of the boys went there.

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Saturday Dec. 15th

Went to the gymnasium as usual this morning, in the afternoon several of us went into Weymouth and spent a very pleasant afternoon there, had tea at the new Y.M.C.A. Building on the promenade; and returned to camp in time for the pictures in the Y.M.C.A. Hut, in the evening.

Sunday Dec. 16th

Went on church parade this morning, and while we were at church there was a heavy fall of hail, followed by a snowfall which lasted about half an hour. Did not go out this afternoon, but went to the service at the Y.M.C.A. hut in the evening.

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Monday Dec. 17th

Nothing much has occurred [sic] today, it has been raining nearly all [day?] and bitterly cold outside. Went to the concert at the Y.M.C.A. tonight.

Tuesday Dec. 18th

Things are just the same today and nothing out of the ordinary has occurred; Went to the concert at the Y.M.C.A. again tonight.

Wednesday Dec. 19th

The weather has cleared a bit today but it is very cold. Spent the afternoon writing letters. There is nothing on at the Y.M.C.A. tonight or tomorrow night as they are doing the hut up for Christmas, So I went to the pictures at the gymnasium.

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Thursday Dec. 20th

Had the usual parade this morning, but this afternoon every man in our company had to go up for reclassification, by the major and a Captain, and they altered the treatment for a lot of us; and I have been put on electrical treatment now, and have to report to the doctor at the Electrical, and massage hut in the morning for further examination. Our hut was awarded first prize today for cleanliness, and we were all granted, a pass from 2 o'clock in the afternoon until a quarter past eleven, and the majority of us went into Weymouth, and had a very

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enjoyable time, we had tea at the soldiers club, and then went to the Jubilee hall in the evening, where we saw a good vaudeville and picture show. The show finished at eight o'clock, and we had a good look around the town afterwards, the shops have all been decorated up for Christmas, and present a bright appearance, there seems to be a fair supply of poultry about, but the prices are very high, Turkeys were from 2/6 to 3/5 per lb. And ordinary table fowls were 10/- each and better sorts of birds were fetching as much as 12/6 each.

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Friday Dec. 21st

Went up and reported at the Massage hut this morning, and was examined by the doctor, who put the electric battery on my leg and was told to report again Monday morning to continue with the electric treatment. Did not go out anywhere today but spent the afternoon writing letters. In the evening went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A.

Saturday Dec. 22nd

Had the usual parades today, stopped in camp again this afternoon, and went to the picture show, at the Y.M.C.A. in the evening. The Y.M.C.A. looks well now they have finished doing it up for Christmas.

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Sunday Dec. 23rd

Went on church parade this morning, went for a walk into Chickereel this afternoon, and returned to camp in time for tea. In the evening the Chickereel Ladies Choir came to the service at the Y.M.C.A. Hut, to assist in the service there, and the evening was spent in singing Christmas carols, and was greatly enjoyed, by the great number of Australians who attended the service, I myself spent one of the most enjoyable nights, I have ever had at the Y.M.C.A. Hut.

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Monday Dec. 24th

Today a large number of men, who have been granted four days Christmas leave with their friends left here, and the rest of us were all put together in a few huts, so as to make it easier for everyone on Christmas day instead of having the men scattered among the different huts in the lines. There looks to be every prospect of us all having a good time tomorrow as the Y.M.C.A. are making great preparations for giving us a rousing good time, and they have decorated the gymnasium up ready for tomorrows concerts. And the officers, and cooks have

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made great preparations for giving us a real good Christmas dinner. This evening a great number of us went into Weymouth, and we got a good idea what Christmas Eve in an English town is like, although of course things are a lot different to what they would be in peace time, The majority of the shops had a very good show; although there is of course a shortage in foodstuffs, and prices are high. In one shop a poulterers the Turkeys were from 2/- to 3/- per lb. And rabbits 1/8 each, fruit was very dear, and fish was fetching

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a good price too. The brilliant effect of the shops was spoilt to a great extent by, the darkness of the streets, on account of the lighting restrictions. After spending a very lively, and enjoyable time in town, we went and had a fivepenny fish and chips supper, and then set off on our return to camp. It was a beautiful moonlight night so we walked out to the camp at Monte Video, a distance of about two, and a half miles, and got back in time to have a cup of tea at the Y.M.C.A. before closing time.

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Tuesday Dec. 25th

We had the usual morning parade, after which there was a combined denomination church parade in the Y.M.C.A. hut. This morning we had porridge, and fried sausages, and bacon, with potatoes, and

two slices of bread and margarine for breakfast. The Christmas dinner they gave us was splendid, we started off with soup, and was followed by turkey, and ham, with roast potatoes green peas, cabbage, and parsnips; and a very liberal allowance of pudding; and each man had an apple, and a

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handful of nuts, and each man had a pint of beer issued to him. In the afternoon there was a splendid concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut given by a number one party from Bournemouth, and at the same time there was another concert going on in the gymnasium, given by the Drury Laners, a party of convalescent soldiers from Westham Camp, for tea we had cold ham, and cake, bread and margarine, and jam, and more apples and nuts. After tea, There was another concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut.

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given by number two company from Bournemouth, and was every bit as good as the one we saw in the afternoon; there was also a second concert in the gymnasium, given by a party from London. After the evening concerts were over, we were all given a free supper by the Y.M.C.A. and were waited on by a party of Ladies from the surrounding district, the Y.M.C.A. also supplied us all with cigarettes, and our hearty thanks are due to these ladies, and also to all the members of these

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concert parties, who sacrificed their own Christmas to make us happy. Our hearty thanks are also due to the C.O. and other officers of this command who did all in their power, to give us a good [time?]. At the conclusion of the evening three hearty cheers were given for the concert parties, three more for the heads of this camp and also three cheers for the good old Y.M.C.A. who do so much for us chaps. And so ended a very happy day and we all went to our huts and bed, in a very contented state.

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Wednesday Dec. 26th

Things have quietened down a bit today, but the boys are still talking about the good time they had yesterday. I forgot to mention yesterday that we received a Christmas greeting each from the Australian Red Cross Society wishing us the compliments of the season, and also informing us, that the Christmas parcels had been delayed in transit, but they hoped to hand them out later on. We also got a card today, from the Australian Comforts funds, wishing us

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every success. This afternoon we each had a pocket wallet with writing pad envelopes, and pencil, given to us, with the compliments of the Y.M.C.A. and were very acceptable, and useful presents. There was a good program of pictures put on at the gymnasium this evening so I went there. After the pictures were over, I went to the Y.M.C.A. hut, and spent the rest of the evening there reading some of the Australian papers, about nine o'clock I had some supper, and then returned to the hut and to bed.

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Thursday Dec. 27th

Went on parade at the usual time this morning, and fifty of us were picked out, to go to the funeral of Private Richard Peek of the 23rd battalion, who died in hospital here. We were dismissed to get ready, and had to parade again at a quarter to ten, when we moved off and marched to the Sydney hall Hospital in the town where the funeral was to start from, it was a large military funeral, the coffin was carried on a gun carriage, and

192 [*He's missed page number 191*]

was drawn by a number of his mates, at the graveside the firing party fired three rounds over the grave, and the buglers played the last post, after the funeral was over we marched back to camp which we reached in time for dinner. We had the usual afternoon parade. After tea another chap and myself took a walk into town, and went to the Jubilee hall, where there was a first class picture, and vaudeville show. After the show, we returned to camp arriving back about nine.

192 [*He's repeated the page number*]

Friday Dec. 28th

Things have settled again now. We had the usual parades today, but six [of?] us were exempt as it was our turn to do camp picket, wrote a few letters this afternoon. In the evening I went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. hut, they had an extra good program and there was [sic] a large number of the boys there. After the pictures were over, stayed and had a look at the papers, until closing time, at nine o'clock.

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Saturday Dec. 29th

Had the usual parades today. Went up for electrical treatment again this morning. Went for a walk into town this afternoon, but returned to camp in time for tea. After tea went to the picture show at the Y.M.C.A. hut. After the pictures were over I stopped there and wrote some letters home. After which I had a yarn with one of our own battalion men, who is a new arrival from France, and we stopped together until closing time.

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Sunday Dec. 30th

Went on church parade this morning, and after that was over, I spent the rest of the morning writing letters. After dinner went for a walk to Chickerel, but returned to camp in time for tea. Went to the Y.M.C.A. hut in the evening, and stayed to the services, which was assisted again by the Chickerel ladies Choir. We have been having fine weather lately, but has been cold, and heavy frosts at night, but, in the daytime, the sun comes out, and brightens things up.

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Monday Dec. 31st

Had the usual parades today. But did not go up for reclassification; although we had the usual weekly medical inspection. After the morning parade, I went to the red cross hut, and did some writing until dinner time. Put in the afternoon at the Y.M.C.A. hut, reading the papers there, until tea time. After tea I went to the concert at the Y.M.C.A. which was every bit as good as the previous concerts that have been given there.

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Tuesday Jan. 1st 1918

Today is a holiday; and it is an open camp for all hands. Went into town for a walk this afternoon, but returned to camp in time for tea. In the evening there was another very good concert given at the Y.M.C.A. hut, So I went to hear it.

Wednesday Jan. 2nd

We have settled down into the ordinary routine of camp life again. We all had to go up for reclassification this afternoon, and a lot of us myself included have been marked B.I.A.1. So expect to be shifted shortly.

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Thursday Jan. 3rd

Today has been a beautiful day, and it is quite a treat to get fine weather at this time of year; as this time last year; it was the worse [sic] winter they had had for twenty nine years. After tea a mate and myself went into Weymouth, where there was a first class vaudeville and picture show, and we spent a very pleasant evening there. After the show we had supper in town and returned to camp again about nine o'clock.

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Friday Jan. 4th

When we went on parade this morning a number of us were warned for draft and told that we would be leaving for Westham Camp today; First of all we had to parade to the medical hut for inoculation [sic], after which we were dismissed until dinner time. After dinner we had to pack our kits, and parade with them at half past one ready to move off. We left camp at two o'clock and marched to Westham. On our arrival there we had another medical

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inspection, and had our details taken. We were then issued with our blankets, allotted to our huts, and were free for the night. After tea several of us took a walk across to the Y.M.C.A. picture palace, which is free to all soldiers, and put in a couple of hours there. After the pictures were over we returned to camp and put in the rest of the evening in the red cross hut which is nicely fitted up with, books papers writing papers, and stationary [sic], and had two splendid fires going in the stoves.

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Saturday Jan. 5th

Went on parade this morning, but were not kept long before we were dismissed again. Put in the morning looking around the camp, went to the red cross hut first of all, and wrote a couple of letters, and then went across to the Y.M.C.A. hut and had a look at some of the later Adelaide papers there. After dinner went to the canteen recreation room, where they have a fine billiard table, and also a good library. Went to the Y.M.C.A. pictures again in the evening.

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Sunday Jan. 6th

We were warned for draft this morning, and told that we would be leaving for Hurdcott tomorrow. We had to have another medical inspection this morning to see that we were all fit to travel; after which we were free for the rest of the day. Spent the afternoon writing letters, in the red cross hut, and also sent a parcel home to Australia. After tea went to the service in the Y.M.C.A. hut and had a good time there.

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Monday Jan. 7th

Had to rise at half past five this morning, and had breakfast at six. We had to hand in our blankets at half past six, also our kit bags, and we moved off from camp at seven o'clock. The band played us

down to [the?] station, and we entrained at eight o'clock for Hurdcott, which we reached about a quarter to three. On our arrival we had another medical inspection at the receiving huts, We then had our kit bags issued to us, and were then marched down to number twelve

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camp, where we were soon issued with our blankets and allotted to our huts. We were given a hot tea, which we appreciated after our journey. After tea a number of us took a walk down to the Y.M.C.A. hut in number eleven camp, where we spent the rest of the evening.

Tuesday Jan. 8th

Went on parade at a quarter to nine this morning, and were taken up to the medical hut for classification. In the afternoon we went for a route march of about three miles, and returned to camp about

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four o'clock, and were, then dismissed. After tea another chap and myself, went down to No 11 Camp, The Albany Ward vaudeville circuit have a camp theatre there, and we went in to see the show, There was only three pictures and two vaudeville turns, but still we couldn't growl as we only paid fourpence to see the show. After the show we had some supper at the Y.M.C.A. hut, and returned to camp again about nine o'clock.

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Wednesday Jan. 9th

Went on parade at the usual time this morning, and were marched down to number eleven camp for dental inspection, returning to our own camp in time for dinner. This afternoon, we went for another route march, of about four miles, and returned to camp and were dismissed about half past three. After tea took a walk down to the Y.M.C.A hut in No 10 Camp, and then went to the Salvation Army hut for supper, after which we returned to our own camp.

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Thursday Jan 10th

This morning we went for a four mile route march and returned to camp in time for dinner. This afternoon we were on physical jerks, for an hour, and then went for a short march. After tea a pal and myself went down to the Y.M.C.A. hut, where we stopped for a while, and then went into the Salvation Army hut, to write a few letters, and stopped to the evening service, returning to camp again about nine o'clock.

[Envelope Insignia/badge, top left-hand corner says
Australian Commonwealth Military Forces
Australian Y.M.C.A.]

The letter itself is written on paper with the Y.M.C.A. triangle in red over an outline map of Australia, and the words *Y.M.C.A. with the Australian Force* in the top left-hand corner.

Letter

No number

*No4 Command Depot
 Hurdcott Mills
 England
 Jan 10th 1918*

Dear Mary

A few lines in answer to your letter dated Sept. 17th I answered the one dated Sept 10th about a week ago, so hope you get it alright. I was sorry to hear that business was so bad in the shop, but still I expect it is no more than what could be expected, with all the men out on strike, but I hope that things bucked up, and that you had a good Christmas. It would be a bit off to have all those toys and cards ordered for Christmas, and then have them left on your hands, So hope that you got rid of them.

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all. You were saying that you often wish that I were in Australia, and I can tell you that you don't wish it any more than I do, but I would like to see things settled over here first. You were also asking me if I had seen many pretty sights over here, well I have seen a few, but I can tell you that I am fed up with this god forsaken country, it is nearly always raining, when it isn't raining it is snowing, and there is mud and slush everywhere, and that cold, it is hard work to get warm at all. I have had a cold on and off ever since, I landed in this country, and I don't think I will ever get rid of it, while I stay here, I will tell you straight the prettiest sight I would like

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to see now, is a good old Broken Hill dust storm, so as I could feel warm once more. You might think I am stretching it a bit saying this but I really mean it and when I get back to Broken Hill, it will take a mighty big team of bullocks to drag me out of it. I thought that was a splendid idea you mentioned in your letter of keeping up your birthday, by asking the ladies to bring something for supper, and the gents to pay 1/6 each for the hall. I was sorry to hear that Mrs Billings was ill, and I sincerely hope that it was nothing

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serious, and that she is alright again. I don't know what sort of Christmas you spent, but I sincerely hope you had a good time. We had a bonzer time at Monte Video Camp. On Christmas Day, We had Porridge, and fried sausages, and bacon for breakfast, after breakfast we had a church parade, for dinner we had soup, Turkey and ham, with roast potatoes, and plenty of plum pudding, followed by apples, and nuts, and washed down with a pint of beer. In the afternoon there was [sic] two very good concerts, one in the Y.M.C.A. hut, and the other in the gymnasium, for tea we had cold ham, cake, bread, and margarine, and jam and, more apples and nuts, in the evening there was another

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concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut, and after that was over, the Y.M.C.A. gave us all a free supper, there was also a second concert in the gymnasium, so you can see we spent a very happy time. You will see by the heading of this letter that I am back in a training camp again so don't suppose it will be long now, before I am back in the thick of the fighting. I have met Frank Hyman since I have been in this camp, in fact he is with me now, and wishes to be remembered to you, he has been ill but is alright again now, Dick is

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still with the battalion and going strong. Well dear friend I don't know that there is much more this time I will write again soon, So I will close now with kind regards to your father and Hazel, and also to Mr and Mrs Billings and the kiddies, and all good wishes to yourself from your affectionate

Pal Jack Coventry

Friday Jan. 11th

Had the usual parades today, went for another route march this morning and returned in time for dinner. Went for a second march this afternoon, of about four miles, taking the same route as in the morning. We returned to the camp and were dismissed about half past three. Did not go out after tea, as ten of us were picked out, and put on fire picket, and have to remain in camp all night, in case of a fire breaking out.

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Saturday Jan. 12th

Went on parade at the usual time this morning, and had to go up for medical inspection. After the inspection I was detailed to assist in the bread house in cutting up and issuing the dry rations, had to go back this afternoon again to issue the rations for tea. After [tea?] went down to the Y.M.C.A. where there was to have been a concert given by a party from Bristol. But they never turned up.

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Sunday Jan. 13th

Was on duty at the bread house again today, so did not go on the church parade. This afternoon my pal and myself went for a walk, as it was a fine day, and returned to our camp again in time for tea. After tea we went to the Y.M.C.A. first of all, and then afterwards we went into the Salvation Army hut to write a few letters, and after having supper there we returned to camp.

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Monday Jan. 14th

Was in the bread house again today, but had to go up for re-classification before going there. After tea went to the Y.M.C.A. for a while, and afterwards went to the church of England hut to write some letters.

Tuesday Jan. 15th

It has been raining all day today, I am in the bread house still, Did not go out after tea but stopped in our hut and wrote some letters, as it was too wet to go out anywhere.

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Wednesday Jan. 16th

Still on duty at the bread house. This morning we were all paraded, and marched down to number eleven camp, where we were all issued with our Christmas boxes, from the Australian Red Cross society, after which we returned to our own camp, and we were soon investigating the contents of our

boxes. The gift turned out to be a most acceptable one, each box, containing two tins of Havelock tobacco, 1 tin of butterscotch, 1 tin of chocolate,

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1 tin of acid drops, 1 tin of mint lozenges, 1 packet of cigarette papers, a pipe and a Christmas greeting card. After tea another chap, and myself, took a walk down to the Y.M.C.A. for a while, and then went into the church of England hut, where we spent the evening writing letters.

Thursday Jan. 17th

Things are just about the same today, am still at the bread store. Went to the salvation army hut this evening to the service, after which I wrote a couple of letters.

Letter No 12

[No location is given]

January 17th/18

Dear Mary

Again I take the pleasure of writing you a few lines in answer to your letter dated 30th September. I was pleased to hear that you are still in the land of the living, and doing a fair amount of kicking as well. I am pretty right again, and have started training again, but don't know yet, whether the knee will stand it, or break down again, as they can never depend on a synovitis case. Glad to hear that your first pie was a

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success, wish I had been there to sample it, it is so cold here that when we come back after a march, we have such an appetite, that we feel as if we could eat a horse and his jockey. I hope that the sponge cake, and lemon cheese, turned out alright, as I am looking forward to having a good feed when I come back ;but no peach Jelly thank you, as it is bad stuff to walk to Railway town on, remember that one. I was rather surprised to hear that you had no trains running to Broken Hill during the strike things must have been pretty tight in the food line. I was not surprised to hear that

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the strikers had sent to the government for relief, as I know what they are. How is Mrs Billings I hope she is well again, remember me to her and Mr Billings and give my love to Mickie and Mavis I often think of you all, and am looking forward to the time when I will see you again. There is one thing the war has done that is show me who really are my friends, and you can take it from me, I am finished with the crowd at the South. Was glad to hear you had

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a good time at the lodge on Presidents night, the lodge room must have looked alright, with the sturt pea decorations, I think they are a very pretty flower myself. Was sorry to hear that you had such rotten weather on eight hours day. It must have been very disappointing for Hazel, to have had such a rotten day for their picnic. Was sorry to hear that you were not feeling up to the mark and hope that you are alright again long before you get this letter. Well Mary I hope you will excuse a short letter as there is really no news to tell you, So I will close with kind regards to all from your affectionate pal

Jack Coventry

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Friday Jan. 18th

We have had another heavy fall of snow, today, and it kept on all day. Am still on duty in the bread store, and it is the best place to be on a day like it has been today. Went down to the salvation Army hut tonight but did not stay there long, as we went on to the Church of England hut, and spent the evening there reading, and returned to camp again about half past eight.

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Saturday Jan. 19th

The weather has cleared a bit today, and the snow has all gone, but there is plenty of mud about. Went out for a walk this afternoon, with a mate, and had a look in at the red cross hut for a while, but returned to camp again in time for tea. After tea we went out again, and went to the Y.M.C.A. first of all, where we stayed for a while, and then went into the salvation Army hut, where we spent the rest of the evening.

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Sunday Jan. 20th

Was on duty at the bread store again this morning, so did not have to go on church parade. This afternoon, my pal and myself went for another walk, and returned to camp again in time for tea. Did

not go out after tea, but remained in camp, A number of us have been notified that we will be leaving to go on our furlough on Tuesday, and we have to go up for medical inspection tomorrow morning.

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Monday Jan. 21st

This morning those of us who are going on furlough tomorrow had to go up for medical inspection. After which we were marched down to headquarters, where we were paid, what money we had due to us; and we paid the money for our fares into the furlough office. After tea several of us had to parade to the quarter master's store to have some clothes changed and be issued with any shortages; when we got back we had to pack our kits ready to hand in first thing in the morning, we then spent the rest of the evening getting everything ready.

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Tuesday Jan. 22nd

We were all up early this morning, and handed in our kit bags before breakfast, we had to parade, at the medical hut for inspection by the doctor, and then had to be inspected by the O.C. of the camp, who gave us a few words of advice we were then marched down to the furlough office where we were issued with our passes, railway tickets, and also our sugar cards entitling us to 2 ozs of sugar a day while on leave, it is necessary for us to have these sugar cards now, as on account of the sugar

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restrictions it is hard to get sugar, as there is such a big shortage of sugar in the country. After getting everything fixed up, we set off for "Dinton" railway station, (about two and a half miles away), where we were to catch the train for London. We eventually reached London about half past two in the afternoon, and first of all we went around to peel house, and fixed up about our rooms, and then went on to Headquarters at Horsefery Road where we drew, our £2/16/- ration money, which is allowed to all men on sick fur

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lough. After getting away from there, we went back to peel House to tea. After tea, my mate and myself, went to see "Chu-Chin-Chow" at his majesty's theatre, and enjoyed it very much the stage decorations, and costumes being wonderful. After the show we returned to peel house, the accommodation here is good, there are both hot and cold Baths, splendid lavatory arrangements a good billiard room, a recreation room, well supplied, with reading, and writing, material, nicely furnished with, arm chairs, & cetera. There is also

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a cloak room where we can leave any kit or spare luggage we may have at a small charge of one penny, there is also a barbers shop, and also a bootblack attached to the place. The charges here are very reasonable, being one shilling and elevenpence for bed and breakfast; and every man has a cubicle to himself, with a cupboard to keep his things in, and there is no extra charge for the use of the baths; Besides the dining room, there is also a large café attached to the building, and our meal tickets are good in either.

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Wednesday Jan. 23rd

Rose fairly early this morning and the first thing I did was to go to the Commonwealth Bank, and draw the ten pounds remittance, that I had sent through from Australia. After I got away from the bank, I took a bus out to Clapham common, to visit Mrs Hibbs, and Mrs Paddison, the two Ladies, who used to visit at the Southwark Military Hospital when I was a patient there; after having dinner with them, we all returned to town together, and called at peel house to pick up my mate, and then the four of us went to the Palladium Theatre. After the show was over, we had tea together, and then Mrs

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Hibbs had to leave us to get back home; So the three of us, met a friend of Mrs Paddisons, and we went to a picture show in the evening, after the pictures were over we had supper, and then saw the ladies home; returning ourselves to Peel House about twelve.

Thursday Jan. 24th

This morning, my mate and I had a walk round town we went into the Aldwych Theatre, which has been taken over by the Y.M.C.A. and, is fitted out as an up-to-date hostel, and café for the soldiers. And there are continuous entertainments going on from 2.30PM until eleven o'clock every night. My mate, went back to Peel House, to dinner but I

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went out to Clapham Common to Mrs Hibbs house, and had dinner with them, and then in the afternoon, Mrs Hibbs and myself went down to Harefield Hospital, to see a pal of mine Bill Kekewick who is seriously wounded, and expects to be returning home to Australia shortly. On arrival at Harefield I was very pleased to find that Bill was up and able to get about, and we had a very pleasant

afternoon together, we returned to town again about seven o'clock, and had tea in Town with Mrs Paddison, after which we went out

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to Clapham Common, and spent the evening there. I also called in to see Mrs Martin, who lives a few doors from Mrs Hibbs, and whose daughter Ida is in the Womens Army Auxiliary Corps in France, and who came to the Southwark Hospital several times to see me; while she was home on leave. Mrs Martin was very pleased to see me, and I spent a very pleasant couple of hours with them. Mrs Martin's only son was killed in France in October; and they all feel their loss very keenly.

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Friday Jan. 25th

This morning I went for a walk around several of the places of interest in London; and went on to Mrs Hibbs to dinner. In the afternoon Mrs Hibbs and myself returned to town, and went to The West End Cinema, where Mrs Paddison works, and had a very enjoyable afternoon there. We had tea in town, and then returned to Clapham Common together, and spent the evening there with Mr Hibbs, and we all spent a very enjoyable evening together. I returned to the town again about half past ten.

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Saturday Jan. 26th

This morning I met Mrs Paddison in town, and we did some shopping together. We had dinner together in town; after which Mrs Paddison went on to the West End Cinema, and I went out to Mrs Hibbs, and then the two of us went to see Mrs Jervis another lady, who used to have us to her house for tea when I was at the Southwark Hospital we, spent a very pleasant afternoon with Mrs Jervis, and returned to Mrs Hibbs house for tea, and had another pleasant evening with Mrs Hibbs, and the children

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Sunday Jan. 27th

Went for a short walk this morning, as it was a lovely day, and then I returned to Peel House, and did some writing until dinner time. After dinner I went up to town again, and met Mrs Paddison, and we went out to Harefield hospital together to see my pal Bill Kekewick we had a pleasant time together at Harefield, and returned to town again about seven o'clock. And went to Mrs Paddison's home, where, I met some very nice people, and spent a very pleasant evening with them.

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Monday Jan. 28th

Was up fairly early this morning, and after breakfast drew my things out of the kit store, paid my bill, and set off to the Euston railway station, where I caught the half past nine train for Liverpool, I met some very nice people in the train, and we passed the time very pleasantly. We arrived at Liverpool about one o'clock, and my cousin Murray Pamment who is over on leave from France; was at the station to meet me and we went out to-

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gether to Aighurtle[?], which is a twopenny tram ride from town, on arrival there I received a great reception from my cousin Mrs M[W?]eldon, and was soon made at home. We had a great yarn, as we had so much to tell one another, as it is about twenty years since we last saw one another. And when the two kiddies came home from school there was great excitement, to think that they had two Australian uncles to see them at the same time. There [sic] only regret was that their father was away at sea.

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Tuesday Jan. 29th

This morning my cousin Murray and myself, went into town and spent the morning at the Liverpool Museum, which is one of the finest of its kind I have seen. In the afternoon We went to one of the picture shows, and saw a fine picture of the life of "Lord Kitchener", it was a seven reel picture and was a splendid picture from start to finish, it showed the whole of his life from the time he first became a soldier. Right up to the time of his

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unfortunate end in the present war. After the pictures came out we went to do a bit of shopping. Shopping is a time of worry for the women folk in these times, they are only allowed a certain amount of meat per head, for those in the family, and are not allowed any at all for children under the age of five. All day long you can see long queues of people waiting outside the butchers shops, to get a little, and it is quite a common thing for a woman to have to wait for over an hour for

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her turn, and then only be able to get, a pound of meat. It is just as bad at the grocers shops where they often have to stand in a queue for an hour and a half to get half a pound of margarine. Sugar is scarce, and householders have to get sugar cards from the food controllers, showing how much they are

entitled to, before they can procure any; eggs are five shillings a dozen, rabbits are from 2/- to 3/8 each, cooked chickens which are very small are from 8/6 to 12/6 each,

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small oranges, are 5/- per dozen, apples are the same price; Lollies are scarce, and shop keepers will only sell a limited amount to each customer, the price for mixed lollies being about 3/8 a lb. Fish is also very dear. We returned to Aigh...? to tea, and in the evening we all went to, the concert given by the Holt school to which my cousins two children attend. It was a real good turn out, and we spent a very pleasant time there. Many prominent public people were there, and gave speeches.

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Wednesday Jan. 30th

This morning my cousin and myself went into the museum again, as we never saw half the things they have there yesterday. They have a wonderful collection of pottery, also a fine collection of war medals, and the names of the men who won them. They also have one of the finest collections of birds, that I have ever seen, and down in the basement, they have a large aquarium [sic], and all sorts of fish in glass tanks. We returned home for dinner, and as it is the

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childrens half holiday from school, we all went to the dingle picture show. After the show was over we returned to tea, and spent the evening at home.

Thursday Jan 31st

This morning my cousin had to return to London to report at Headquarters. I went into the Lime [?] St station to see him off, and then I caught the half past ten train to Manchester to visit Mrs Petts. On my arrival at Manchester, I went to 34 Lever St, where I met Mrs Petts son Hoyland who is in the furnishing

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business there. We went out and had lunch together, We then arranged to meet again a [sic] five oclock, when Mrs Petts came off from business and to go out together to his home, as his mother is at present stopping with them. I first of all went to the Y.M.C.A. hut where I wrote a few letters and then I took a circular route, tram and had a pleasant trip right round one of the prettiest parts of Manchester. I returned again, and met Mr Petts at five oclock,

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and we caught the train out to "Cheadle Hulme" to his home, on our arrival there, both his wife and mother made me very welcome, and we spent a very pleasant evening together, I stopped the night with them, but will be returning to Liverpool again tomorrow.

Friday Feb. 1st

Mr Petts did not go to business this morning as he was not too well, so we had more chance of talking to one another. I remained with them to dinner, and when I left in the afternoon to

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return to Manchester, to catch my train for Liverpool Mrs Petts came up to town with me to see me off. I arrived back at Liverpool, about seven oclock, and it was not very long before I was out at Aigh...th again, the kiddies were glad to see me back again, and we spent the evening together.

Saturday Feb. 2nd

This morning I went into town, and spent the morning at the Walker Art Gallery, which is a fine big building and has a splendid collection

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of pictures, and one would need at least a couple of days to look through it properly, I returned to Aighwith[?] to dinner, and in the afternoon we all went to the public park, where they have a beautiful artificial lake, and also a yatching [sic] club, and I saw some beautiful model yatches [sic] on the lake, there is also a beautiful big Palm house, with a fine selection of flowers in it including some fine orchids, we also went and had a look at the averies [sic]

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where there is a fine collection of parrets [sic], cockatoos, pheasants, ducks Hawks, Ravens, as well as a number of small birds of all descriptions. We returned home to tea and then in the evening we all went to the Dingle Picture show.

Sunday Feb. 3rd

This morning the kiddies and I took a tram ride out to Caulderstone Park. This park is nicely situated right out from the town, and is a very pretty place, we spent the morning there, and

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returned home again in time for dinner. In the afternoon we all went down to the Pier Head where we caught a ferry boat across to Brighton beach, where we spent the afternoon, we had tea there, and returned again about seven oclock. In the evening we did not go out anywhere, but stayed at home, I

wrote a few letters, and then had to get my things together, as I will have to be leaving early in the morning to catch the train back to London.

Letter Card plus photos

LIVERPOOL
Feb 3rd (19)18

Dear Mary

A few lines to let you know that I am still alive and kicking. I am sending you a few pictures of Liverpool, where I am at present, on my holidays. I have been to Manchester, had a few days in London, seen a few of the shows, and some of the seaside resorts, and had an all round good time, but like all good things, my holidays are nearly over, this is Sunday night, and I have to report back to camp on Tuesday night. I am just sending you a few views of Liverpool, but will write you a long letter when I get back to camp, and tell you all the news, as there isn't room here to tell you, remember me to Mr and Mrs Billings, and the kiddies. How are things looking in the hill better I hope. Give my kind regards to your father and Hazel, and accept some yourself from your affectionate pal Jack Coventry.

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Monday Feb. 4th

Had to rise early this morning and left Aigh... at seven o'clock. The kiddies came part of the way with me. I caught the ten to eight train from Liverpool, and was back in London about a quarter to one. On arrival there I went straight to Peel House, where I put my things in the kit store booked my bed, and then went up to the Y.M.C.A. Aldwych Theatre where I spent the afternoon. In the evening I called at the West End Cinema, and

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saw Mrs Paddison, and we went home together to her place, and then we arranged to go out to Mrs Hibbs together tomorrow morning.

Tuesday Feb. 5th

This morning I went for a final look around, and then went on to Clapham Common to Mrs Hibbs house. Mrs Paddison was there too, but she could not stay long as she had to get back to business; but I stopped to dinner; in the afternoon, Mrs Hibbs came up to town with me and we did some

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shopping together. We had some lunch together and then I had to go back to Peel House to get my things, and then had to make my way to Waterloo Station to catch the six o'clock train back to camp. There was a big crowd of us returning to camp and we had a special train to take us back. Mrs Hibbs came to the station to see me off. We arrived at the Wilton Station, which was the nearest to our camp about a quarter past nine, and caught

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motors from there back to camp which we reached before ten o'clock. After handing in our passes we were allotted to our huts, and were in bed by the time lights out had blown.

Wednesday Feb. 6th

This morning we had to parade at half past eight for medical inspection, and then had to parade a second time for, reclassification. Had the usual afternoon parade, In the evening went down to the Y.M.C.A. hut and wrote a few letters. Received a batch of letters from home this afternoon.

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Thursday Feb. 7th

Had the usual parade today including a route march this morning and another in the afternoon. After tea I went for a walk down to the Church of England hut, where I spent the evening writing letters.

Friday Feb. 8th

Went for a route march this morning. And again this afternoon. After tea I went for a walk down to the Y.M.C.A. hut at No 9 Camp, to get a few things, and then returned to our own camp; and spent the evening in the recreation hut.

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Saturday Feb. 9th

Went for a route march again this morning, but this afternoon was a half holiday. So as it was a fine afternoon, several of us went for a walk, but returned again in time for tea. After tea I went down to the Y.M.C.A. hut where I spent the evening.

Sunday Feb. 10th

Went on church parade again this morning after which we were free for the day. Went for another walk this afternoon, but was not away long, in the evening went down to the Y.M.C.A. hut, again received a parcel from home.

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Monday Feb. 11th

Went on parade as usual this morning, but did not go for a route march we had physical jerks instead. This afternoon I was among those picked for the Milton picket, so had the afternoon off. We had tea at the usual time, and left at half past five, to go into Milton. It is about four miles to Milton. We marched in, and reported we then went to the Y.M.C.A. where, we had to wait in case we were wanted. We left on our return journey about nine o'clock.

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Tuesday Feb. 12th

This morning was picked out with a party of others for camp fatigue, so did no other work. In the evening went to a very good concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut given by the Royal Scarlet entertainers.

Wednesday Feb. 13th

This morning a number of us were warned for reclassification so did not go on the march but were given physical jerks instead. The doctor could not put us all through before dinner, so the rest of us will be put through tomorrow. Was on fatigue again this afternoon, digging a

250

trench at the back of the canteen. After tea, another chap and myself went to the picture and vaudeville show at the Camp Theatre, but the show was a very poor one.

Thursday Feb. 14th

This morning had to go up for classification and was marked B.I.A.4. so don't expect to remain much longer in this camp now. Went for route march this afternoon. After tea, my mate and myself, went to the pictures at the Y.M.C.A. hut; after the pictures were over, I wrote a couple of letters and then returned to camp.

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Friday Feb. 15th

Went on parade this morning, but was warned for inoculation [sic], we have to be inoculated [sic] every six months, so as to prevent us catching any diseases that may be about. After being inoculated [sic] we are exempt from duty for 48 hours. So have spent the afternoon writing. This evening went to a concert in the Y.M.C.A.

Saturday Feb. 16th

Had the usual medical inspection this morning, went for a walk this afternoon. And to the Camp variety theatre in the evening

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Sunday Feb. 17th

Went on church parade this morning after which we were finished for the day. Went for a walk this afternoon but returned in time for tea. After tea went to the camp cinema.

Monday Feb. 18th

This morning was picked for guard; and after doing about half an hours guard drill we were dismissed, until four o'clock. At four o'clock we mounted guard, as there is only one post, and we only do two shifts, of 1 hour and twenty minutes each.

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Tuesday Feb. 19th

On account of being on guard, we slept in the guard room. We were relieved at four o'clock this afternoon, and after tea, another chap and myself went to the show at the camp theatre.

Wednesday Feb. 20th

Had to go on dental parade this morning; there is a new order out now, that every B.I.A.4. man is to go on dental parade every day until his teeth are fixed. Had an impression taken for a top plate, and then was on physical jerks for the rest of the day.

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Thursday Feb. 21st

Was on dental again today, had the bight taken this morning, and then was on physical jerks again for the rest of the day. In the evening went to the camp theatre again.

Friday Feb. 22nd

On dental again, today, had a second fit with my teeth this morning and was on physical jerks again afterwards. After tea went to a very good concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut given by Miss Rena Gara's concert party some of whom are Australian ladies from western Australia

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Saturday Feb. 23rd

Was on dental, again this morning, and got my teeth on the plate, given to me, so I am finished dental now. We had to do physical jerks as usual until dinner time, There was no parade this afternoon, so I went for a walk, but returned in time for tea, after tea went to the Y.M.C.A.

Sunday Feb. 24th

Went on church parade this morning, and when we returned to camp, a dozen of us were picked out to go into Milton on picket tonight. Spent the afternoon

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writing letters in the Red Cross hut. At five thirty we set off for Milton it is about a four mile march into Milton; on our arrival, we went to the Y.M.C.A. where we had to wait in case, we were wanted. At nine o'clock, we had to patrol round the village, and then set off on our return to camp which we reached about a quarter past ten. We were lucky to strike such a fine moonlight night, and we enjoyed the trip.

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Monday Feb. 25th

Went on parade as usual this morning, and was picked out along with some others for canteen fatigue, there was not much to do, and we were finished by ten o'clock. After tea my mate and I went to the camp theatre.

Tuesday Feb. 26th

This morning a number of us were put on cook house fatigue, but there was not much to do, and it didn't take us long to finish.

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THE PAGES 258 – 302 ARE THE WORDS OF POEMS/SONGS COPIED OUT: *To the girls we left behind; Eve of Battle; Stretcher Bearers*, etc. They take up the rest of Diary 3.

WAS THERE A 4TH DIARY WHICH HAS BEEN LOST, OR DID HE SIMPLY STOP KEEPING A DIARY?

**Letter
No14**

*Sandhill Camp
Longridge Deverill
England
March 14th [1918]*

Dear Mary

I have just received three letters from you dated Oct. 12th Oct. 28th and December 14th and was very pleased to hear from you once more, the first two are evidently the two that you said had been returned to you, so I will set to work and answer them right away. I was very sorry indeed to hear that you had been ill with the flue [sic] or dogs disease as you call it and sincerely hope, that you have quite recovered long before you get this letter, and that you will not be troubled with it any more. I was amused at your

2

account of the peanut who has been hanging round the shop, I wish I had been there I reckon the two of us could have give [sic] him something to think about don't you, I remember the way Mack used to look daggers at me don't you. Was sorry to hear business was so bad in the shop, but hope that you had a good Christmas. Was glad to hear that Mr and Mrs Billings and the children are well remember me to them and give my love to Mick and Mavis, I am very pleased to hear that Mick still remembers me, as you know, I am very fond of kiddies

3

and always seem to be able to make friends with them wherever I go. When I was on leave I went to Liverpool for a week to stay with a cousin of mine and she has three kiddies a boy aged ten a girl aged eight and a baby twelve months old and the kiddies and I got on well, in fact the little girl told me she is going to marry me when she is fourteen, so you see I wont always have to be a batchelor [sic] will I. Was glad to hear that the lodge visit to the south was such a success, and that

4

you had such a good time. You were asking me if I had come across Jim Clarke, but am sorry to say

that I haven't, I don't think I have been getting all your letters, as there is a long time in between them, but hope that you have been getting all of mine, as I am numbering them now, so as you will know if they all arrive. Well Mary it is getting late now, and will soon be lights out, So will have to draw this on to a close but will write again in a couple of days time. Give my kind regards to Hazel and your father also to Mr and Mrs Billing.

With the best of love from Jack Coventry

P.S. I hope you will be able to read this scribble, as I have a crook pencil, and have to hold this letter on my knee to write it.

Letter
No15

*Sandhill Camp
Longridge Deverill
March 18th / (19)18*

Dear Mary

A few lines in answer to your welcome letter dated Dec. 14th and was very pleased to hear from you once more. Well Mary I am expecting to leave for France either tomorrow or the next day, so will be well in the thick of it again before you get this letter. I received the two letters alright that you had returned to you, and sent out again, I answered them a couple of days ago, so hope you got that letter alright. How did the boxing day picnic turn out, I hope

2

it was a success. Was not surprised to hear that you were on the committee, as I know what a hard worker you are for the Lodge. From your description of the weather you have been having, it must be pretty rotten, and something like we get over here, with the exception that we never get any heat I only wish we did, I have forgotten what it feels like to be warm. I was surprised to hear that you had the Broken Hill Agency for Harringtons Photo supplies, I used to know the firm well, Mr Casely used to be the Adelaide manager, is he still there do you know. I can quite imagine, how

3

Kodak's feel about it; but it is nearly time they had some opposition, as I always found it hard to get a fare [sic] deal with them. I hope that you make a success of the agency, I expect you will be having a go at taking some photos yourself now, if you do don't forget to let me see some of the results. I am not surprised to hear that you are feeling so run down after having all your teeth out; it is a rotten experience I know, as I have had my teeth

4

pulled about, a lot by different dentists since I have been in the army, and know what it is like. Well Mary I am stuck for news this time, as it is so close after the last letters. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Billings and give my love to Mick and Mavis, Also give my kind regards to Hazel and your Father, So I will close now with love

from your sincere friend

Jack Coventry

Letter
No 16

*Sandhill Camp
Longridge Deverill
Salisbury Plains
March 19th / (19)18*

Dear Mary

Since writing my letter to you yesterday I have received another letter from you dated Dec. 27th and was very pleased to hear from you again. Although I wrote only yesterday I am going to answer this one straight away as it is the last chance I will have of writing before I leave for France. I was pleased to hear that both Mrs Billings and yourself received the letters I wrote thanking you for the parcel you sent me. You were right when

2

when [sic] you said you could imagine what I was like when I got it, especially as it was the first parcel I had received since leaving Australia, there had been others sent from home but I never got them, so you can imagine the pleasure it gave me to receive yours, and I was just as excited as a school boy with a surprise packet. You said in your letter that you were looking forward to seeing me back in Australia for easter, but am sorry to say that there is no chance of that; but I am going to prophesy that I will be leaving for home next September so see if I am right, I don't know anything

3

but all the same I have an idea that something is going to happen, that will get me a trip home by then. Was glad to hear that the picnic to the Gorge was such a success, but I reckon you must have been kept pretty busy, with such a great crowd there. Was very pleased to hear that you were kept so busy in the shop at Christmas time, as it is a sign that you must have done a fair amount of business, to keep five of you going. Was surprised to hear that Hazel was going

4

to Sydney for a holiday, and that your father was also thinking about going. You said you were going to have a holiday in 1919, well that is looking ahead a little; but why not have your holiday when I return; I know Adelaide like a book, I could guarantee to give you a jolly good [time?], and I know my people would be only too pleased to make you welcome, if you cared to call on them. In case you did go to Adelaide before I return, and you cared to drop a line to my home, the [family?] would be pleased to see you, as I have often mentioned you to them, and in fact, I left a photo of

5

you hanging on the wall of my room, when I came away, so you see in a way they already know you. You need not ask me if I intend to return to Broken Hill, when I come back, as I have all ready [sic] made up my mind on that, there is only one place for me in Australia and that is Broken Hill. And you can bet your bottom dollar that when I am returning I will let you know, so as you can make some peach Jelly, but I will

6

make the oyster stew myself as I think my recipe beats anyone else's dont you. Well my friend I don't think there is anything more this time so I will close with kind regards [to] your father, Hazel and Mr and Mrs Billings and the kiddies with love from your sincere

Pal Jack Coventry

My peoples address is

*Mrs G Coventry,
Albert Street, Mitcham*

Take Mitcham car from Grenfell Street to Mitcham Post office, four sections in tram, anyone there will tell you where they live.

Letter
No 17

May 13th 1918
In the Field

Dear Mary

A few lines in answer to your very welcome letter dated 1/3/18 No10 and was very pleased to hear from you once more. You said you hoped I would not mind you typing the letter, and I can assure you I don't mind how the letter is written, as I value your letters too much, to care whether they are typed or written as they always recall very happy memories to me. I am sorry to hear that

2

you are not feeling quite yourself, and think that what you need is a nice long holiday by the seaside, with nothing to worry about, and hope that it will not be long before you have the chance of a good spell. I am pleased to say that my knee is pretty right, but don't think it will ever be as strong as it was before, as you will see by this letter I am back with my battalion again, and have had three goes in the line, since I

3

rejoined, and we expect to go in again, any time now. Dick Trezize was wounded the last time we were in, but I don't think it is serious, Frank Hyman is still going good, and wishes to be remembered to you. I am glad that you have fallen in with my suggestion to number the letters, as we will know, now, whether the letters go astray or not. You were telling me about the two letters you had returned to you, and also the third letter that you wrote

4

and I am pleased to say that I got them alright and answered them straight away. You were asking me about the fancy work, I did a fair bit while I was in the hospital, but of course I had to knock off when I left there, as there was no time afterwards to do any, but I have not forgotten you. I hope that you are getting on well with your pen painting, and like it all right. I was sorry to hear that business was so slack

5

in the shop and hope it will soon improve. Was glad to hear that the cooking is going along so well, and will certainly take advantage of your invitation to have dinner and tea with you of a Sunday, when I return; and am also looking forward to a good old game of cards, and will get all the practice I can, so as to give you a good go. Well Mary there is not much I am able to say from here

6

as we have to be very careful what we put in our letters, I hope you will be able to read this scribble as it is not too easy to write with the paper resting on ones knee but hope you will be able to read it all right. Well dear friend I will have to close now with fondest love

from your sincere pal

Jack Coventry

Letter

No 18

*Somewhere in France
[May 31st has been crossed out]
June 2nd / 1918*

Dear Mary

I have just received two letters from you dated March 10th and March 22nd (Nos 2 and 3) and was very pleased to hear from you once more, and that you have been getting my letters also. According to all accounts you seem to be having a good time on your own while Hazel is in Sydney, it is a good job I am not there, or else I think I would be filling the eye of that recruiting officer, as he might go and eat all them good things

2

you are cooking, before I get back, and then again he might persuade you to marry him, and then how would I get on for a game of cards, and Peach jelly then, so don't let him persuade you to do anything like that. You were asking me about my brother, and I am glad to say that I have heard from him just lately, and he is going good. I see Frank Hyman pretty often, although he is not in the same company as myself but, as I told you in my last letter Dick has been wounded in the leg, at first they thought it was not serious, but it has turned out worse than was expected, and it will be several months before he will be able to get about again.

3

So Mac, is getting the home together is he, I reckon it was pretty cool wanting to fill in a spare night in your company, it is too much like making a convenience of one don't you think so. Was sorry to hear that business was not too good in the shop, and I certainly think it is time the men settled down, and left things quiet until the war is finished anyway. You make my mouth water when you tell me about all the good things you have been cooking, we get stew once a day here, and it is not bad either.

4

But of course it is not nearly so good, as the first one I had in the hill, but then as you know, it is not so easy to get things here in the line. I quite agree with you, that after what happened, at S.B.H. I have no further wish to live out there, and, as you suggest I intend to look for a place in the town, to live when I come back and then we will be able to see one another when we like eh! You were asking me if I ever hear from Bertha; well I do get a letter now, and again from her, at present she is in Adelaide, and has been out to Mitcham, several times to see my people, but as for proposing there is not

5

likely to be any of that; as when I decide to get married, (if I ever do) I intend to choose the right girl myself; and not let anyone else do that for me. Like yourself I think one is better off on their own, and as long as you and I remain the best of pals, I don't care a damn for all the rest, and intend to tell them so too, if they have much to say to me. I am afraid that by the look of things at present, it will be some time before, there will be any likelihood of getting a

6

trip home to Australia, but when I do return, I will certainly avail myself, of your offer, and have breakfast with you, as I have no intention of letting the South crowd know, when I will be back. I well remember the look on their faces, when I did them in, and stopped to breakfast with you before. I was pleased to hear that Mrs Billings is quite recovered from her illness remember me to her and Mr Billings, and give my love to Mick and Mavis. Was sorry to hear that you were suffering from another attack of the dogs disease, and hope that you are quite well again long before you get this letter. I will try and get that Old Bleach linen for you, if I

7

[have] the luck to get across to England again; there is no chance of getting anything here in France, and if we could, we are not allowed to take anything out of the country. Well Mary I have been back with my battalion a little over two months now, and have been in the line four times since I came back, and we expect to go in again, at any moment, for another go at Fritz, so I am taking the last chance I will have of writing, to you for some time, as we are expecting a rough time; and are expecting to be in the line for some time. I am pleased to say that I am alright so far and am in good health and spirits. I think I will have to close now, as an order has just come in to move up to the line.

8

at once. So I will have to close in haste, with kind regards to Your Father, Hazel, and love to yourself from your sincere pal

Jack C

In hospital somewhere in France
June 25th

Dear Mary

Since writing this letter which I never had a chance to post before we went into the line, I regret to say that I have been admitted into hospital suffering from a gunshot wound in the right temple but am pleased to say that I am getting on first rate, and expect to be well enough to rejoin my unit in a few days time. I will just give you a short account of how it happened, and chance whether the censor scratches it out.

9

We had been in the line about a week, when we received orders to attack the German position, and drive them out. Well we went over the top took two lines of German trenches advanced five hundred yards, under heavy shell fire, dug in, and consolidated in our new position which we held for 48 hours, in spite of all the heavy shelling from the German batteries. At the end of the 48 hours we were relieved by a fresh battalion, and to give you an idea what sort of time we had; when we were relieved we had thirty five men left in our company out of one hundred and twenty when we made the attack, I myself had a marvellous escape, after we took our objective, I and another chap were completely buried twice by shell fire, but the others dug us out, and we neither of us had a scratch, and then the night we got relieved, we had to crawl back through the grass for nearly half a mile, as the snipers were giving us a hot time, and I had got back within a hundred yards of our old line, when I met a couple of

10

our stretcher bearers, who were burying a mate of mine, who had been killed, and stopped to speak to them when Fritz put over a big shell, which burst about twenty yards away and I got a piece in the right temple, and they all said I was a lucky man to be alive, as the piece went in and stopped in the flesh, just under the skin they said if it had gone another quarter of an inch it would have killed me, so you see my luck was in. They took the piece out when I got here, and am just about right again now.

Will write again soon, with love from your old pal Jack C
let me know if you get this letter alright.

Letter
No 19

Somewhere in France
July 14th (19)18

Dear Mary

A few lines to let you know how things are going. I am pleased to say that I have quite recovered from my wound, and am now in a rest camp on my [way] back to rejoin my unit. I have not had a letter from you for some time now, but expect, to hear from

2

you when I get back to my battalion, as I expect my letters are there waiting for me. How are things looking in the Hill, have they bucked up at all. I hope that business has improved in the shop and that things will continue to improve. How have you been keeping,

3

I hope that you are quite well, and have had no more bad turns. How is [sic] Mr and Mrs Billings and the children are they all well, remember me to them, I have not heard how Dick Trezize is getting on lately, but I think Frank Highman [JLC has spelt the name differently here] is still going strong. If you happen to see any of the chaps from the Zinc Mill, you can remember me to them and tell them that I am

4

alright again, I don't suppose you see any of the south crowd, but if you do, tell them nothing as I have finished with them all. Well dear friend I am stuck for news. So am afraid I will have to close now, but will write again soon, so will close with kind regards to your Father and Hazel, and love to yourself from your affectionate pal
Jack Coventry

Letter
No 20

Somewhere in France
July 28th 1918

Dear Mary

It was with great pleasure that I received two nice long letters from you today, dated April 3rd and April 17th respectively; and can't tell you how pleased I was to get them. But was greatly upset to hear that you were ill, and was [sic] suffering so much pain. I have just seen Frank Highman, and he was telling me that he had had a letter from Hazel telling him that you were in hospital ill, (evidently his letter is a later one than mine,) so you can imagine how anxious I feel and am eagerly looking forward to next mail day to hear how you are getting on, and sincerely hope that the next

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mail will bring me good news to say that you are quite well again, and that there was no need for an operation. I was pleased to hear that you got the few little views of Liverpool that I sent while I was there. I don't know whether I told you before or not, but you have a rival there, as my cousin's little girl told me that she is going to marry me when she is fourteen; as she is about nine years old now, I wont have to remain a batchelor [sic] much longer shall I; of course I have only myself to blame as I made such a fuss of the kiddies when I was there, but then you know, I love kiddies, and am always happy when there are any about, but of course their mothers always say I

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spoil them. You were just about right when you said you expected that I was wishing that they would grant me a trip home and you are just about right as we have been through Hell this last month, and haven't been out of shell fire for four months, of course, we haven't been in the line all that time, but when we come out for a spell we are still within range of the big guns, and it tells on the nerves, to a certain extent. But still I don't want you to think I am complaining, as I am not. It is necessary to always have us handy to the line, in case of an attack from Fritz, and we will always beat him, as our officers, are all good fellows, and we have every confidence in them, and I can tell you that is half the battle.

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You mentioned in your letter that now I am back in the trenches, that you were going [to] knit me some more socks. Well I won't deny that socks are always welcome, but I want you to promise not to attempt to knit any, or in fact do any work at all, that you can avoid; until you are quite well, as it wont be giving yourself a chance to get well unless you take all the rest you can get. You were asking me why I didn't try for a job as a cook, but those jobs are very hard to get and there is no chance in that direction I am afraid. Was pleased to hear that you thought of having a quarters lessons at the piano, because then when I come back, we could have some

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bonzer sing song evenings together at the piano, I don't know that I am much of a singer but I can make a noise. You mentioned in your letter, that Mr and Mrs Billing were disappointed at not receiving any letters from me, and I want you to tell them, that although I don't write very often, they are often in my thoughts and since I have been back in France, I have not had many opportunities of writing, as we are not able to write while in the line, and I have so many to write to, that the few spells we have out of the line, hardly allows me time to write to all my friends, as often as I wish to, but I will try and write a little oftener to each, even if I don't write very often my thoughts are

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always with you all, I think if it wasn't for the thoughts of my dear ones at home, and the knowledge that I still have a few staunch friends left in Broken Hill, that my nerves would break down at times

under the severe strain we have been going through over here. You will no doubt be surprised to hear that Dick Trezize is on his way home to Australia (lucky chap), but no doubt you will have seen him long before you get this letter. Frank Highman sends his kind regards, and hopes that you will soon be well again. He is still going good. Well Mary I don't know that there is much more to tell you this time, but I will write

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again, as soon as I can, So I will close now sincerely hoping that you have quite recovered from your illness and that you are your old self once more, and will continue in good health, and that when I return, I will see you, just the same bright cheerful pal, that you was [sic] when I left give my kind regards to your father, and Hazel, and also to Mr and Mrs Billings and give my love to Mick and Mavis, and accept very best love from

your true pal Jack Coventry

Letter

No 22 [No 21 seems to be missing]

*Somewhere in France
August 14th/(19)18*

Dear Mary

I have just received three letters from you two dated May, and the third one June 2nd and was very pleased indeed to hear from you once more but was very sorry to hear that you have had such a crook time of it, in hospital and you must have been very ill indeed to have had to have two operations so soon after one another; I know what doctors and hospitals, and also operations are like, and can quite realise what you must have gone through; but I sincerely hope and trust, that you will be quite well again long before you get this letter. It must

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have been an anxious time for both Hazel and your father; to say nothing of the expense of it all; doctors, and hospitals soon run away with the money. I only hope that you wont have to forgo your holiday, through it, as I should think you will need a holiday worse than ever now, after what you have been through. You asked me in your letter if I wrote and told my Mother about the parcel you and Mrs Billings sent me last year, and you may be sure I did, I always mention you in my letters home, and they were all very pleased to hear about me getting one from you. I was surprised to hear that you had seen one of

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my photos in Rundle Street, and liked it, I did not see them myself, as they were not finished when I came away. I have wrote [sic] home to Chrissie my eldest sister and asked her to send you one, and I know they will only be too pleased to, do so, if they have one left, as although they have not met you, they have often heard of you. Well Mary I am very sorry to have to tell you that poor Frank Highman has been killed. We were all in a big attack that was made on Fritz, and I was talking to Frank just before we made the attack and did not see any more of him; but two days later I came across a grave that had been newly filled in, and when I looked at the little cross on it

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you can imagine the shock I got when I saw Frank's name and number on it, also his identification disc; I don't know what became of his belongings, but I picked up a little pocket bible belonging to him, and I have it now, if you know his people's address, will you send it to me, as I should like to write to them, and send them the bible. I expect they would like to have it. I am glad to hear that Harringtons agency is a success, and can imagine how sore Kodaks must be about it. You were asking me about my brother, and I am pleased to say that he is still going good as far as I know, I had a letter from him about a month ago, and he was alright then.

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I was very pleased to hear by your second letter that you were well enough to leave the hospital, and was [sic] staying with your cousin. I think they are quite right not to let you do any walking. If I were there I certainly shouldn't allow it; I wish I was and then I could have helped you pass the time with a game of cards and a good old yarn. I will have a lot to tell you when I do return, which I hope wont be long now, although the war don't seem likely to finish for a while yet. Was glad to see by the third letter (June 2nd) that you are getting along so well, and think that you are making a quick recovery, but hope

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that you wont be tempted to do too much and overstrain yourself, as I want to see you looking well and strong again, when I return. Don't forget to let me know how the Red Triangle Fete gets on, I hope you are well enough to take part in it yourself. You were asking me for a keep sake, and I only wish I had given you one before I left, but as you know we were sent away on such short notice that I hardly had time to do anything, but if I have the luck to get across to Blighty I will certainly send you something, as you are about the only pal that has stuck to me all through, and I think more of you than the whole

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lot of the others. You were telling me not to go flirting with any girls over here or else you would be getting jealous, but there is no need to worry about that, I have only had one proposal of marriage, and that is from my cousins little nine year old daughter, but as she also proposed to my brother George as well, I don't think you have anything to fear in that direction. Of course I have several lady friends in England but as they are mostly married ladies who visit the hospitals they are alright, but what about yourself. If I was in the Hill I think I am the one who would be getting jealous, of the butcher boy, and also that

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boy from Queensland. It was pretty cool wanting to take you to see his father, to see if you would suit as a daughter-in-law, that wouldn't suit me, to have my father choose a wife for me, I would want to please myself about that. Well dear friend I will have to close now, wishing you the best of luck and a speedy recovery from your illness with best love from your old pal

Jack Coventry

Letter

No 23

*Somewhere in France
September 10th /19 18*

Dear Mary

A few lines in answer to your very welcome letter dated June which I received yesterday. I was very pleased to hear from you again, and to hear that you were well enough to return to the shop. I was sorry to hear that your father was not well; and hope that it is nothing serious, you must have had a pretty rough time in the shop on your own, especially after what you have just been through yourself too. You want to take great care of yourself for some time yet so as not to have a relapse, as I want to see you looking

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quite well again when I return. If you are not well when I return, I am going to take the reins into my own hands, and make you stop in and rest; so you want to look out and not let the people at the Lodge pile too much work onto you. I am looking forward to the time when I will be able to return to Broken Hill and drop in for a game of cards, like I used to, and also some peach Jelly, but I bar any walks to Railway Town afterwards. A game of cards is about the only thing we get a chance of playing over here; but it is mostly Poker, or Bridge that the boys play over here.

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in one of my letters, I wrote and told you that I hoped to be leaving here, to return to Australia in September; but there is not much chance of that now. At the time I wrote that letter the general opinion was that the war would finish then but things have altered a lot since then. As no doubt you have seen in the papers, we have been giving Fritz, a big wallop, and we have him well beaten, but it is going to take time to drive him right back to his own country, and of course it would be no good letting him have peace until we do, as it would only mean another war in a few years time.

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We have been in all the heavy fighting of the last two months, and we have lost many fine men, and comrades; for which we mean to make fritz pay; the last time I wrote, I told you that poor old Frank Highman had been killed; poor chap he was killed by a shell; while we were digging in, after gaining our objective, in a big advance of about five miles that we made, under heavy shell fire. He was killed instantly, so did not suffer any pain, first. I feel his death very much, as well as the death of so many others of our mates, who went west, but of course we do not have much time to think of these things which is just as well, I expect.

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I am very thankful to say that I have pulled through it all safely so far, but of course we all feel the strain of being under fire, so long. I am pleased to say that my knee is still good, and shows no sign of cracking up, but of course it is hard to say whether it will stand the winter. Was glad to hear that the camera business is improving, I expect that Kodaks are feeling pretty sore about it, have you tried your hand at taking any photos yourself. I was very much surprised to hear that Jim Clarke was back in Broken Hill, and can imagine the surprise you got, when you

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saw him standing in front of the shop, and I'll bet you gave him a blowing up. If you see him again, remember me to him. Who was the woman who told Conlon that I had been killed do you know; I was wondering if it was one of my South Broken Hill (friends?) It is a pity they don't leave me alone, I only hope they don't write to my mother, and tell her that yarn. Poor Mother, I am afraid she is worrying a lot about George, and I. I have written home and asked them to send you one of those photos that you wanted, so expect they will send you one. If you cared to write a few lines to them any time I think they

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would be glad to write to you. They have ofened [sic] heard of you from me; and they know you as Bonny Mary; so you see that although you have never met one another, you are not altogether strangers. I have just received a letter from Ms Billing, I am afraid I have neglected them lately; but it is not my fault; as with the open warefare that is going on now; and advancing all the time it is very difficult, to find an opportunity to write any letters, and when we do get a chance, it is only, a few lines that we are able to write home. So if you do not get many letters from me, I hope you will not mind; as even if I do not write for quite, a long time my thoughts are always with you all.

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Well dear friend, I don't think there is anything more this time, So I will close now, remember me to Mr and Mrs Billings, and give my love to Mick and Mavis, and remember me to Hazel and your father; hoping you are quite well yourself, as it leaves me, with fondest love from

*Your true pal
Jack Coventry*

Letter
No 24

*Somewhere in France
October 20th/(19)18*

Dear Mary

A few lines in answer to your ever welcome letter dated July 7th which I have just received. Am sorry to hear that you are still so weak after your illness and hope that you are quite strong again before you get this. I want to thank you for writing to my Mother and I know they will be pleased at getting a letter from you as they have heard of you so often, I always mention you in my letters home. About that prophesy [sic] of mine, about returning in September; I am sorry to disappoint you, but I had a good chance of doing, so, but did not try to, as every man is needed.

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here now; and as I have been through all the heaviest fighting the last few months, I feel that I can't leave my mates now, when we are in need of every man the Australians can get; and victory is in sight. I think that you will agree with me that I am right in this; as we have got the Huns well beaten now, and it is only a matter of time before he gives in altogether. I hope you will not be offended with me, but I had leave into one of the big French towns a couple of days ago, and bought a folding silk case, which I have sent on to you for a Christmas box. I am also enclosing a silk card in this letter for you. You remember me telling you about the fancy work I did

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while in hospital, well I am making one for you now, and hope to send it on in a few days time so hope that you get it alright. Was pleased to hear that you treasure the little book I gave you a couple of years ago, and I quite agree with you that it would be great if I could get back for Dec 12th and keep up the two birthdays together. I was sorry to hear that your father is still suffering from a bad cold, influenza is bad in England just now, but there is not much of it in France yet. I have quite made up my mind to live in town when I return, and then I will be able to carry out some of those jobs you say you have for me, such as cooking the

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dinner, developing films and plates, but what will give me the greatest pleasure, will be to make short work of those peanuts who are pesting [sic] you while I am away, they will find that since I have been away, I have learnt how to take my own part, and am afraid of no one now. You can remember me to any of the chaps at the Zinc Corp, that you see, it certainly seems strange that they should all go to you for news of me, as we were only friends, before I left, but I hope when I return, that we will be something more than that to one another. I would like to say more here, but I feel that we should get this job over here finished first, before thinking of ones future, don't you.

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you asked me who sent me that white feather. I am glad to say that it was not anyone that we thought it was at the time. I don't think the person who sent it was anyone that you know, and I would rather not mention who it was, as I settled my account with the cur before I left, and I don't think they will ever try it on again. Well dear friend I hope you will be wise and not go doing any washing or hard work that will injure your health in any way, as I think it would be foolish to do that. You make my mouth water when you tell me about all the nice things you have been cooking. You asked to be remembered to Frank and Dick.

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Well Dick has returned to Australia and I am very sorry to say that poor old Frank, was killed by a shell on the 8th of August. I wrote and told you all about it at the time, but don't know whether you received the letter. We are out resting at present and are billeted at a farm, and a few of us have been helping the farmer dig his crop of potatoes, it is a few days job, and is a pleasant change, from the military routine. We are having our meals with the froggies. There are four of us Aussies, and eight very old French women on the job, all the French men of military age are away fighting. We are having real good fun, none of the women can talk English

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and our French is very bad; so you can guess, the knots we tie ourselves into trying to talk to one another. Well dear friend, I have just about come to the end of my tether now, but will write again in a few days time. Remember me to your father and Hazel also to Mr and Mrs Billings and give my love to Mick and Mavis, I will close now wishing you a Merry Christmas and a Bright, and prosperous New year, with fondest love

from your old pal

Jack Coventry

P.S. When writing home do not mention anything about the South crowd as it would only upset them, if they knew how they have turned me down since I left. As it doesn't trouble me but would upset them.

JLC's fancywork consists of an embroidered couple of small rectangles of cloth, both of which are attached to a blank postcard, forming a sort of envelope. On the outside *Longing to see you* is embroidered in yellow; on the inside is a gift tag showing a picture of a windmill, and the words **Forget me not** printed on. JLC has written in pencil *To Mary with love from Jack Coventry*

Letter
No 25

Somewhere in France
Nov 3rd /1918

Dear Mary

A few lines in answer to your very welcome letter dated July 29th and was very pleased to hear from you once more. You say in your letter that you often wished I was back, in B.H. and I can tell you that you don't wish it any more than I do, and I am very pleased to say, that I don't think it will be very long now before the war will be finished, and we will all be able to return, or, rather I should say all that is left of us. Things are looking very promising over here now, "Bulgaria" has surrendered

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and "Turkey" also has given in; and we have got word tonight to say that "Austria" has surrendered

as well, so there is only Germany left now, and we have her well beaten, and the end may come any time. So it wont be very long now before I will be able to come back and develop those films for you, and also deal with those pea-nuts (as you call them) who have been pesting [sic] you, I don't think they will trouble you much after I return. I am very pleased indeed to hear that you, and my sister Chrissie have written to one another, she is my

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favourite sister, and we are great pals, I would do anything for her and I know that she would do the same for me, I don't want you to think that I don't care for the others as I love them all but she is my special chum. If I remember rightly I believe I told them the joke about the Peach Jelly, and also how we came to be introduced to one another over a plate of stew, if I haven't I will certainly do say [sic], as the joke is too good to miss, don't you think so. You said that you had sent Chrissie an invitation to stay with you if she came to B. H.

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When I return I will most likely fetch her up to the Hill with me for a holiday, so you will have an opportunity of meeting one another then. I would also, very much like her to meet Mr and Mrs Billing, as I always mention you all in my letters home. I think it was a good move on your part when you told that pea-nut that you had a boy at the front, and feel proud to think that you thought enough of me to think of me in that light, and I only hope that when I return, that we will be more to one another than mere friends. I hope you won't

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think that I am joking in saying this as I really mean it. Since I have been away you have always had a place in my thoughts, I have recalled with pleasure the many happy evenings we have had together in the past, and am looking forward with anticipation to the time, when we will be able to have the same again. I feel wild to think of that chap you had in, who drank your wine, and only wish I had been there to deal with, him; I don't think he would want any more after I had finished with him. I only hope that you will give chaps of his sort a wide birth in the future, as one

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can't be too careful these times. It is not only the way they act, but things of his sort have a nasty habit of saying all sorts of things behind one's back. I know from experience, as I have met a lot of his sort, and never found one any good yet. What about the one who bought the wristlet watch, have I got to deal with him too. I don't suppose he will like it much, when I come back, as I should judge, from the fact that he has been buying so many presents for you, that he fancies he has a chance himself; is that so.

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Was sorry to hear that you have been getting a fit of the blues; going out on your own, but think it is wiser to do that than go out with the class of man that seems to be left in Broken Hill now. I was not surprised to hear that Jim Clarke is engaged to that little scotch [sic] girl, as I know he thought a lot of her before he enlisted. I am glad to hear that the photo trade is getting better, it must be a very sore point with the Kodok people, how are they taking it.

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I was quite interested to hear of Peter's doings, I expect he is just the same spoilt little rascal as when I was there, is he just as fat as ever. I am afraid Conlon is a bad judge when he says I will never come back to Broken Hill, but then of course he doesn't know, what attraction I have there does he. We are still resting, and don't expect to go back to the line for some time, of course it all depends on how things go, but I think Fritz is well beaten now, and it wont be long before he chucks it in altogether.

You will no doubt be greatly surprised to hear that I am a cook just at present, so I will tell you how it came about. As I wrote in my last letter four of us got a job to help the old Froggie we were billeted with, to gather in his crop of potatoes, and the day that job finished, I got picked out of our company to go to our N.C.O.'s School to cook for the instructors, it is a five weeks job, and is a good one too. I have got eight sergeants to cook for, and we are billeted with some French people right

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opposite the school we have a room to sleep in; another room to dine in; and I have the use of

madame's kitchen and stove, so you can see we are pretty comfortable. The Frenchman and his wife, are very nice homely people and they have a daughter nineteen years old; I am teaching her English and in return she is teaching me French, or at least she is trying too [sic], but I am pretty thick in the head and I am afraid it will take me about ten years to learn it properly. I will try and give you an idea what I

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[am] cooking for them. For breakfast I give them porridge, and Fried bacon; for dinner roast meat and baked potatoes, with boiled turnips, and cabbage and sometimes pudding. or else boiled rice, and custard, and for tea, I generally make them rissoles. They get the same breakfast every day, but I change the dinners; one day they get steak, and vegetables; the next day stew; and the next day stew; I also make toast for their breakfast, and scones, now, and again, So you see we

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don't do so bad. I don't want you to think that the army issues all this to them, because they don't; but they have a mess fund among themselves and buy extras from Madame. You will be able to see from this that I am keeping my hand in, so will be able to cook the dinner for you on Friday night when you are busy in the shop. Well dear friend I think I have told you all the news for this time remember me to Mr and Mrs Billing, and give my love to Mick and Mavis, So I will close now, with kind regards to your Father and Hazel and lots of love and kisses, to yourself from yours etc,

Jack Coventry

Letter [No number on it]

Somewhere in France
November 18th/(19)18

My Dear Mary

Again I have the pleasure of answering one of your letters, dated Aug. which I have just received. You mentioned in this letter that you had just received my letter dated June 2nd. Well it was the next time we went into the line after writing that letter, that I was wounded, we were in the line nearly a fortnight before I got cracked, in fact it was the night we got relieved that I stopped one. I don't know whether you are superstitious or not, I never used to be but I have seen and heard of so many remarkable things, happening, that I sometimes think that I must have turned superstitious myself. I expect you are wondering why I am talking in this train, but there is something I am going to tell you, which I want you to promise not to tell them at home when you write to them, as perhaps it might worry them. What I was going to tell you is that I knew before we went into the line that time, that

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something was going to happen to me; although, I didn't know exactly, what would be the result, or when it would, happen; I felt so sure, of it, that I gave my watch, and wallet to one of my mates to mind for me, and told him that if I didn't come out of the stunt to send them home to my people for me. You may think it foolish of me to take any notice of thoughts like those; but then no one only ourselves, know what our thoughts are, when we are waiting for the word to go over the top, as we all know, that there will be a lot who never answer the roll call again; and the thought often comes, who is it going to be this time. I don't want you to think from this that it makes any of us flinch from the task that we know is in front of us, as it never enters our heads to do that, it only makes us more determined, to wipe out as many Huns as we can before our number goes up.

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Well much to my own surprise, I got through the stunt alright, although our ranks were sadly thinned out, by the time we got to our objective. After taking our objective, we held it for two days and nights, in spite of a very heavy bombardment, from all the guns that Fritz could bring to bear on us; As the time came closer, for us to be relieved, I began to think I must have been mistaken. When the relief came out to take over from us, my mate said to me, well old boy you were mistaken that time, and congratulated me on coming through safely, we had to crawl back through a crop for a good distance as it wasn't safe to show oneself, on account of the machine gun fire that was all around us. Well we

had got nearly back, when I met the stretcher bearers, they were burying one of our chaps who had been killed, and I stopped for a few minutes to give them a hand, when a shell burst quite close to us, and one of the pieces put a dent in my

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steel helmet [sic], while another small piece went into my head, I said to the stretcher bearers, "I've stopped one after all." It was lucky for me that they were near at the time, as they bandaged me up, and got me down to the dressing station without loss of time. So you see my prominitions [sic] came right after [all?]. Well dear Mary I didn't mean to take up all this space to tell you that but I haven't much news to tell, so thought you might be interested to hear a little of our thoughts, at times, when we are in the line. I will switch off onto something else quite away from the war now, or else I am afraid you will

be getting bored with this letter. I am glad to hear that you have been getting my letters alright, and I think I have been getting most of yours. You asked me if it was a fact that I was jealous of you being on your own. Well I dont know that, that exactly expresses it, but I certainly do not like to think that you are being annoyed by those pea-nuts, you mentioned. And I

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think I could deal effectively with them if I was there, without you having to run the risk of being called up to the court as a witness in an assault case. I don't quite agree with you, when you say it would be better is [sic] some of those pea-nuts were to put on a suit of Khaki and come over here and give us a hand, as I don't think that, that class of man would be much good to us over here. I was not frightened of you getting married to any of these, as I know, you have too much sense to do that, and so was not jealous of any of them. Am sorry to hear that you get a fit of the blues now, and again, and hope to chase the blues all away when I return. I cant express how pleased I am to hear that you and Chrissie are corresponding with one another, and if you do not meet her before I return, you will certainly have the chance to, when I return, as I intend to bring her to Broken Hill for a trip. I would also like you to meet my Mother, and Father, and the rest of them, and I think you would like them

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all, and I know they would be pleased to meet you, as they have heard of you so often, from me. I have just heard that Dick Trezize has arrived back safely, I wrote at the time and told you about poor old Frank had been killed [sic], I will tell you all about that stunt when I return. Mac seems to be cutting a dash since he was married paying 15/- a week rent, and buying all his furniture in Adelaide I suppose broken Hill wasn't good enough for him. You said that you was [sic] sorry that you had been making my mouth water, telling me of the things you had been cooking, but there is nothing to be sorry of [for?] as I like to hear of all your doings especially of your cooking, and hope to be able to give you some of our recipes, which I think will be new to you; when I return. Stews, and rissoles are my long suit over here. But they don't come up to the Oyster Stew, I made at S.B.H.

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you are quite right about me not going to S.B.H. to live, as I have finished with that lot. And another thing the South is too far away from you, as I will be able to see you more often, if I live in the town, and will be able to send the other pea-nuts about their business in double quick time. There is no need for either of us to worry about Bertha; I thought when she went to see my people that perhaps she was trying to get in; but I had a letter the other day from her, telling me that she had become engaged, and was very happy, so there is [no] need to bother ourselves about her. I wrote and congratulated her and wished her every success, and was glad to do it; as I don't want her. You said in your letter that of course I would be having plenty of chances of getting married when I return, but that doesn't affect me much, as I don't want anyone who might take to me, because I am in Khaki, I want someone who has always stuck to me and been a true

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pal, both before I enlisted, and since I came away and there is only one person who has done that, and that is yourself, and when I return if you are still free; you are the one, who I want; but even if you are engaged to anyone else, we will always be the best if pals shant we, I hope you wont laugh or think I am joking, in saying this, as I really mean it. I have wanted to tell you this for a long time, but felt that since I volunteered to come over here and help to win the war (and it was the only honorable [sic] thing any man could do if has any love for his home, and people) I felt that we should get this job over

first; But now we have got the Germans beaten; and peace is in sight; I feel that the time has come, when I can turn my thoughts away from the war, and look to the future, and I think you will agree with me that I am right in looking at it in this light.

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As I will be in the town when I return, I want you to look up a nice quiet place, so as I can have a nice quiet time; after all the nervewracking ordeal we have been through over here. I am always interested to hear of your doings, both at home and at the Lodge; but hope you wont be foolish enough to take on dancing too soon, and so run the risk of a breakdown. Was sorry to hear that business was not too good in the shop but suppose it is on account of the unsettled state of affairs in the Hill. Well Mary the fighting is finished at last, but think it will be some time before we will be returning home. I have finished my job as cook at the N.C.O.'s school, and am back in the battalion, and am cooking for Headquarters Company; we are moving up to Germany in a couple of days time, to

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garrison one of the towns on the Rhine, so expect we will be there until peace is finally fixed up, and I expect it will take some time to do that. Well dear Mary I think I will have to draw to a close now, but will write again at the first opportunity. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Billings, and give my love to Mickie and Mavis, and remember me kindly to Hazel and your father. So will close with fondest love from your true pal
Jack Coventry

Letter [No number on it]

*Mont-sur-Marchienne
 "Charleroi" Belgium
 Christmas Day [1918]*

Dear Mary,

Again I take the opportunity of writing you a few lines. As you will see by the heading of this letter we are now in Belgium. We arrived here a few days ago; We had a four days march to get here, and it rained all the time, so you can guess what a state we were in as regards mud. "Charleroi" is a very big town, and has a lot of big coal mines, it has been in the hands of the Germans for four years, and the people are so over-joyed, at being free once more that they cant do enough for us. When we arrived here the people went to our officers, and asked them for permission to take the soldiers into their homes to sleep; and they have granted us permission to do so. I myself struck it very lucky, I am billeted in a lovely home. It is a big

2

three storied [sic] house, and when I come in at night they dry my boots for me, give me slippers to wear in the house, and I have a hot bath every night before going to bed, and a drink of coffee. I have a bedroom to myself, a big double bed, with electric light so as I can switch it off or on without having to get out of bed. In the morning they call me at seven, and fetch me hot shaving water to my room, and when I get up there is always a drink of coffee waiting for me. So you can see I am in clover here; and I can tell you it is like heaven, after the rough time we have had in the past, sleeping anywhere we can lay our head, and up to our eyebrows in mud very often. I am hoping to get my Blighty leave soon, it is nearly twelve months now since I had my last leave. They are making arrangements now, to get some of the 1915 men home, and I think we will all be back

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by next August or September; and it will be the happiest day of my life when I can get into civilian clothes once more, and leave this life behind me. Won't it be great when I get back, and can come around once more like I used to, and spend a pleasant, and quiet evening with you. I cant tell you how much I am looking forward to the time when I will be [able] to see you again, what a great yarn we will have, and what a bit we will have to tell one another, after being away so long. It is a good while now since I had a letter from you, or from home, but I believe there is a mail in now so I am looking forward to getting a letter from you soon. I am glad that Chrissie and you are writing to one another. Chrissie is my chum, and you know, that I think a lot of you, and am very pleased to think that you are both getting to know one another, as she has often heard of you.

4

Well dear pal, I don't know that I have much more to tell you this time, but will write again, as soon as I get my mail. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Billing and give my love to Mick and Mavis; tell Mr Billing that I have been getting the papers he has sent me, and thank him for them, I will be writing to them in a few days time. So I will close now, with best and fondest love from yours etc, Jack Coventry

Christmas Card**Standard Issue** – Jack Coventry filled in his and Mary’s names in pencil

Front says:

Christmas New Year Greetings 1918 – 1919 AIF Somewhere in FranceInside left has the 27th’s insignia, and says:**“All joys be thine this Christmastide”****I send from No Man’s Land****God grant that ere New Year’s decline****I’ll grip thee by the hand.**Inside right says:**With every assurance of****Continued remembrance, and****ALL GOOD WISHES for****XMAS and the NEW YEAR****To Dear Mary****From Jack Coventry****Letter****No 29**

Mont-Sur-Marchienne

Chaleroi Belgium

December 30th [19]18

Dear Mary

I have just received two letters from you both dated Oct. 15th and was very pleased to hear from you again. It is always a great pleasure to me to get your letters, and cant tell you how much I look forward to getting them. I am also very pleased to see that you have been getting mine also; you said that you had received No’s 20; and 22, from me, well I wrote three so no doubt you will get 21 alright the mails dont always go the same way home; so that, no doubt accounts for some letters taking longer than others. I am very pleased to hear that you are quite well again, so will promise not to worry any more about your health. I was glad to hear that you had such a good day in the Hill in aid of the red Cross drive, and think

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they did remarkably well to raise £2,000. You say in your letter that you hope my married life will prove satisfactory, as you would not like to think that I was unhappy. Well I certainly feel sure that it will be, when I do get married, but as for you having a rival in my affections, there is no one likely to fill that place, I have not a lot of girls over this side of the world, and like them well enough as friends, but as for taking one as a wife, I wouldn’t think of it, as they are not the class of girl, I would care about taking to Australia as my wife, as the conditions in Europe, and in Aussie, are so different, and they are quite unsuited for the climate and the open life the Aussies live. No Mary give me a dinkum Aussie girl I think I know who it is that I want; it is yourself; I want you to know, that you are the only

3

one, who has remained fresh in my memory and the longer I am away the more often I think of you, and the many happy evenings we spent together. I am not surprised that Chrissie tells everyone that the photo on the wall is my Broken Hill girl as that is what I told them myself, I hope you are not cross with me for saying that; Because dear Mary I honestly mean it. I cannot find words to tell you on paper all that I feel, but when I return, I hope to be able to show you , what I find it difficult to put on paper. Well dear I hope you wont laugh at me or think me foolish in writing in this strain, but it is just what I feel, and I hope and trust that you feel the same towards me, as I do towards [you?], if such is the case, then I will be the happiest man in Europe.

4

You were right when you said I must be fond of kiddies, as I love them, and can always get on well with them wherever I go. They have two nice kiddies where I am billeted, and we are great pals even they call me uncle Jack, in Broken english. Well dear, I want to thank you for the parcel you sent me, I haven’t got it yet, but I expect it will turn up alright. I hope to get leave to Brussels soon, which is about two hours run in the train from here; as you know Brussels is where the finest lace in the world is made, so I am going to try and get some for you while I am there. Chrissie has told me that Stan Crosland and his mother and brother had been to Adelaide, and I am beginning to think too, that there must be some attraction at our place too, but I dont think it is likely to be Chrissie, it is more likely it is Lucy he is after. I was quite interested

5

in your account of the reception the Broken Hill people gave Cpl Inwood V.C. and should imagine he felt a little uncomfortable with so much attention being paid to him, I know I should if I was in his shoes. Sorry to hear that business was slack in the shop, but hope you had a busy Christmas, and got rid of all those toys, you had in for Christmas. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Billing and give my love to Mick and Mavis, also remember me to any of the boys from the Zinc Corp, if you happen to see any of them. Well dear Mary I will have to close now with kind regards to your father and Hazel and lots of love to yourself

*from your old pal
Jack Coventry*

Letter [written in light purple pencil]

Not numbered

*Mont-Sur- Marchienne
Charleroi Belgium
Feb. 15th / [19]19*

My Dear Mary

A few lines to let you know how things are going. Well Mary since I last wrote to you I have had my Blighty leave, and had a very enjoyable time indeed. I will try and give you a detailed account of my doings from the time I left here till I got back. We left Charleroi station, at four o'clock on the morning of January 12th. We were three days and two nights in the train, and in cattle trucks at that, with no seats only our packs, and

2

29 of us in the truck I was in, so you can see it is not always a joy ride on a leave train. But still we didn't mind much as we were all in good spirits and talking about what we were all going to do when we got to Blighty. We passed right through the different battle areas on our way to "Calais", and it seemed a little strange to be riding through all this country without seeing any soldiers, and not hearing a gun fired, especially after the heavy fighting we used to have, to only advance a few hundred yards at a time. The trenches and dug outs are still there

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and all the shell holes, and Broken villages, and it seemed very strange to see them all empty, after being used to always finding men in every little Bit of trench you came to, when the fighting was still on. On our way we passed through "Peronne"; "Mons"; "Armentieres"; "Etaples"; "Boulogne"; and many other towns, that you have read about in the papers, when the fighting was on. Well eventually we arrived at "Calais"; late in the afternoon of the 14th and were marched out to a rest camp, about four miles, out, where we had a good meal, and stopped the night.

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Next morning the fifteenth, we had an early breakfast, and then marched about four miles to the docks, where we were soon on board the transport, which left at nine o'clock to take us across the channel to "Folkstone". We were about two hours crossing the channel, it was fairly rough, but although a lot of the chaps were sick it didn't have any effect on me, as I am a good sailor. When we arrived at "Folkstone" there was a train waiting to take us to London, which we reached a couple of hours after. On arriving in London we were given a free feed at the Anzac Buffet on the Railway station and were then marched around to Headquarters at Horseferry Road, where we were

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issued with a complete change of clothing, had a hot bath, received our pay, and railway warrants, also our ration coupons and were then free to go. Another chap out of our battalion and myself went around to the War Chest Club, and had tea and booked our beds, and then went to a theatre in the evening. The next day my mate went to Scotland and I went out to Clapham Common to see Mr and Mrs Hibbs, and spent a very pleasant day with them, and in the evening Mrs Hibbs took me around to her sister-in-law's

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house; where they were having a party, and they made me very welcome, and I had the time of my life there. I returned to the War Chest Club that night to sleep, and left the next morning (Friday) for Liverpool to see my cousin. I found my cousin, and the kiddies all well, and the youngest one who is just two years old now, took full possession as soon as I entered the door and called me "Mine Gack". And whenever they asked her who I am, she says I am "Baby Pat's Gack", so you see you have another powerful rival there now. And Dolly still says she is going to marry me when she is fourteen, so I think you had

7

better get me home quick, or else, I might get hooked over here dont you think so. On Saturday afternoon I took Dolly and Jim to the pictures, and on Sunday, we all went out together for the day to New Brighton. Monday morning I left again for Manchester to visit old Mrs Petts. It is her son who is in Adelaide, who taught me photography, and I met her when she was out in Australia on a visit about seven years ago. They gave me a great reception at Manchester and they couldnt do enough for me whilst I was there.

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Mrs Petts is living with her married daughter Mrs Rider and they gave me a real good time, they took me around all the old places of historical interest, including the Cathedral, and Mrs Rider's husband who is a commercial traveller, took me all through the stock exchange. After a very enjoyable time in Manchester, I returned to Liverpool again the following Friday afternoon. And the next day Saturday my cousins kiddies gave a small party, and had a few of their friends there, and of course I was well in the boom again. Sunday morning I took the kiddies for a walk and had my photo taken, and will send you one as soon

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as I get them. I left again, on the Monday to return to London, as I had a few things to get before I returned to Belgium. My leave finished on Wednesday morning the 29th Jan. but when we turned up at Victoria Station we were given another seven days leave, as owing to some trouble on the Railways in France they were unable to send us back straight away, so that meant we didnt have to return until Feb. 5th. I did think of going to Scotland to spend the extra seven days but there was trouble on there owing to the strikes and

10

they had to man the streets with soldiers, and machine guns, so I thought it was better to keep out of it, so I remained in London. I met my mate who had returned from Scotland, so we knocked about together, seeing the sights and also went to a few of the theatres, and went out to Clapham Common a few times. Well my leave finished, and we left London the morning of Feb. 5th, embarked at Folkstone, crossed the channel, and was in the rest camp at "Calais" by dinner time. We stopped at Calais that night, and left the following morning for "Charleroi", which we reached at five oclock on Friday night the 7th

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so you see we did the journey back a little quicker than what we did going. We had a little more comfort in the train too, as we had seats, and plenty of straw, and a stove with a good supply of coal, and we needed it too, as it started snowing two days before we left London, and has been freezing ever since. On the whole we had very good weather, while on leave, but it was very cold, as it always is at this time of the year. Well dear Mary since I returned from leave, I have received the

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parcel you sent me, and want to thank [you?] very much for all the good things in it, the tobacco especially was very welcome and will last me a long while. It is very hard to get good tobacco over here. The lollies were very welcome too, also the chewing gum cigarette papers; and cigarettes ecetera, I was looking for some Peach jelly too; but I suppose you are keeping that for me until I return which I hope to do about next August. I have not received any letters from you for some time now, but we are expecting a mail in any day now, so am looking forward to getting a letter from you

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then. How have you been keeping yourself lately; I hope that you are quite well, and have had no sign of a relapse since your illness. How are Mr and Mrs Billings and the kiddies keeping, remember me to them, also your father and Hazel, you have no idea how much I am looking forward to seeing you all again. What yarns we will be able to tell one another eh! When I come back, I am afraid that I will be a little bit selfish and want

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you all to myself when I come back, as I have so much to tell you, so hope that you will give me a good hearing. Well dear Mary best of pals; I will have to close now, with fondest love and kisses; and a bushel of extra ones for that nice parcel from yours affectionately

Jack Coventry

xxxxxx Just a few to go on with until I return.

Letter [contains a small spray of imitation lily-of-the-valley]

Number30

Mont-Sur-Marchienne

Charleroi Belgium

February 26th / [19]19

My Dear Mary

A few lines just to let you know, that I am still alive and kicking. It is a long time now, or at least it seems a long time since I received a letter from you, but no doubt, I will get several together, when they do come, so I will just have to have patience until they turn up. You have no idea how much I look forward to getting your letters. They are always full of interest for me, and I can almost imagine I am in your little sitting room

2

at the back of the shop listening to you telling me all the news, instead of just reading your letters. I told you in my last letter all the news, about my Blighty leave. Things seemed very quiet here for a while, after I got back, but I soon settled down again. I have not been cooking for the officers since I came back. I am cooking for the company now, and I like it a lot better, as there are four of us on the job, and we are able to arrange it, so that we can have a fair amount of time off. I did not go to the same place to billet when I came back

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I have got a very nice place quite close to where my work is, they are very nice people there is the madame, and her son who is about fifty years old, he is a commercial traveller for typewriters, and also stationery of all sorts, and he has a very large connection, he is the sole agent in Charleroi and gets business from all parts of the world. There are also two daughters middle aged, who are milliners, and dress make. They are very nice people, and are very good to me, One of

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the daughters has just asked me if I am writing to my fiance [sic] (girl) and I told her yes, so she has done up this little spray of flowers, and asked me to put it in my letter, for you, with her best wishes for your future happiness, It will be a little souvenir for you all the way from Belgium. I have received several letters from home lately, and am very pleased to hear from Chrissie, that you, and she, are still corresponding to one another. I think judging from Chrissie's letters, that she has taken a great liking to you although she has

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never met you yet. We all expect to move across to England in a months time, and hope it wont be long after that before we are on our way home, to dear old sunny Australia. I think they reckon to have most of us home by the end of August, so we will hope for the best. So if you do not hear news of me returning by the time you get this letter, still address yours to B Company 27th Battalion A.I.F. as that address will find me wherever I am. I wrote another letter to Mr Billing a

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few days ago, so ask them if they got it when you see them will you. Well dear Mary, I think that is all the news I can rake up this time. Remember me to Mr and Mrs Billing and give my love to Mick and Mavis. Also give my kind regards to Hazel and your father. And my very best love and affection to yourself from

yours affectionately

Jack Coventry

Letter

No 32

Mont-Sur-Marchienne

Charleroi, BELGIUM

March 13th, 1919

Dear Mary,

Again I take the opportunity of writing you a few lines. It is a long while now since I had a letter from you, but I don't doubt but what you have been writing all along, so am looking forward to receiving a budget from you soon. Since I last wrote to you, I have had leave to Brussels; four of us went together, we had four days leave, including the day we went, and the day we came back, so that gave us two clear days in the town,

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besides the greater part of the other two days, as it only takes a little over two hours to get there by train. It would take dozens of pages, and hours, to describe everything to you, that we saw on the

trip, so I will just give you a brief account of the trip. First of all I must tell you that it cost us nothing for food or lodging as the 2nd Division to which our battalion belongs, has a rest house there, where we get beds and meals free.(sic) and that is a big item in Brussels as food is very dear there. The first day we got hold of a good guide, who could talk English, to show us around. We started off at nine in the morning, and

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visited the Town Hall; Public Library; Parliament House; The big Cathedral; the "Palais de Justice"; where there is [sic] twenty different courts, and on our way back to dinner we visited the oldest Church in Brussels, which was built in the fourteenth century. These buildings are very large, and full of some of the most beautiful tapestry, and carpets in the world, and also some of the most valuable pictures in the world. As our guide knew the history of all these places and had a free pass into the lot, it made it

4

very interesting for us. In the afternoon we went to the Art Gallery, where besides the many beautiful and valuable pictures they have a very fine collection of statuary. We also went to the museum of antiquities, and then went to see Nurse Cavell's grave, and also saw the spot where the huns shot her. We also visited the Town hall, and saw the room where Nurse Cavall (sic) was tried by the Huns; and the seats the different ones connected with the trial sat in. Considering our guide only charged us two francs each for the days outing, I reckon we struck it very lucky. After tea we all went to a big vaudeville show, it only cost us 7/2d each and we had

5

a good seat, and enjoyed the show. It lasted about three hours, and they had some of the cleverest acrobats that I have ever seen in my life. The theatres here are quite different to what they are in Aussie. Here they are all laid out with little tables, to seat four, and you can buy beer; coffee; or anything else you fancy, and the waiters bring it along, and everyone eats, and drinks, and smokes, while the show is going on. Nearly all the girls and women smoke; and they all drink beer, even the little children

6

who come with their parents drink beer and smoke cigarettes. Of course the beer is very weak, and does no harm, like the beer in other countries does. The next day being Sunday, we spent looking around the squares, as it was market morning, and the open squares were full of stalls, selling everything you could possibly imagine. In the afternoon, we went and had a look at the King of Belgium's Palace, and it is a very beautiful building. In the evening we went to a theatre, and returned to Charleroi the next afternoon. I could go on for ever telling you about Brussels, but it would take too long, so will leave it until I return. I wanted to get

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some lace while I was there, but it was too expensive: of course I could have got some cheap stuff, but I didn't want that, so I never got any. A big draft of men left our battalion this morning to go to England for return to Australia; and if we have any luck, I hope to be on the next draft to go. So I still think that I will be home by next August, if there is [sic] no more strikes in England to hold us up. Well Mary dear I think that is all this time. Remember me to

8

Hazel and your Father also to Mr and Mrs Billings, and give my love to Mickie and Mavis. So I will close now, with fondest love to yourself
from Jack Coventry

PS I have not got my photos from Blighty yet, but I am putting one in this letter that my mate and I had taken in Charleroi. It is not much, but you will be able to see who it is I think.

Letter

No number

My Dear Mary

Just a few lines hoping they find you well, as it leaves me at present. As you will see by the heading of this letter we are still in Belgium, but hope it wont be long now before we will be leaving here for England on our way home to Australia and those we love. We might have all been in England now, only for the strikes. There seems to be nothing but strikes over this side of the world, and they are greatly interfering with

Mont-Sur-Marchienne

Charleroi BELGIUM

March 28, 1919

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our demobilisation arrangements. On account of the shipping being held up. I hope the trouble will soon be settled for good, as we all want to get home now the war is over: it is alright for the tommies as when they go on leave, they have their houses to go to, but it is different with us as all those we love, and hold dear, are twelve thousand miles away. I don't want you to think that I am grumbling, because it is not that, but it certainly seems hard that we have got to wait so long in this cold rotten country; just because, a lot of so-called Men? Who have been in good soft jobs, while the war was on, and getting plenty of

3

money, decide to take a holiday, so they can spend some of their money; for that is what it amounts to. I am enclosing a photo for you in this letter that I had taken while I was on leave in England, and I think when you see it you will agree with me that it is a good one. I had two positions taken, I am sending one to Mrs Billing and the other to you, so you will be able to see both (sic) I would have liked to send you one of each, but I didn't have enough to do that,

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so am sending you the one I think you would like best out of the two of them. It is about two months now, since I had a letter from you, and about a month since I had one from home, so I am looking forward to getting quite a budget from you when the next mail comes in; as I feel sure there must be several of yours, somewhere abouts for me. Sometime ago, I sent you a photo of a pal and myself, that we had taken in Charleroi (sic) it is not a very clear one, but I think you will be able to see which one is me. So I hope you get that one alright.

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Well Mary I'm afraid I haven't got much news I can tell you this time, but am hoping that I will not be very long in following this letter myself, that is if we have any luck at all. Remember me kindly to Mr and Mrs Billing, and give my love to Mick and Mavis and my kind regards to Hazel and your father, and the best and fondest love to yourself from Jack Coventry

Letter is on YMCA paper as above. It is written in black ink, as is envelope. It is stamped 8 MY, FIELD POST OFFICE 5.W

Letter
No 35

Mont-Sur-Marchienne
Charleroi Belgium
May 5th/(19)19

My Dear Mary

Again I take the opportunity of writing you a few lines; in continuance of answering your five letters that all came by the same mail. You were saying that I will have my work cut out, to get rid of the different peanuts, who are hanging round, but I don't think I will myself; I will get you to stand at the door and count them as I chuck them out, and then you can tell me, when the

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last one is finally disposed of; then we can go inside and eat our Peach Jelly, in peace, and quietness, and I will be able to tell you all I want to and to also ask a certain question, of mutual interest to both of us; without any interruptions. Well dear Mary, I think you will understand from the last few letters, I have written to you what my feelings are, towards yourself; At the same time I realise, that if a chap cares for a girl at all, it is only fair to her, to speak to her personally, and not through the medium of a letter, and give her an opportunity of asking any questions she may

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wish to do, and also to talk things over together. So all I am going to ask you to do, is to wait for me until I get back, and then we can talk it over together. I hope you wont think I am taking too much for granted; but I think you do care for me, don't you Mary? You were telling me that you was putting a lot of things away in your box, and that naturally people were thinking that you are getting ready to be married, and I certainly hope that

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you are, providing of course, that I am the lucky chap, am I right in hoping this. I am glad to hear that

you prefer to have your wedding quietly, without a flash show. And I quite agree with you that it is far more sensible to spend the money, on furniture, and comforts for the home; and that is what I prefer to do myself. I am always interested to hear of your doings at the Lodge. You certainly seem to do a lot of work for them. I intend to transfer from the South Branch. To yours, when I return, which I hope wont be very long now. In reference to Frank Highman's bible, I

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have still got it safe in England and will bring it home with me. When I return, I will try and arrive in B.H. on a Sunday, as you suggest, and then we will be able to talk without you having to keep going into the shop. As we will have quite a lot to tell one another, and you, and Chrissie will also no doubt. Have a lot to tell one another, as I intend to bring her with me. I am sorry to hear that business is not too good in the shop; and

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we will certainly have to fix up that dark room; and boom photography for all we are worth. Well dear Mary there is absolutely no news to tell you from here, so I will have to close now, but will write again in a few days time. Remember me to your Father, and Hazel, also to Mr and Mrs Billing, and give my love to Mick and Mavis, and my best and fondest love and kisses, to yourself

from yours lovingly

Jack Coventry

Letter

No number

*Mont-Sur-Marchienne
Charleroi Belgium
May 19th / (19)19*

My Dear Mary

At last the long looked for mail, has arrived; and you can imagine how pleased I was, when I opened it to find there were five letters from you in it. Three written in January, and two in February. So I am going to set to, and answer as many of them as I can straight away. In your first letter of the five you say [you?] feel very much disgusted at not writing to me for some time; well dear Mary there is no need to feel like that, as I think you are

2

doing remarkably well in writing so many, as I know your time is pretty well taken up; and even if a mail does arrive without any letter from you, I always have the feeling that you are thinking of me; over here; so that takes away the disappointment. I am glad to hear that you got the Christmas present I sent you from "Abbeville" in France, I have several little things for you now, but will bring them with me when I return, as parcels from soldiers have a nasty habit of going astray in the Post Office. I am very pleased to hear that you are doing so well since your illness; 9 stone 8½ lbs, is [a?] very good weight

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to go, in such a short time, after being laid up and wouldn't be surprised if I am not able to recognise you when I get back. I am very pleased to hear that you and Chrissie, are still writing to one another, and expect by the time I get back I will find you both firm friends, and that would please me very much, as she is one of the best, and I would do anything in my power for her, and I know she would do the same for me. You suggested in you letter that when I get back, we hold an evening in the A.N.A. Rooms; well I don't

4

care much about doing that, as I would much prefer to return quietly, without any celebration; as I can't help thinking of the many brave fellows, who will be left behind to sleep on the battlefields over here, and also of their mothers, and other dear ones; who will look in vain; and can imagine how they ll feel, when they see us return. But anyhow, I will leave it now, and we will talk it over together when I get back. I am glad to hear that your father has got rid of his cold; and also that they have not got the "Spanish Flu" in Broken Hill, as it is a deadly thing; a great number of soldiers have died with it since the armistice, and when I was

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in England in January the American soldiers in hospital were dying in hundreds. I think it is a good idea of yours to have the cellar fitted up as a dark room and, do photography there, as it ought to pay well; and I could do all that for you in my spare time. I am glad to hear that the south Crowd get no satisfaction out of you; as if they were sincere, in wanting to know how I was; they could easily write a few lines, to me. About that white feather business, it was not S.C. the

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Star Boarder; and I don't think the one who sent it will ever send one to anybody again, so we will forget all about it now. You were saying in your second letter that, I will have my work cut out to get rid of the different peanut pests, who have been hanging around since I left; but I don't think I will, so we will wait and see; but you have no need to be afraid that there will be any argument or unpleasantness, as I am sure I will be able to persuade [them?] to melt away quietly. You were saying that you hope it is not long before I will be back again; and I hope the same; but I am afraid it will be some

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time yet. I was hoping to be back in Australia by the end of August, but demobilisation is so slow, on account of the scarcity of shipping that it may be later than that before we get back now. Well Dear Mary, I will have to close now, as I am dog-tired but will continue, at the first opportunity; remember me kindly to Hazel, and your Father, and give my kind regards to Mr and Mrs Billing, and my love to Mick and Mavis, and don't forget to have the Peach Jelly ready

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but I bar, the walk to Railway Town afterwards, So I will close with fondest love and kisses, hoping you are quite well, as it leaves me at present,

from yours lovingly

Jack Coventry

JLC returned to Australia on 13 July 1919, was discharged on 4th October 1919, and married Mary Dix in Broken Hill in August 1920. He was nearly 33 years old.