



Letters from the Past No. 29

The WW1 Letters of Reginald John Greig. 2. England

These letters have been transcribed by Reg's daughter Dawn Daken. They were published in the Moruya Examiner and kept in a scrap book by her Grandmother. The originals have unfortunately not survived. This group of letters are from Reg while at training camp in England. He is enjoying the adventure of seeing England for the first time and experiencing many a young man's dream of travel and adventure. We have no actual postcards that Reg sent home, but where possible postcard of a similar vintage have been added to the text.

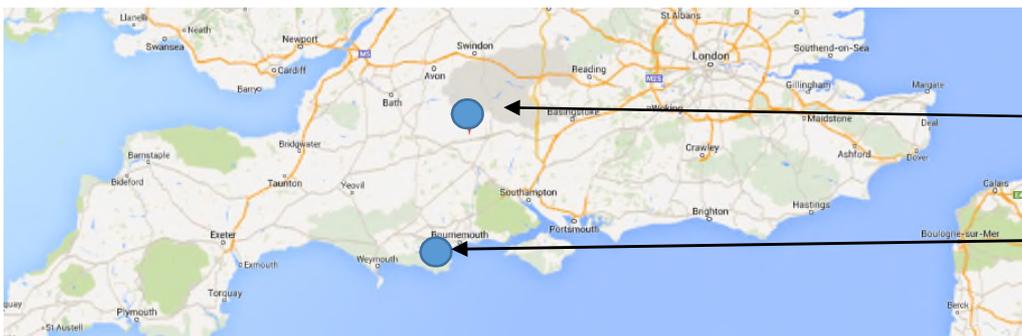
9th July Sunday



Eddystone Light
1916 postcard

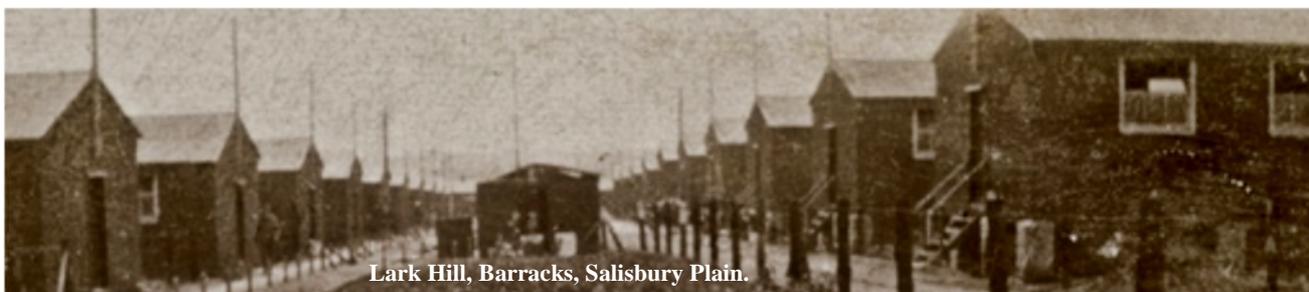
Well, we have arrived in merry England at last, we sighted the Cornish coast at 9.30 this morning. It must have been near Landsend, we were steaming along the coast all the morning and we could see the farms and villages all the way. We passed quite close to the Eddystone light house. It is about 20 mins south east of Plymouth. Plymouth is one side of the harbour and we disembark in the morning and we heard rumours that we are going to Salisbury Plains. It was a great sight to see land and to know that it was old England. The farms are all divided by hedges and ditches, the barley and stuff are just about ripe now. Plymouth Harbour is the best I've seen since I left Sydney, but it can't hold a candle to Sydney Harbour. When you get in Sydney Harbour you have seen a harbour; not a duck pond that they are in the habit of calling harbours. Well, I guess the Kaiser will be mad when he hears that the submarine did not get us, I don't think they even got a look at us. We did the last 150 miles at 18 knots per hour, the old A8 surprised herself. I have kept the straight path so far and

I think I can do so till the end. I will always remember your training. I will now conclude this letter. I will write again as I get to our new camp. I will send a few photos as soon as possible.



1st Training Base.
Lark Hill,
Salisbury Plain.

2nd Training Base.
Swanage, Dorset



Lark Hill, Barracks, Salisbury Plain.

July 16th 1916

Your most welcome and long thought of letters to hand on the 14th July. Received two letters, one dated 15th May and the other 21st May. The 14th July was rather a big day for us, I received 11 Letters altogether. We got them just before tea. I missed my tea over them but it was grand to be in touch

with Australia again after nearly 9 weeks of nothing but sea. This is a very pretty place about here, I think it could not be beaten. There are several villages about here. Amesbury is a beautiful old place.



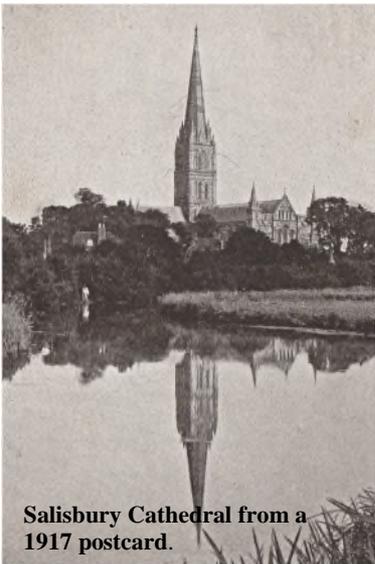
Amesbury Abbey.



Amesbury from a 1917 Postcard.

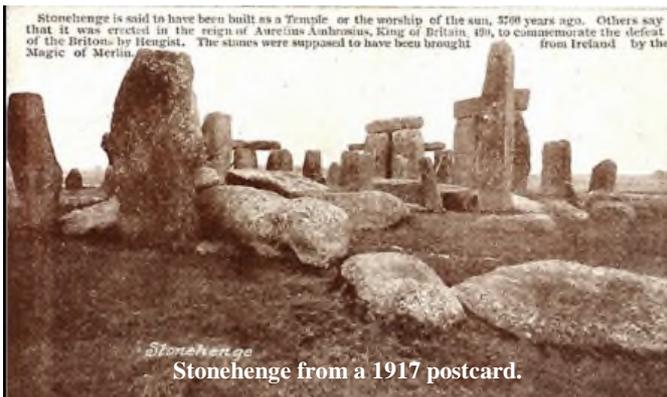
I posted a few views of it a few days ago. We get leave every evening and we walk to the surrounding villages. Over a 5 mile radius is out of bounds but there is plenty to see within bounds. Amesbury is a very old place with its old Abbey, which we went through and everything was explained to us. The oldest part is 1100 years old; the old door is still in use and the lock is the size of a candle and the key is about a foot long and attached to the door by a dog chain so that no one can pinch it.

The river Avon flows through Amesbury. Yesterday a party of us went to Salisbury (by special permission), a distance of 12 miles from here and we went to a soldiers club and had tea, then an old gentleman named John Wheeler took us round and showed us all the sights of Salisbury. We were lucky in going to the club as this old gentleman has permission to take soldiers through the grounds of different places in the city including some castle about 3 miles out but we didn't have time to go out there but if we get over there again we will go. There are great gates which shut off certain parts of the city at night, the part shut off includes the Bishop's Palace and the Cathedral. The Cathedral is a magnificent building as you will see by the card that I am sending. The spire reaches to a height of 404 feet. We also saw an old house that Charles 1 stayed in I wish now that I had studied my history better than I did because it would be a great help.



Salisbury Cathedral from a 1917 postcard.

We went through the most beautiful garden that I ever saw, the flowers were of a much more delicate type than anything ever grown in Australia. Pansies were of the palest colours and everything was of a lighter colour than in Australia. The green of the trees is much lighter than out there. I wish you were able to see the sights I have seen since leaving. I received the sprig of honeysuckle in good order, it brought back memories of old times. I will try to get a sprig of ivy from the old Abbey and send to you.



Stonehenge from a 1917 postcard.

This is a beautiful part of the country, every field is almost red with poppies, cowslips and forget-me-nots are everywhere. I used to think it was all fairy tales about the flowers growing wild but it is true. You should see the English strawberries, they take a beating, you can buy a basket full I measured the basket 1ft x 6ins x 4ins for 1/- so you can guess we have some feeds. Another historic old place is Stonehenge, it is the remains of an old sun worshipper, it dates back 1780 BC. It is a circular affair and

the stones used are up to 75ft high, and on the top are other stones said to weigh 25 tons and at the top, they are notched and the flat ones are hollow so as to keep them from slipping off. It is a sort of rough dovetail.

You will notice in the souvenir of Amerbury there is a picture of Stonehenge, and you will notice a large stone in the foreground. At the longest day in the year the sun rises directly over this stone and when it is rising the shadow falls across the altar stone, a huge flat stone. At the side there is another very big flat stone, said to be the sacrificial stone but this is only surmised: strange thing about this is that there are no rocks in England like those used, the only stone like it is found in France and they think that it must have been brought across and then you wonder how they got these stones weighing 20 tons up on the upright ones. The accepted theory is that they filled up round them with earth and then rolled them up. I have a card of a model which is said to be like the original.

I am sending you some of our papers, the "Yandoo", and it will give you an idea how things go on a transport. The twilight is beautiful; it doesn't get dark till 10.30pm and it is daylight at 4am, the time is 1 hours ahead of the correct time, that is the idea of the daylight saving bill.

Lark Hill Salisbury Plain. 25th July 1916

We got to London on Friday 21st. I got the mail and the "Examiner" a few days after the letters. Since writing last I have had four days leave in London. The whole brigade went at the same time. We went up to London on a day's special leave then we marched into Australian headquarters at Homeferry Road, Westminster which is not far from the station. We arrived in London at midday. Well London is an eye-opener; it is even greater than ever I imagined. At headquarters, they give you the addresses of places where you can get rooms. We, four of my mates and I, went to a place in



Theatre Royal, Drury Lane

Tavistock Square. It was a grand place and the people treated us well. On Friday afternoon we went for a bus ride round the city (or part of it) and after tea, we went to the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, and saw the Razzle Dazzle Review. I thought it was worth going to when we had a chance. It was a beautiful show, there were over 300 performers and the scenery was magnificent. We got a fine seat in the grand circle which cost us 10/- but it was worth

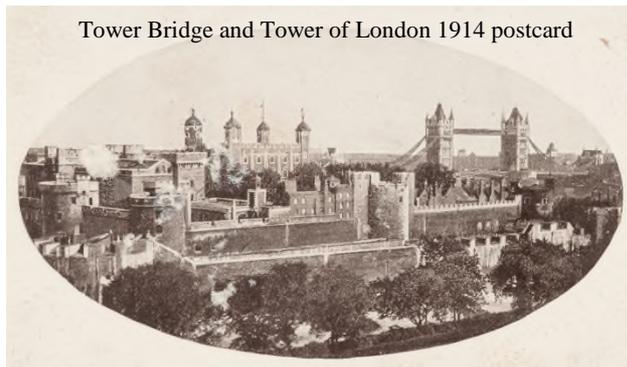
all that to see the

theatre. The stage is the biggest in London, being 120 ft across and 100 ft deep so you can form an idea what a beautiful place it is.

On Saturday morning we went and saw them changing the guard at Buckingham Palace, it was a great sight to see the Life Guards and Grenadier guards, the former were mounted and dressed in red coats and busbies, they looked all right, but they would make a lovely target. I didn't call on George, as it was a bit early, 10 am We afterwards went to St. Pauls Cathedral and were shown through by the vergers. It is a most beautiful building and the carved stone and wood are magnificent, in fact it is indescribable. We were taken into the crypt and saw all the tombs of the great people who lived in the last few hundred years. The pillars supporting the great dome are 25 feet square, so it will give you an idea of the size of the place.



Interior of St Pauls Cathedral from a 1916 postcard



We next went to the Tower of London, it is the most historic part of London. I got a book showing all the principal places and posted it, you should get it the same time as this Letter. The Royal jewels are well worth coming all the way to England to see. In one case, there are five million pounds worth, and other parts which the booklet describes are all very interesting. The tower covers an area of about 20 acres. On Sunday we went to Church at St Pauls, and in the afternoon we went to the zoo. It is said to be the finest zoo in the world.



In the evening, we went to Hyde Park and saw the greatest crowd ever I thought possible to gather in one park. There must have been millions. On Monday, Payne, Wynn and I thought we should like a run to Brighton, so we went and had a pleasant day. The train we went in does from London to Brighton (62 miles) in 65 minutes - some flying. Well Brighton is a very nice place, as you will see by some cards that I am sending. I don't think I will be able to catch this mail as it

closes in London tomorrow. Brighton is a fine place, it has a sea frontage of five miles and there is a promenade and gardens the whole length of it. We left Brighton at 8pm and got to London in time to catch our train for Amesbury and arrived at the camp at midnight last night, so you can guess I feel a bit tired this evening.

Our battery has been turned into a Howitzer battery and that means that we have to start from the first again. I and some of the other boys from this battery are attending a gunnery school, there were six of us picked out and we will have a two month course, and this under English officers is better than years under our own. In a week I learnt more than all the time I have been in the army. There may be a good job at the end of it. I will write a longer letter next time as I want to catch this mail.



Horwitzer Battery

For those with a technical interest in military equipment the following are the details on the Q.F 4.5 Howitzer

Calibre	4.5 inches	Barrel length Bore length	70 inches 13.4 calibres	Rifling	32 grooves, 1 in 20 uniform twist	Chamber capacity	100 cubic inches
Barrel	Built-up A tube & jacket	Breech	Horizontal sliding block	Recuperator	Hydro-pneumatic	Sights	Reciprocating & non-calibrating
Carriage configuration	Box trail	Max elevation	-5° to 45°	Top traverse	3° L & R	Loading angle	
Basic Weight	1.5 tons	Length (muzzle to towing eye)	9.1 feet	Trunnion height	3.8 feet	Width at wheel hubs	6.7 feet

From: igelif.tripod.com/45Howinchsheets.htm

QF stands for "Quick Firing", a British term for ordnance that fires ammunition with a metal (usually brass) cartridge case containing the propellant charge. The maximum firing range of the Mark 11 was 7,300 yd (6,700 m).