



## Letters from the Past No. 31

### The WW1 Letters of Reginald John Greig.

#### 4. France.

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. This group of letters are from France.



**Above:**Field Artillery waiting to move forward. AWM EO3561.

**Left:** Entrance to catacombs, Hill 33 near Messines 22 January 1918. Arrow points to Reg. Photo by Frank Hurley.

**Below:** Manhandling a gun. From "Brief History of the 7<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Brigade".



#### 2nd February

I am just starting this and intend to write a few lines every day. I received your letter, also Grandfather's and Ethel's, all dated 3rd December. I haven't received your parcel yet but I got one from Auntie Thalia and two from Auntie Mary and one from the Brigade Comfort Fund, it contained handkerchief, pipe, tobacco, milk, preserved prunes, lollies, chewing gum, lead pencil and writing pad. Every man in the Brigade got one, and they went well. The parcels were late for Xmas, but as it was it was better as we spent Xmas in London.

#### 4th February

I received your parcel today, so it turned up after all I also got one from Aunt Alice Bishop. We have a fine billet here, we are sleeping on beds of a fine French type, and it is great to sink down in the kapok bed. We also have two stoves, one for cooking and one in the bedroom for warmth, quite different to what I thought it would be like in action. There are some beautiful houses in the town of Armentieres, and they are just as they were left when the Germans were here two years ago. For instance we are sleeping in a room, the walls of which are all worked satin of the prettiest designs, it is better than anything I have ever seen. Today being Sunday I will give you an idea of what we had for our meals. Breakfast - porridge, (made of biscuits put through a coffee mill, and milk, eggs and bacon, tea, bread butter and jam. Dinner - soup, roast mutton, potatoes, preserved pineapples and custard; and tea, bread; etc. Tea - curried bullied beef with bread, cheese, butter, jam etc. With the food issued and a few things we buy we can live like lords. The trouble is that we often have to leave our meals to get cold while we go out to give Fritz a few shells, it is only a step from our dining room out to our gun-pit.

**6th February**

I received Ethel's Letter dated 18/12/16 today. I like to get her letters as they are always so newsy. It is terribly cold here now, the temperature being sometimes as much as 20 below freezing, and by the papers it is colder in England. We get the English papers a day old; so that is not too bad I am still in the best of health, not even a cold; and the health of all the boys is better than expected it would be in such cold weather as this. Today I received two parcels from the Red Cross Society of Moruya containing pudding, ginger, cigarettes, chocolates etc. In the cigarette packets were Little slips and on them was "To our boys from the people of Moruya", one had Mrs Flood's name on it and the other Miss G Thomson so you might mention to those kind people that I got the parcel OK.

**9th February**

Today I received your letter of the 16/12/16, also two bundles of papers. I have been getting your letters more regular over here than when we were in England. The weather has taken a decided change and is much warmer now, and the thaw has begun, and everywhere is mud and slush. We are not badly off through having an asphalt yard and opening out onto the street, the boys in the trenches are having a wet time, there being about six inches of snow to melt and the country is so flat and all the canals are frozen, it will just about cause a flood.

**12th February**

I received your parcel today. I think all the parcels were held back at Xmas time, and it is just as well they are more appreciated over here than they would have been in England. In the last mail I got there are some pictures taken at Durban and at Amesbury, two places I will always remember. I will cut them out and send in this Letter as I intend using a green envelope and they are not censored. I had a letter from Eunice Bishop today which has taken since the 20th October to get here. I often get letters from both Alice and Eunice. Yesterday was a nice day it was quite warm and everything was quiet, not a sound; one would not think we were in the midst of a great war. At night there was a bit of a raid on, and at 8 o'clock to the second every gun in the place opened fire. The ground fairly trembled with the noise. The timing of these raids is everything, it must put a nasty taste in Fritz' mouth when our hurricane of shells go over. For every one he sends over, he gets 10 back. The worst thing about this job is that we are called out at all hours of the day and night to send a few records over to Fritz.

**4th March**

Things have been very quiet here these last few days, one would almost forget there was a war on. One night last week our boys raided Fritz's trenches and they found the Germans chained to their machine guns, so they had no alternative but to bayonet them and leave them there. They brought back over 100 prisoners. Our Captain was congratulated on the good work of his battery in covering our infantry. Though we have only been here a short time the battery has been mentioned in dispatches. The weather here is getting quite warm again, and the days are getting warmer. With love to all from Reg.

**People mentioned in the letters:** Ethel:Reg's sister; Aunt Alice Bishop:Wife of William Bishop from the second marriage of Reg's great grandmother Thalia; Aunt Thalia:Thalia Anne McGregor (nee Parbery), sister of Reg's mother; Aunt Mary:wife of Charles Parbery Reg's mother's uncle; Eunice Bishop: unknown. Mrs Flood and Miss G Thompson: friends of family.

That is all the letters we have from Reg. History tells us that the Brigade disembarked at Le Harve on 31<sup>st</sup> December 1916 and went into action on 17 January 1917 at Armentieres. They also took part in the battles of Minim Road, Broodseinde, Passchendale, Morlancourt, Mont St. Quentin, Messines and the Hindenburg Line.



Reg received a gun shot wound in the right thigh on the 18<sup>th</sup> April 1918 and was sent down to Abbeyville and repatriated back to England on the 23<sup>rd</sup>. He arrived back in Australia on 3<sup>rd</sup> April 1919 on the Orca, which was quarantined on arrival in Australia due to an outbreak of influenza on board. Reginald married in 1926 to Pearl Denny.