

TRIP TO BRUSSELS – JANUARY 1919.

The first stage of the journey was to be from Ham-sur-Heure (Belgium) to Charleroi, a distance of 10 miles. Anticipating a cold and bumpy ride, Stewart and I fortified ourselves with a little German wine, of which the Sergeants' Mess had bought a big consignment at dirt-cheap rates. Three barge-loads of German stuff had been captured and sold by auction to the soldiers, with the result that our mess was selling a fair quality wine to its members at the rate of half a franc a bottle and cigars at 8 a franc.)

A motor-lorry was to leave the village for Charleroi at 8 o'clock but it didn't actually get away till after nine. However we didn't notice the delay much as we put in the time alongside the stove of the neighbouring estaminet. A propos of these estaminet stoves, I'm thinking of introducing them into Australia. They'll always do me for the cold weather. All the heat that goes out into the room and they don't use up much fuel.

We rolled into Charleroi at a pretty good pace and arrived there about half past ten. Our party was now increased to three as we picked up Sgt. Raymond, who was also doing the same trip. The next thing was to find beds. Charleroi has now practically come under the military death-knell, which means that everything shuts up like a book at 9 p.m. so we had rather a difficult job to find accommodation. Knocking up several hotels, we found that the place was full of soldiers that night and all beds seemed to have been booked long ago. At least one obliging landlady offered to make up beds out of long chairs and couches so we were only too glad to accept this. She gave us a cup of coffee each and put us into quite a decent warm room. We soon had our boots off and slung ourselves in any old positions on to the couches and slept the sleep of the just.

At 5.30 next morning we were up and doing and got another cup of coffee poured into us. They only charged us Fr.2 each for the lot so we got off lightly. We then made tracks for the railway station and hopped aboard the train, which consisted of third class German carriages, absolutely unheated. We all managed to secure seats but kept up a running flow of curses at a Belgian woman who kept the carriage door open for ten minutes drawing out a long wailsome good-bye to some relatives on the station.

At 6.30 the train crawled painfully out of the station. Oh it was a slow train. It seemed to get out of breath about every ten minutes and of course every time it got out of breath it slackened off and stopped.

After an hour we crawled past the Field of Waterloo and the station called Waterloo. The monument erected to commemorate the Battle stands just a little way from the railway line and consists of a huge pyramid-shaped mound of earth, surmounted by a lion, looking towards France. A Frenchman sitting opposite me said that the lion should really be looking the other way now as it was Germany we had to keep our eyes on. He still seemed rather annoyed about poor old Napoleon's defeat. He said to me, "If only Napoleon had

aeroplanes he would have been able to see Blucher's army and wouldn't have been beaten." Dear oh dear! I couldn't help smiling. I tried to cheer him up by saying that the Battle of Waterloo was really quite a paltry affair when compared with the recent battles and that France had now won a far greater victory.

The word "victory" seemed to immensely please a little Belgian kid in the carriage as he immediately started to shout, "Victoire, victoire!" This reminded his mother of all the clever things her little boy had said or done while the German soldiers were billeted in their house, and she began to relate these things in minute detail. The kid --- he couldn't have been more than six years old --- then actually produced a cigarette and asked his mother for a match. His obliging parent gave him a light whereupon he proceeded to puff away like an old stager. It takes a lot to surprise me nowadays in these countries but I must admit I was rather taken aback at this display. For our edification the youngster then recited the German numerals up to ten and delighted the whole compartment by giving vent to such expressions as "Schwein Allemands", etc., etc. He really was a nice looking little kiddie though.

We arrived at the Gare du Nord, Brussels at 9.30 and walked across to the Hôtel Espérance nearby, to which we had been recommended. This is a fine big hotel, and, after fixing up rooms for the night, Stewart conducted us to the Théâtre Royal de la Monnaie, where we booked seats at 5 Francs apiece for the evening's operatic performance.

It was one of the coldest days I have ever experienced so we kept on the move. Stewart seemed to have quite got the hang of the city so we appointed him Chief Guide on the spot (as he had been there once before.)

Brussels has fine wide streets like Melbourne, but the resemblance goes no further. We made our way to the Grand Place, which is in the form of a square and contains buildings richly ornamented and most beautiful architecture, including the Maison du Roi and the Hôtel de Ville. It is worth going to Brussels to see the Hôtel de Ville alone. It is a very fine building and contains the beautiful ball-room where Wellington danced the night before Waterloo. We saw the very niches with seats that Byron refers to in his poem commencing, "There was a sound of revelry by night." The ball-room has on its walls the finest tapestries I have yet seen, all the colours being still wonderfully brilliant. On the ceiling at one entrance is painted a startling picture of the horrors of war and, at the other entrance, six alabaster statues are grouped. The whole place is so delightful that I was loath to leave it.

We then proceeded to the Church of St. Michel & Ste. Gudule, the interior of which we all thought beats Notre Dame, Paris. Such stained glass windows! I felt thankful the Germans never bombarded Brussels. The pulpit also is a wonderful display of wood-carving.

However, as one can't live on beautiful sights alone, the next place we visited was the Restaurant Anspach, where we had quite a respectable "eat-up" for 5 Francs 50 centimes per head.

I noticed far more French than Flemish being spoken, though all the street names and notices are displayed in both languages.

After dinner, we went to the Palais de Justice, which is said to be a marvel of architecture. The architect is said to have gone out of his mind after working on it for twenty years. It is really a most wonderful building and stands on high ground from which one can view the whole city.

We visited two more churches and then the Art Gallery, which contains a very beautiful and famous collection of pictures, including quite a number of Van Dyck and Rubens, and also the celebrated 'Adam & Eve' by Van Eyck, which are so remarkably life-like. The exhibition of sculptures did not impress me so much, though two Nubian slaves done in bronze are well worth seeing.

We had tea at the same restaurant and then proceeded to the Theatre Royal de la Monnaie to witness the performance of Gluck's opera, 'Orpheus', or 'Orphée', as they call it here. The theatre is a very fine one, with five tiers of seats, and is, I should estimate, about twice the size of Her Majesty's, Melbourne. The house was just about full when we got there and we were a little disappointed to find our seats a little too far to one side. However, as we had only paid 5 Francs each we couldn't very well complain. (Fr. 5 equals about 3/8d..... three shillings and eightpence).

The performance, from start to finish, was magnificent and Mademoiselle de Silvera, who took the part of Orphée had a strikingly beautiful and youthful stage appearance, and also a glorious voice.

The opera Orpheus is a most extraordinary one and has very little action. The first scene represents a sacred wood on the earth with a marble tome of Euridice in the centre of the stage. Orphée (who is really meant to be a male character) is mourning the death of the girl Euridice. The scene in the 2nd Act represents "L'entrée des Enfers," or, the entrance to hades and the large chorus of demons and Furies (with black and dark brown veils on) surrounding the entrance was one of the most ghastly sights I have ever seen on stage. Act 3 represents the "Champs Élysées," or Abode of Happy Spirits, and was a most beautiful scene, with a large hidden chorus in the background singing beautifully. The last Act represents a cavern leading out of Hades towards the earth.

Orpheus is a very old opera and was first performed in Paris in 1774 and from a musical standpoint it is exceptionally interesting because Gluck was the first composer to break right away from the old traditions, make full use of the orchestra and cut out all the

flimsy ornamental stuff. It was generally admitted that Wagner got a lot of his ideas from Glück. Wagner himself admits in his writings that till that period Gluck was the only man who could write legitimate opera and properly wed the music to the words.

From beginning to end, the music of Orpheus seems to flow out in one long angelic strain, something like Mozart's, but in my opinion, of a much better quality. There are no sudden changes from fast to slow or from soft to loud and no harsh noises whatsoever. The music has a remarkably soothing effect and seems to just slither along all the time.

I took care to buy a book of the words during the afternoon so was well-informed as to everything that was going on.

The performance lasted 3 hours, finishing up at 10.30. We then had supper at a restaurant near the theatre and afterwards went to Nice's Café.

Nice's Café is one of those sorts of places you don't see in Australia so it may be worth while describing. It is handsomely furnished and has a row of little tables down each side with an open space in the centre. There are a number of girls floating about, dressed in tights and other startling costumes and these dance round the open space, either with each other or with any of the customers who may feel inclined to dance. The orchestra plays all kinds of dance music. When we got there, a girl in Spanish costume was going through a sort of castanet dance. All the girls had apparently had their hair cut short within the last couple of months, so, as this was rather a bad sign, we cleared out after about twenty minutes. (You probably heard that the Belgian authorities cut off the hair of all girls who were suspected of having been too friendly with the Germans during their occupation of the city.

We reached our hotel about midnight and had to get up again at 5.30 the next morning to catch the 6.25 train back to Charleroi. We very nearly got into the Paris Express by mistake. Our own train was very crowded and took 3½ hours to get to Charleroi --- a distance of 25 miles. On the line between Brussels and Charleroi we passed the scene of a tremendous explosion. Seven hundred wagons of ammunition had been blown up by a German eight days after the Armistice was signed. You never saw such a mess! (We were at Le Câteau (France) at the time of the explosion, and even way back there it felt like an earthquake. They have German prisoners at work clearing up the mess and quite a number of these have been killed and wounded through damaged ammunition going off as soon as they try to move it. Another big explosion occurred about the same time at Jamoulx (on the railway between Charleroi and Ham-sur-Heure) and the force of this lifted the roofs of all the houses in the vicinity. Several buildings quite 500 yards away were wrecked.

On our arrival in Charleroi at 10 a.m. we caught an electric tram to La Chapelle and the steam tram from there to Gozée. From Gozée we had a walk of 3 kilometres back to Ham-sur-Heure, arriving back about midday.

Ham-sur-Heure
29-1-19.

**Un-numbered letter.
(pages 1 and 2 missing)**

**HAM-sur-Heure
BELGIUM.
February, 1919.**

..... the only operatic stuff we have is "All hail thou dwelling pure and holy," from 'Faust' and the Ballet Music & Soldier's March from 'William Tell'.

I do not have very much work to do nowadays. Whenever the Corps Commander (General Hobbs) goes out I am automatically off duty and he goes out frequently. His As.D.C. (Aides-de-Camp), Lieuts. Temperley and Murray, are fine fellows and I get on very well with them.

We had our first big fall of snow the other day and it is still lying on the ground. I think we have been fortunate in having had so little snow so far as I detest the snow; it makes things wet under foot and when the stuff gets hard one can hardly stand up.

I may as well mention that General Hobbs informed me yesterday that he had promoted me to Staff-Sergeant as from 1st February. This means that I shall be able to draw an extra 1/6d. Per day extra over here and will wear three stripes and a crown, though all promotions since the Armistice are only temporary and may have to be dropped on embarkation for Australia. However even if I do have to revert to Sergeant when I get on the boat, I shall get the benefit of the extra 1/6d. per day in the meantime. Les has been made a temporary Corporal.

This morning I had my second play on the Ham-sur-Heure church organ. It is a nice pipe-organ, with an up-to-date, two manual and pedals, with an electric blowing apparatus. The village is lighted with electricity, the current being brought from Charleroi.

Last week, Les and I paid a visit to the Ancient Abbey d'Aulnes, about 4½ miles from here. It is said to be the oldest ruin in Belgium. It was commenced in the year 600 and was apparently a very fine Abbey. The place was burned by the French at the time of the Revolution. It stands on the banks of the River Sambre. The scenery en route is very pretty (we walked) and a battle was fought in the wood nearby between the French and the Germans in 1914.

Les seems rather puzzled about getting his wife out to Australia. He is thinking about going out first himself and letting her follow by P. & O. or Orient boat though I have told him that it would be better for them to travel together if possible, even if it did mean a little delay.

The General is going on leave to England on Saturday so that means I am going too. I am well due for it as it was in March 1918 that I had my last English leave. I intend to spend

a good part of it with Florrie and Aunt Maggie this time. Will have to arrange to get to Barry for the weekend as I believe Uncle Robert is working at Birmingham and only gets home for weekends. I don't altogether relish travelling at this time of the year as I well remember my first trip to England, which occurred in the month of January and by jingo it was cold.

Oh well I don't think there is anything else to write about this time so I will close, hoping you are all managing to keep your ends up alright. Expecting to see you soon

I am your loving son and brother,

Bob.

MY FOURTH TRIP TO GREAT BRITAIN

The first stage of the journey was by train from the dismal little village of Ham-sur-Heure (Belgium) to Charleroi, there to board the Boulogne-Cologne Express for Boulogne. The train consists of 14 carriages, fitted with beds but no seats (formerly a hospital train) and is run specially for officers going on leave, one coach being set aside for senior non-commissioned-officers. On my arrival at Charleroi, I learned that the "Express" was running four hours late so I put in the time at the Y.M.C.A. and one of the local cinemas. The Y.M.C.A. people here have taken over the second floor of a very fine cafe and they have managed to get hold of a magnificent Bechstein grand piano from somewhere or other. --- It may be worth mentioning that the date was February 1, 1919.

The train left Charleroi at 10 p.m. and crawled through Mons, Douai, Arras and Doullens to Boulogne, arriving at the latter place about 9 p.m. the following day. I'd like to meet the wag who named it "Express". I had chummed up with a Tommy in the train and when we got outside Boulogne station we went in search of a bed for the night, having been too long in the army to dream of going to a military rest camp. After a feed of fish and chips we landed at Madame Bonnet's lodging-house and passed a most comfortable night on feather-beds. As our passes were made out "via Calais" (just like the army) we had to get up at 4.30 next morning in order to catch the 5 a.m. to Calais. Madame B. called us and supplied us with an excellent hot breakfast. As the Tommy said he had a headache she rubbed his head with eau de cologne and then nearly drowned me in it just for fun. This dear old lady insisted on kissing us goodbye and gave us "quelque chose à manger" on the voyage.

Our boat, "Princess Henrietta," (an old paddle affair) left Calais about 10 a.m., journeyed almost into Dover piers and then changed her mind and steamed down the English coast to Folkestone.

I arrived in London about 3 p.m. and tried to get a room at the Shaftesbury Hotel but found they were full up. The porter recommended to me a private boarding-house in St. Martins Lane nearby so I made my way thither. I found the place was, strange to say, kept by Belgians who could speak very little English. As I had been told that it was very difficult to get accommodation in London, I decided to accept the room offered me here. I found I could get on better by speaking French to them than they could by speaking English to me and when they found I knew a bit of French they were delighted and made me "one of the family."

I found there was much more food in London than last time I was there, but the tube railways were on strike.

Saw the Russian Ballet at the Colosseum on night of 3rd and also heard Mark Hambourg play again.

On afternoon of 5th it began to snow and a thick pea-soup fog on the morning of the 6th put the finishing touch on London for me so I cleared out for Wales by the 3.30 p.m. train. Arrived at Pontypridd that night.

A DAY IN GERMANY: AN UNAUTHORISED VISIT TO COLOGNE, (18TH FEBRUARY 1919).

The train (it called itself the 'Cologne-Bologne Express') left Bologne punctually at 7.30 p.m., 18th February 1919, and, seeing that it had to travel through three different countries -- France, Belgium and Germany -- I thought it very meet and smart that it should start off on time.

Well, apart from a two hour stop between Wimereux and Étapes (a mere bagatelle), our "puff-puff" jogged along quite merrily until we got to the Franco-Belgian frontier; then the trouble began. With all the stopping and starting that went on I almost thought I was back on the old Melbourne cable trams again. A Tommy engine driver told me the reason. He said the British military trains are run by Tommies and all the other trains and railway stations are manned by Belgians. And the dear Belgians work dead against the dear tommies and will shove any old train of coal wagons in front of a British military train. Hard

drinks and cigarettes are sold on the "Express" to keep the passengers from going quite mad during the journey.

I chummed up with a sergeant of the Guards in the train and he told me such wonderful stories of Cologne that I definitely decided to go there at all costs. After managing to get through Arras and Douai, our "Express" turned up at Charleroi at 8.30 p.m. 19th February – just a trifle over twelve hours late. After stopping an hour at Charleroi we went on through Namur to the German frontier at the same terrific speed.... Here, the Tommies handed us over to the tender care of a German engine-driver, fireman and guard. From then on our train was an express indeed. My, didn't we travel--- between 60 and 70 miles per hour, according to my estimation, right into Cologne.

It was 7.30 on the morning of the 20th February when I walked off the up-to-date Cologne railway station.

The first thing to strike your eye as you leave the station is the Cathedral. It is very beautiful indeed with its lofty roof and two tall towers. I found myself alone as the sergeant of the Guards had to say good-bye and catch an electric tram to the suburb where he was billeted. The streets were full of people and for the first hour or so I was so interested in everything around me that I quite forgot that I hadn't had any breakfast. However, after a bit more walking I soon developed an "enormous hunger" but I didn't know what on earth to do as I didn't fancy entering any of the Hun shops and besides I couldn't speak a word of German either. Then I met a Y.M.C.A. official and told him my trouble. Such a nasty man he was. Said I should have brought my own food. Said their Y.M.C.A. didn't open till half past ten and only had a very limited supply of biscuits. When I asked him if there were any German shops where I could get something to eat he said it was absolutely forbidden and "what a cad one would be to take the food from the poor German people who didn't have enough for themselves." I nearly said worse than "Bosh," but didn't: I just thought it. I also thought, "Wouldn't one be a cad to starve to death?" I left him in disgust and kept on walking about --- couldn't even find a place to sit down. Then I came to a church and decided to go inside and sit down there. But, alas, I came another thud: there were only queer arrangements to kneel on in the church and no proper seats. So I kept on walking about, and every now and then, to sort of relieve the monotony I kept on asking passing Tommies if they knew where I could get a "feed" and the passing Tommies kept on saying they didn't know. I must have passed half a dozen other stray soldiers also looking for food and this was the only consolation I had to cheer me up.

After living on cigarettes and scenery till about 10 a.m., I met a cheery –faced little Tommy, and after that everything went right. He told me he had been in Cologne about three days and was on the way to as cafe at the moment. I was also delighted to know that he had some knowledge of the German language. (Oh! What a mug a man feels in a strange

country when he can't speak the language). If I ever go to China I'll be sure to take a little book containing such useful phrases as: "Gimme something to eat", etc, etc.

We turned round a corner and bowled into a sort of combined baker's shop and cafe, and, after Bill (my new Tommy friend) had had a long guttural discussion with a snowy-haired young German boy about 18 and a nice little German girl about 14, we sat down at a little table. The girl then produced some black bread and two cups of what looked like coffee without milk. By this time I was so hungry that any qualms I might have had about the food being poisoned had long since disappeared and I would have eaten anything they liked to put before me. Bill said, "What about something to put on this bread?" and then after another long conversation, the girl brought to light some stuff she called "kraut" and what I would have called bad treacle. I consumed about five slices of the 'bread & treacle' and as too busy to notice how much disappeared down Bill's throat. Then we drank the black liquid, which smelt like fish and tasted like nothing under the sun. I forget what the girl called it but I believe it was a substitute for coffee. Bill then said to me, "What about some pastry?" and I said, "Certainly my dear chap. I'll eat whatever you can dig up." He then asked for some 'tochter' (I won't vouch for this word but it sounded to me like 'tochter'). Anyhow both the boy and the girl laughed and turned up a minute later with a card bearing a scriptural text. "Oh my godfather!" howled the Tommy, turning to me, "I asked him for some of that pastry I saw in the window and this is what they bring me." Then my faith in Bill's knowledge of the German language began to wane. When he started to try and explain himself to the boy and girl I sat up and took notice and discovered that the language he was using was a wonderful mixture of English, French and German. However, to do him justice, he did know a few German phrases, such as 'I love you' which he used to great effect on a fraulein in a beer-house half an hour later.

As he couldn't make them understand what he meant by "pastry" he got a plate and rushed to the shop-window and presently returned with two highly coloured specimens that looked like rainbow cake. As fast as I put this stuff into my mouth it melted and disappeared, leaving no taste beyond a slight sweetness. It might have been frogs' spawn for all I know. They charged us 2 Marks 95 pfennigs for this little lot and we got up and left the shop.

We walked a few yards further down the street when Bill suddenly cried, "There's a boozer!" We dived in and discovered it was an iron-monger's. However, we discovered a 'bierhaus' a few minutes later and found the German beer quite decent and only 25 pf. a glass

The shopkeepers wouldn't take my French paper money so I went to an Exchange office and changed a so I went to an Exchange office and changed a £1 note receiving no less than 39 Marks for it. This was alright for me as it meant that I would only have to pay about 6d. for the things valued at 1 Mark (about ½ price).

We then found our way to the Opera House or 'Opernhaus' as they call it. The one at Paris is the only one I have seen to compare with it, and, as we found they were playing the opera 'Martha' at 5 p.m. that night I bought two tickets for the ridiculous price of 3 Marks (about 1/6d to me) each.

After that, Bill took me to a big cafe where they had a lovely grand piano and an organ. Bill played the organ and I played the piano. We tackled some Cav. Rusticana and Trovatore with more or less weird results. But the German waiters only looked on & laughed. We then drank some more German beer and ate some more "frog spawn."

Then Bill began to get worried about the dinner question. He said he was alright because their Division had taken over a hotel and brought in the rations for their own men who were in Cologne on leave. But he didn't know where I was going to get anything decent for dinner. We eventually decided that I should be introduced as his long-lost brother from Australia whom he hadn't seen for years. I went round to the hotel with him and he introduced me to the quartermaster and I nearly got brain fever trying to keep up the joke. Bill kept asking me how such and such an old friend was and I had to say that I hadn't seen him for months or some such rot.

Anyhow I got a big feed of stew and boiled rice out of the quartermaster so the settled the matter.

Then we went to see the great Hohenzollern Bridge over the Rhine. It is the biggest bridge I have ever seen (not counting the Forth Bridge which is, of course, for a railway only). The Hohenzollern Bridge has statue of the Kaiser and Bismark at one end and two other jokers at the other end and carries four railway tracks, two tramway tracks, and two footpaths across the Rhine. We walked across it and back again. The Rhine is a fine wide river at Cologne --- about 3 times the width of the Yarra at Prince's Bridge or, at any rate, more than twice as wide.

After seeing the bridge, we went inside the Cathedral (the 'Dom', they call it). Some old German we met inside showed us all round and explained everything in passable English. He said that the cathedral was the highest in the world and, pointing to a certain thing, said "that was put there by our late Emperor". The cathedral is magnificent, both as regards the exterior and the interior.

There is a good electric-tramway system in Cologne, the trams running to Bonn being exceptionally large and fast. We travelled free on the trams.

We took our seats in the Opera House about a quarter to five. It is a tremendous place, with five tiers of seats and the house was full by five o'clock.

The opera "Martha" was beautifully rendered, both as regards the singing and the part played by the large orchestra. The rendering of the "Last Rose of Summer" by the tenor was splendid, though the German language sounds rather queer at times in an opera.

After leaving the Opera House we managed to find a restaurant where we could get something for supper. For about 4 marks, we got a large slice of fried fish each in a very stylish restaurant.

The civilian population have to be indoors by 9 p.m. and at this hour I said good-bye to Bill and made my way to the station.

The train left Cologne at 5 o'clock the following morning and landed me back at Charleroi about 4 o'clock in the afternoon.

..... Finis

Love to All,

BELGIUM
March, 1919.

Bob.

AUSTRALIAN CORPS

Corps Headquarters,
20th April, 1919.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

No. 8651, Staff-Sergeant R. O. SNAPE has been acting as confidential clerk to me from November last until the present time. He was very anxious to return to AUSTRALIA when his turn for demobilization came, but, owing to the difficulty in replacing him, I was unable to release him. I am now, however, able to do so.

During the time he has served with me he has carried out his duties to my entire satisfaction and I am very sorry to lose him.

J. Talbot Hobbs.

Lieut.-General,
Commanding AUSTRALIAN CORPS.

(COPY)

AUSTRALIAN CORPS.

Corps Headquarters,

20th April, 1919.

Dear Bruche,

The bearer, No.8651, S/Sgt. R. O. SNAPE, has been acting as confidential clerk to me during the time I have been at Corps. He also acted in a like capacity for General MONASH.

He is desirous now of getting back to AUSTRALIA by a boat not later than the "Osterley", and I am willing to release him. I should be very much obliged if you would kindly do all you can to make the necessary arrangements.

General MONASH knows S/Sgt. SNAPE well and will, I feel sure, be quite willing to help him in the way he desires.

With very kind regards,

Yours very sincerely,

(Sgd.) J. TALBOT HOBBS.

Colonel J. H. BRUCHE, C.B., C.M.G.,

Director of Non-Military Employment,

(Branch 1d), 54 Victoria St., LONDON.

ARG/1.

76887/115
ADMINISTRATIVE HEADQUARTERS?
AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE.
7 May, 19 - 8-30 p.m.
CENTRAL REGISTRY.
2653/1/16.

OR. A. IF. 64342 (A4)

AUSTRALIAN IMPERIAL FORCE DEPOTS

IN UNITED KINGDOM.

Headquarters,
Bhurtpore Barracks
TIDWORTH.

5th May, 1919.

5th May, 1919.

Headquarters,
No. 2 Group, A.I.F.,
SUTTON VERY.

No. 8651 S/Sgt. R.O. SNAPE, Aust. Corps H.Q.

The subjoined copy of letter received from the Director General of Repatriation and Demobilisation Dept., is forwarded for your information and necessary action.

Please ensure that S/Sgt. SNAPE is placed on the first draft leaving your Depot for Australia and advise this Headquarters when he marches out.

Ref. 1.D.1.a. 19973 of 30th ulto.

"The Director General has approved of the Early Repatriation of this M.C.O. whose Normal Repatriation is considerably overdue owing to the fact that he has been employed as Confidential Clerk to Lieut-General Sir J. Talbot-Hobbs, the Corps Commander, who has personally asked that his Embarkation be not delayed. He will be marched out to 1st Bde. Concentration Depot, No. 4 Camp, SUTTON VERY, on Monday next, 5th prox."

*Approved
and issued
8 MAY 1919*

SA6
Captain,
For D.A.A.G.

Headquarters,
Repatriation and Demobilisation Dept., A.I.F.,
LONDON, S.W.1.

30th ulto.

For information reference your 1.D.1.a.19973 of

TIDWORTH
5-5-19.

DIA

Moorehead
Major General,
Commanding

DIARY FRAGMENTS: 23rd MAY to 25th JULY 1919

23rd May. Left Hardcott (Eng.) Camp in charge of Advance Party for troopship, 'Bremen'. Marched to Denton railway station & took train via Salisbury & London to Liverpool. Saw part of 'Manon' at Covent Garden while waiting in London for train. Arrived in Liverpool at 6 a.m. Quartered in American Y.M.C.A., Liverpool.

26th May. Not allowed on troopship owing to some repairs being effected to engines. Sent to Camp near Knotty Ash near St. Helen's.

28th May. Complained to authorities about dirty conditions at Knotty Ash Camp & were instructed to sterilise our clothing & return to Y.M.C.A. at Liverpool. Had trip to New Brighton by ferry-boat.

30th May. Trip to Chester by train & by small steamer along River Dee to Eccleston, returning in evening to Liverpool.

2nd June. Went on board S.S. 'Bremen,' a boat captured from the Nord Deutscher Lloyd Co. Went trip to Seyforth Sonds [?] Volunteered and was given post of Orderly room Sergeant for "B" Company.

3rd June. "Bremen" sailed from Liverpool during early morning. Amazed at complicated system of locks & docks to get out of Liverpool by sea & R. Mersey.

8th June. Sighted a whale.

10th June. 3 p.m. arrived at Port Los Palma, Grand canary Island, after an exceptionally smooth passage all the way. Anchored in the harbour & took aboard fresh water from barges. Usual crowd of little boats all around the ship, manned by dark-skinned men of apparently Spanish extraction. These men brought bananas, figs, cherries & lemons; also shawls, , table centres, canaries, slippers & cane chairs which they sold to the passengers on board, the goods being hauled up by means of baskets & ropes. A number of passengers bought canaries at all prices from 4/- to £1. Goodness knows why!

9th June. Had a concert on deck. Didn't know what to play to suit popular taste so essayed Missouri Waltz. Flying fish seen.

11th June. Volunteered to assist Lt. Halpin (Education Officer) in the issuing of a newspaper on board. Completed a page entitled, "Things we want to know" and composed a story entitled, "Jones tries flirting." Discovered a good comic singer named Snell so composed for him with seven verses to the tune of "Parlez-vous?" Left Canary Islands at 6 a.m. Col. T. Williams, commanding officer of the ship, asked if I was Harold's brother as he remembered H.

12th June. Concert on well deck --- largely attended. Played overture on piano & was announced as follows:- "The concert will now be opened by an overture on the piano Sgt Major Swipe." My song "Parlez-vous?" was sung by Pte. Snell & was a most surprising success in spite of the fact that the singer forgot the words on two or three occasions & had to stop & refer to the "book." After he had gone thro' it the first time the audience made him sing it all again.

14th June. The first number of the ship's paper, "The Bremen Babbling," was issued and the 100 copies sold like wildfire.

15th June. Portside engines of ship broke down so have to run all day with starboard propeller only.

16th June. Porpoises or dolphins & large numbers of flying fish seen during last few days. Sea still remains calm though heat is terrific & atmosphere in sergeants' sleeping quarters almost unbearable as portholes are only from sea level & have to be kept closed a great part of the time. We are fortunate in having an electric fan in our corner but even this doesn't do much good. Phosphorus on sea at night brighter than I have ever seen it before.

18th June. Concert in 2nd saloon. Played overture & one accompaniment. Snell sang "Parlez-vous?" again with great success. As he pressed me to write more trash for him after the style of "Parlez-vous?" I have written him a song called "The Good Ship Bremen", to be sung to the tune of "So early in the morning." I slept for three nights on the boat-deck, but as it has now got a little cooler, have decided to sleep downstairs again.

19th June. Pte. Duffy, a good singer & pianist is getting up a costume concert party & has asked me to act as pianist so for the last four mornings we have been holding rehearsals in the 2nd Class Saloon from 9.30 to 11.30 a.m. Have Pte. Oliver in the company. He has a fine voice. Duffy asked me to compose a song to the tune "There is a Happy Land" and also words for the final chorus & I have done this. He has set the latter to music.

25th June. First costume concert came off in 3rd Class quarters. We were dressed as pier rats in costumes brought on board by a Y.M.C.A. official. (See programme).

26th June. Arrived at Cape Town, a.m. all went ashore till about 3 p.m. Motley population of all shades of colour from white to jet black. Town seems rather cramped up between Table Mountain and another mountain.

28th June. Repeated concert in 1st Class Saloon.

29th June. Arrived Durban in morning. All off ship by 10 a.m. Had an enjoyable time, afternoon & evening, at the house of Mr. McKenzie, at "The Point."

30th June. Visited Durban Town Hall, Zoo & Gardens, also beaches, which are all very fine. Went to a Mr Wall's home.

1st July. "Bremen" sailed 5 p.m. Saw whale on shore. Sea not so calm from 2nd July onwards.

8th July. Concert in 1st Class saloon. Played accompaniment for '4 Crows' [?]

9th July. Concert by our party in 3rd Class room.

11th to 12th July. Rough weather. Ship pitching. Rather unpleasant.

13th July. With other members of the concert party presented with fountain pen & £1 by C.O. of ship.

14th July. Gave our last concert (1st Saloon).

15th July. Arrived Fremantle.

Frank Brennan
15th July, 1919

My dear Mr.

We have at length arrived at
(or almost at) Fremantle. We expect to
arrive there in a few hours.

I am impatiently waiting to
see you all again but it won't be
more than a few days now.

The ship is very good to travel
in, we have had an exceptionally
smooth passage — only two
really rough days so far.

I expect there will be a letter
waiting at Fremantle from
you but I have to post this
before it will have a chance
to reach me.

Hope you all + Mudge are keeping
as well as I am
Yr loving son + brother
Bob

We may call at Adelaide. Not sure, but possibly.

16th July. Went ashore & by train to Perth, arriving at noon. Met Horace Shaw & had dinner with him. Met Olive Treloar & her husband & was driven all round Perth & through King's Park in side-car. Stayed night at Horace's boarding-house in St. George's Terrace.

Had tea at Mr. Street's house in Cottesloe & spent evening with Mr. & Mrs Street, Margery Street, Olive & her husband & Horace.

17th July. In afternoon, went to Perth zoo & had tea with Horace.

18th July. "Bremen" left Fremantle about 6.30 a.m. Passed a barque at sea.

25th July. Landed about 11 a.m. Met Father, Frank and Arthur Lightfoot at foot of pier & Madge & Mother at Sturt Street, South Melbourne Depot, at 12.30 p.m. Taxi home.