

## FRANK'S LETTERS 1916-1917 TO FAMILY

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### pre-Christmas 1916

Melbourne Thursday 9 am [21 Dec]

Dear Mother,

I am writing this note as the Orontes is moving into the wharf at Melbourne. The troops are all getting leave from the time we lay to until 10 pm tonight. I had the misfortune to strike ship guard from 6 o'clock to-night as well as all day tomorrow.

Well I'm having a great time. The sea after leaving Sydney Heads was like a mill pond. The weather was just beautiful, so were the rations. Miles better than at camp. On Tuesday night most of us slept on deck, either stringing our hammocks or using them as a sort of mattress. It was great, believe me! We passed Gabo Is. at about 6 o'clock next morning (Wednesday) and it was a fine sight, as indeed is the whole of the coast. Things were going splendidly till about 2 o'clock we turned out for guard but as my shift (10 to 2) didn't start till 10 o'clock I turned into bed for some sleep - again we slept on deck. It was extremely cold but a balaclava and sweater soon overcame that. From now on we commenced to round the Cape (Wilson's Promontory) and the boat did heave some, I can tell you. I got to sleep and was all right. At 10 we were rudely wakened by the Corporal of the Guard. At this time the sea was easily at the worst and I wasn't feeling too clever. I stood it out however, and am happy to say that as yet I have not been seasick.

While on guard (on the 1st Class Promenade Deck) I got on to a deck chair and with a great coat and waterproof around me was soon dead to the world. At 2 o'clock in the morning, my strenuous (?) watch was o'er and back to my hammock I departed.

We passed through Port Melbourne Heads at about 5.30 in the morning; whatever else Melbourne has she has no harbour. The port is just a wide expanse of water - so wide that we couldn't see land on either side of boat. This, however, may be due to the weather dull and showery and fairly cold. At this minute a huge rope hawser which the crew were beutening {?} by a Captain has snapped like a bit of cotton. They're getting a fresh one cut straight away.

All our fellows (from the tent) are together again at the ??same mess?? The troop deck which is down below the 1st Class deck is about the pick of the boat. The men are arranged in messes - a certain ? to each table. Above the tables are hammock hooks, but so far I have slept on deck which is much cooler and more pleasant. There are 8 to our mess - the 7 of our tent and another young 'Varsity man. We are allowed to sleep on the boat deck, and on the aft promenade deck (2nd class). There are quite a no of 1st class passengers (men and woman). A lot of the chaps have their people with them. There are no 2nd class passengers, but a lot of civilians are going home by this class as munitions workers in England.

By now the boat is alongside.

Give my love to Grandma and all the Aunts, Cousins, etc. I'll try and write to some from here if I can do it.

With fondest love from,

Frank

PS I saw George, Jack, Una and S Tulloch at the boat. Did you get my note from Warren. Dinna forget my address. No 31079, Gunner F Evatt, 23 Reinforcements, 1st FAB Field Artillery, AIF

December. Also did you get a photo of our guard.

**26th/27th Dec. 1916.**

Dear Mother,

Am beginning this letter at about 5.30 p.m. on Boxing Day. We left Melbourne on Saturday at 12 noon (23rd December). The departure was quite a gay scene but hardly so brilliant as at Sydney. We struck the famous Rip just outside Port Phillip, i.e., a zone of very churned sea, almost a whirlpool, where the ocean current meets the current of the Yarra. Once out to sea we struck normal ocean weather. All the Sydney men were as right as rain, but a great majority of the Melbourne men were very bad all day. Up till now I have not been troubled with seasickness. Praise be to Allah but, touch wood. On Sunday morning (Xmas Eve incidentally) we had a church parade. The Y.M.C.A. representative giving the service. All day long the chaps mostly lounged about the decks reading or sleeping. By this time we were well into the Great Australian Bight but had not struck it exceptionally rough though it has a rather bad reputation for heavy seas.

On Sunday night sleeping as usual on the boat deck (i.e., right above where the boats are kept) we were disturbed about midnight by the sound of Christmas hymns and carols sung in the saloon by the officers and ship's staff.

Christmas Day was rather dull but the sea was quite calm. Well, this was the first Christmas I ever spent away from home and a rather unusual place to spend it in the middle of the ocean. However, everyone made the best of it and we had a very happy time. We breakfasted on grilled chops, jam and cocoa. After breakfast at about 10.45 a.m. there was a full Church service (Christmas service) held in the 1st Class saloon.

I wouldn't have missed it for anything. The captain of the steamer read the service and the Y.M.C.A. representative gave the address. Incidentally it was choral service. I felt I was back at old St. John's again, believe me. After service we [p.2] were lined up on deck to receive everyone of us, a Christmas box from the N.S.W. war chest. This consisted of sardines, potted paste, tin cocoa, 1 pack cards, 1 tin sweets, handkerchief, peanuts and postcards. Very nice little gift too. We then adjourned to a real Xmas dinner. Chicken broth, goose and some great plum pudding. Also fruit, sweets, nuts and cake and soft drinks, the latter items being our own stuff. After dinner more read and sleep (N.B. not too much work On board). At 6.30 pm. a concert was arranged on the forewell deck which was a great success and enjoyed muchly by the men.

Most of us have got our sea legs now and are quite at home on board. We have a large amount of reading matter and a tremendous lot of sporting stuff, games' etc. so none of us are likely to be bored much by the long trip. I have started a diary which I hope to keep going for some time. I s'pose I'll soon get sick of it though.

We expect to reach port on Thursday at dinner time. If we pick up mail there, which is very improbable, I might get a letter from you. So far none received. As we will not get mail again before reaching England, just address the letters in the usual manner and don't bother about the c/o Capt. Symonds, Commander R.S. Orontes, though I don't suppose it will much matter if you have.

At present I am writing this letter on the promenade deck (port side is allowed to men though starboard side is reserved for officers. There are a crowd of large albatrosses hovering round the ship - graceful majestic birds they are too. Today has been rather dull with intermittent showers but now, late into the afternoon, it is quite fine, though a strong wind has sprung up. Occasionally a large sheet of water sweeps part of the deck and the fellows roar with laughter when they see some poor lad all unwittingly walk too near the rail and get a drenching. In my little sheltered corner I am quite safe from the spray. Physical drill has been the order of [3 - 3] the day though it has been a bit windy to do much in that line. It has also been rather cold so much so that one's great coat is necessary when knocking about the ship.

Though our sleeping quarters are down below on the troop deck we are allowed to sleep on the upper deck (boat deck) and the fellows for the most part prefer sleeping there out in the open rather than in the allotted place below. Down on the troop deck the hammock hooks are placed above our mess tables and of course in wet weather we'd be obliged to sleep there, though I should hardly imagine it to be nearly as good as on deck.

At 6.30 p.m. we are allowed to take our hammocks up above and there is generally a wild rush for good positions. This letter was interrupted while yours truly got hold of his and found for himself a good place. One big difference in life here and on land is the hour of retiring. Nearly everyone is well tucked in by 7 o'clock at the latest. With plenty of food, sleep and not much work my condition shouldn't be too good, too fat and lazy by the time we reach England. The English training will soon tone me down however. There is a vague chance of leave at the next port (I can't mention the name on account of the censor). I suppose I'll strike-e duty again. Anyhow, here's luck.

The sea is by now pretty rough but I am feeling as fit as a fiddle and will I trust be so till the end of the voyage. A balaclava cap is a great thing and I'm dashed thankful that I have a few; so also is that comforter that you made me. With these, the cardigan Jacket, great coat, waterproof sheet, and a pair of socks, one could sleep out in any weather. After leaving the next port we shall gradually strike warmer weather but so far things have been if anything on the cold side.

Have you had any news of **Ray** lately. If we get ashore at the next port, I'll drop him a note; also to as many of the others as possible. If I don't get the chance remember me to all the [sic??] give everyone my best wishes for the New Year. [4 - 4] How is old **Clive** getting on up in Queensland. A little bit of hard graft should do him good. Hard luck he couldn't make Duntroon, but it might make him work harder next year - perhaps.

I am continuing this letter on Wednesday 27th. Today is rather dull and the sea a little bit heavier than usual. Have just breakfasted and have come on deck to finish the letter as the mail must be in by 1 o'clock today. All letters are of course to be censored.

How did Christmas go chez-nous? No doubt you spent it at Auntie Maggie's, [Margaret (Gray) Green] but I have up till now addressed all letters to Bella Vista. Probably you have made arrangements to have them sent on to wherever you are staying. I suppose Bella Vista will soon only be a memory so far as the Evatts are concerned. **Bert** is plugging hard into Law no doubt, I'll write him about things musical and dramatic from England. Has **Jack** started work on those theatrical cuttings. Don't let him neglect them as it would be a pity to discontinue such useful and interesting work`.

You might tell **George** that his present is a godsend. It is impossible to use an ordinary razor on board and the safety razor he gave me is a beauty. **Clive** should be able to sell some of my 1st year text books. All can go except McMurrishes "Development of the Human Body" and a text book of Inorganic Chemistry (Kippin and Perkin). He should also collect some money from young Fraser with whom I left my chemistry apparatus to sell.

I manage to get a shower every day though there are 4 showers only on board and they are salt water. That sea soap comes in very handy. Ordinary soap is useless. We were all given a cake of lifebuoy soap on Xmas day. This can be used at the wash basins where the water is fresh.

We have to put our watches back 1/2 hour every day. 'The ship's time keeps altering and it is necessary to conform or our time piece would be useless. Our daily routine pans out something like the following:-

6 o'clock	Reveille
6.30 am.	All hammocks down below and men on deck.
6.45 am.	Mess Orderlies draw rations
7 am.	Breakfast
9 am.	Parade - Physical drill
10-10~30	Spell
10.30-12	More drill
12.30	Dinner
2-4.30	Parade (Drill)
5 pm.	Tea
6.30 pm.	Retreat
8.30	First Post
9 pm.	Last Post

9.15            Lights Out.

We sighted land this morning at about 8 am. The first time since leaving Melbourne. I only hope I'll be able to get ashore at our next port. Today at 2 o'clock parade, we fall in, in full dress uniform, kit inspection, or some such thing

If you got all my mail from Melbourne you should have got 2 letters, dated 21st and 23rd, 1 postcard and also a Xmas card and a little booklet. I'll write again if we can get ashore. If not, my next letter will be from Durban S.A. most likely.

Well I don't think there is much else to write except that I am in good health and am quite happy. May 1917 be a brighter and happier year and may it see the end of the bally war and Ray and myself back again in good old Sydney.

With fondest love from your son,

Frank.

### **27 December 1916, George, at sea**

Dear George, We had a splendid time in Melbourne getting two days leave. I had a bumper time and saw all that was to be seen. It's a grand city is Melbourne - the city proper I mean - streets, buildings etc. Went out to St Kilda a couple of times & got my photo taken 1/- while U wait which I sent to the mater from there. The House of Parliament is one great building and the Gardens are magnificent.

We left at midday on Saturday 23rd from the new Orient Wharf at Port Melbourne. A pretty scene but not so brilliant as at Sydney. I don't think I'll ever forget that sight- it was some. Well, we sighted land at about 8 am this morning for the first time since leaving Melbourne and we expect to make port tomorrow (28th) about midday. There is a chance of leave, but nothing certain yet. I only hope I havn't the bad luck to strike guard duty again, as a couple of hours leave would be very welcome.

That razor you gave me has saved my life so to speak. It would be almost impossible to use an ordinary razor. (p 2): It's a beautiful razor too, is the Autostrop, shaving as clean as a whistle. There are only 4 showers on board amongst 700 troops and these are salt water. However I have managed to get one pretty regularly and with some sea water soap they are not half bad. We always sleep on deck which is much healthier and more inviting that down below on our troop deck. So far sea-sickness has not troubled me.

Christmas on board was not at all bad and the fellows made the best of the unusual circumstances. We all got an Xmas box from the war chest, which was very welcome to all. Our mess consists of 8 men, all Varsity students & all under 21. We had a fine dinner on the 25th. The special rations included Goose, roast beef, chicken broth, vegetables, plum pudding, nuts & fruit. Sweets & cakes & soft drinks were supplied by ourselves. Also a fine Church Service in the morning was further reminiscent of home.

Well I wish you, Stella & your quartet of girls and also all at Te Waree the best and brightest of N Year. Your loving brother, Frank.

**Thursday, 28th December, 1916, mother**

Perth P.O. 3.30 pm.

Dear Mother,

We got leave in Fremantle from midday to-day. At first it was to be till 11 pm. but unfortunately the District Commandant of W.A. put his foot on this and we have to be on the wharf at 6 pm. tonight. From there we will be conveyed to the Orontes by launch. Rather bad luck, eh? We all had a good lunch in Perth whither we sojourned from Fremantle per special train. Perth is rather a nice little town and the Swan River (or what we've seen of it) is a fine one, very wide, like a harbour. The streets in Perth are about as wide as Sydney streets and the trams are electric. There is another troopship in Fremantle quay which left Melbourne the day before us so that there are now about 3,000 troops in the city today.

You should get a censored letter somewhere near this which I mailed yesterday on board ship, for fear we shouldn't get leave, and also a postcard of the R.M.S. Orontes which I am posting with this. If I have time I may send New Year cards to as many as possible.

We leave at midday tomorrow (29th) Thence Durban 14 days travelling. You will hear again from me from that town.

Perth today is a swelter of a place; about 100 and something it feels like. The city is about 8 or 9 miles from Fremantle and takes about 45 minutes by train. Fremantle harbour is really artificial - a huge breakwater forming a quay not unlike Circular Quay. It is obviously a busy shipping port judging by the crowd of ships in the quay which are either lying alongside the wharves or are anchored in midstream. So far I have not received any

letters but that is because I didn't know about addressing them to the captain of the boat, and underneath this Melbourne or Fremantle, according to where it would catch us. From Melbourne I wrote telling you of this but didn't tell you to add Fremantle. As it is, address them from now' on according to the original address I gave you, as we won't get any more mail till we arrive **home**.

With fondest love, Frank.

**6 January 1917 At sea.**

Started Friday 5th Jan. 1917. Finished and posted Saturday, 6th Jan. Dear Mother,

I didn't intend to write to you till we reached our next port, but we heard today that all letters from there to Australia would be censored so I decided to post this one on board.

Though we only had a short leave of 6 hours at our last port, we had a rather good time, seeing most of what was to be seen in the capital. I wired Bert from there and also sent a couple of letters, and a card or two to Bella Vista as well as other places. No doubt all were received. We spent the night (28/12/16) in port and weighed anchor the next day at about 1 o'clock all men parading in full dress uniform on the deck in accordance with military regulations. At 2 pm. we saw the last of dear old Australia we'll see for a while and headed out to sea in beautifully fine weather. That night I was detailed off for main guard and was on till 6 pm. the next day (Saturday). On Saturday morning I was on patrol from 10 am. - 2 pm. on the 1st class deck where the officers and passengers were amusing themselves at kindred pastimes. Bert I think knows a few of the A.M.C. captains. The R.C. Chaplain had quite a long talk with me while I was on duty. He is a fine fellow - typically Irish in manner.

A splendid concert was given on Saturday night on the after-well deck, the major, O.C. Troops, and the Commander of the . . . being present. I enjoyed it immensely.

Sunday morning - Church parade in uniform at 10.30 am. At 9 am. all the men paraded with their mugs and were issued with some Condy's fluid for a throat wash - a good idea on board. In the evening a sing song was held by the men and those hymns a la Salvation Army, were given with great gusto. At midnight was disturbed whilst asleep on deck by the noisy revellers and the ships band welcoming in the New Year. A band was formed from among the troops on board and though only a small one is pretty good. They generally play on deck near the 1st Class dining saloon while the officers are having dinner at 7 pm.

New Year's day (Monday) thus merrily welcomed was as merrily celebrated. ~ sports meeting was held on the port side of the promenade deck which is allowed to the men (the starboard being reserved for the officers). The sports were a great success and most enjoyable. I went in a couple of events but didn't win any. The day was concluded by a concert at night at which the band assisted and also a number of passengers who had more or less experience on the vaudeville stage. Before turning in had a talk with a returned Melbourne artilleryman who was sleeping near me on the deck. He heard me whistling some "Boheme", and it appeared he was an ardent music lover and was familiar with all the operas. He gave me an interesting sketch of artillery in action on the Peninsula where he was knocked by shrapnel. He was discharged but re-enlisted a month ago because as he remarked some one had to go.

Life on board ship is an easy one - a lazy one in fact; apart from the few hours' physical drill every day we hardly get any exercise whatever. I have an occasional spar and do a good deal of skipping, but this is not sufficient to keep me in good nick and I am now miles too fat. However, the stiff English training should bring me down soon into better condition. One misses the early morning route march re used to have at the "Warren", for there is no parade on boat before 9 am. The tucker is very good and we draw a lot of extras which we wouldn't get on land, eg., butter, milk in the tea, etc., soup, porridge and pudding daily, pork, ham, brawn, buns, etc. Hot salt plunges and cold salt showers are available and with some sea soap are dashed nice before going to

bed or else I have a shower before brekker. Reading takes up a large part of the day - I've read about a score already. The other night one of the chaps brought a gramophone up on deck; he had some good records. I'm looking forward to hearing some of the real stuff in London

Every day we have to put our watches [10 - 3] back about 1/2 hour on average so that we are gradually getting behind Sydney time. The watch Bert gave me keeps splendid time. The other afternoon they had a cricket match on deck between the sergeants' mess and the N.S.W. men the former winning. We have tons of sporting material on board and books and games in abundance - a game of chess is enjoyable now and again.

Is there any more news from Ray? Am looking forward to any letters that I might get when we reach shore. We won't of course be collecting mail from Australia before then. I suppose Ray will get a furlough in . . . . and I might see him there. Clive no doubt is back from Bananaland by now; I hope the work will do him good and instil some energy into him; I'm sure the garden could do with a weeding and a dig, not to mention a watering. When are you thinking of leaving the old place. Very soon no doubt for it's just a little too big for yourself and Clive. When Ray and I are back we'll all settle down in a smart little villa round Mosman or Neutral Bay or perhaps go back to "Bella Vista" again.

Am out of touch with war news but believe there's a lot of peace talk - mostly hot air I suppose. Wireless news is pasted up now and again. From this source we heard about the phenomenal rain in Queensland and also about such an all important topic as a Barmaids' strike in Melbourne.

The other night I saw about the most gorgeous sight I ever wish to see - sunset in mid ocean. The spectacle lasted altogether for a half hour the aspect changing continually. The effect of the whole was enhanced by clouds on the horizon, I'm not going to attempt to describe it, but I was most profoundly impressed. Dawn is also another grand thing at sea.

All are eagerly looking forward to leave at the next port - two days at least are expected. I'll write again from there and tell you all about it.

Pay day the other day. We only got 10/- (1/a day on board boat) The remaining 1/- a day is paid us in lump sum when we get to . . . . .I'm thinking that I will have to go very steady when we're getting 2/- a day for it goes very easily even on board boat and when we get leave it should run away with a good bit of "dough.. I shouldn't think one would want very much at the front though.

With this mail I am ,writing to all the Aunts, George, Jack, Bert, Grandma, Uncle Harry , Messrs. Sellar and Richardson and Dot.

Will write again from next port which we expect to reach in 5 or 6 days.

With fondest love from, Frank.

**6 January 1917 to George [George's papers]**

addressed to Shirley Rd

Dear George,

We reached our last port in the morning of the 28th December and were granted 6 hours leave (12 noon - 6 pm) enabling us to go into the capital and have a good time. Leaving port at midday next day (29th) we headed for mid-ocean in beautiful weather. Since then have been 8 days at sea enjoying beautifully fine weather and calm seas.

Had a good time of New Years Day. On board we have concerts about every other night and they are splendid. Am writing this just before the commencement of ??????[could be concert] on the well deck to night. We expect to reach our next port in about 6 days and are looking forward to a good leave there.

Love to Stella and the young ones, from Frank.

### **Friday, January 12th, 1917, DURBAN, to mother**

Royal Hotel, Durban.

Dear Mother,

We sighted the African coast at about 4.30 this morning - a splendid sight it was too. After being anchored for about 1/2 hour outside the entrance, we moved into our moorings at about 6.30 a.m. Durban harbour is very fine and somewhat reminiscent of Sydney with its lofty verdant foreshores. The wharf was crowded with dirty looking ragged kaffirs with whom the chaps got great amusement by throwing them coins to scramble with.

We fell in at 9 am. in full dress and were taken ashore for a route march going as far as the Marine Parade. This is the ocean beach set off by wide esplanade and lawn, with some splendid hotels standing in the background. During the march, native fruit sellers hovered persistently around us with their wares; fruit is excellent here. We were marched back again to the boat and at 1 o'clock were again taken ashore. This time however we were taken into the heart of the town and dismissed in front of the town hall - a magnificent building.

Straightway we made for the hotel opposite (the above and the best in Durban) where we engaged a room at the moderate price of nix (i.e., the 8 members of our mess). After a bath and some light refreshments we went out to see the town.

Rickshaws are abundant in this town. We each jumped into one and jaunted in single file down to the beach. Believe me, its a fine ride in one of those carriages. The runners are gorgeously ornamented with various articles of vivid colouring (I may send home a photo of self and another in rickshaw some day. One of our chaps took us all in that posture). A bathing enclosure (surf) is fenced off. the water is evidently very popular with the residents judging by the

crowd. After a look around the beach we next had the tram ride of Durban. The trams here are double deckers. Hopping into the top of one at the P. Office we had a wonderful ride. Entering the residential area of the town (where all the millionaires hang out; this is Musgrove Road) rising higher and higher

magnificent views of town and harbour, are obtainable. The mansions and surrounding grounds form one continuous line of splendour. The ride leaves you at the Public Zoo and Gardens which we were too late to see but which we may see tomorrow if leave is granted.

Returned back to the city about 6 and after a cold plunge had dinner. Have just finished.

I sent a souvenir to you in the form of a booklet of views and also some P. cards to others. I didn't think it necessary to cable from here but will probably do so from England.

So far have had a bumper time in S.A. and hope we get leave again. We fall in tonight at 11 p.m. outside the town hall to be marched back to the boat.

Your loving son, Frank.

### **Friday 12 Jan 1917 Durban post card to George**

Dear George, Arrived in Durban 6 am today and after a route march through the town were given leave till 11 pm Have had a bumper time. Durban is a really splendid place and there's plenty of good things to be seen. Wrote to you on board but doubt whether you'll get it or not. Best wishes etc, Frank

### **Saturday, 13th Jan. 1918 8pm. To Mother**

Waverley Hotel, DURBAN. Natal.

Dear Mother,

Have just finished coffee on the verandah of the hotel. As I guessed, we were given another leave today, though we had some anxious moments before it was definitely announced.

This morning we paraded at 8 am with our towels and were marched to the surf enclosure on the Ocean beach (about 16 miles) It was a sweltering day and I can honestly say that I never relished a dip so much as this morning. The surf is not nearly as good as on our own beaches and is much more dangerous ~ hence it is enclosed by a semi circular breakwater. This didn't detract from the pleasure of our swim by any means. After the surf we were marched back to the boat again. The following cheerful notice met the eye as we filed on board: "HMS. Orontes to sail at 2.30 pm. today. No leave to be granted."

All of us were blown out by the march, the heat, etc. and were too "done". to growl, though it certainly was depressing news. I had a "hunch" though that all would be well and sure enough about half an hour later, it was announced that the ship was not to sail till 6 am. tomorrow (Sunday 14th) as originally thought. Parading at 1 pm. we were again marched to the Town Hall and dismissed till 10.30 p.m. tonight. A ride to the beach in a "ricksh". and some light lunch were followed by a look at some sports in aid of the Governor-General's (S.A.) fund. We then had several tram trips to the outskirts of the town and by Jove, the suburban area of Durban is magnificent in every direction. The roads are an

eye-opener (all asphalt) and there isn't a grain of dust about. The residences and grounds are wonderful with a slightly oriental tinge in design, vegetation, etc.

Before dinner had a bonzer swim in Durban baths (calm water) which are admittedly the best in the world. Then adjourned to the above hotel for dinner - and a good one too.

So you can understand I've been having a "king" time and have enjoyed every minute of leave.

You will probably receive this letter with the mail I sent yesterday (12th Jan.) consisting of letter add souvenir of Durban. I also sent postcards to George, Grandma and Auntie Flo.

We reach Capetown in about 3 days and in 3 weeks from then will have set foot on English soil. There should be a few mails before reaching England (to Australia I mean) so you will soon hear from me again.

The Durban are polite but not enthusiastic. The trouble is that previous contingents have at times run wild and thus in a way we suffer though naturally it hasn't affected our enjoyment. An instance of this was given us at dinner of a resident who had invited a few Australians to his home finding his sideboard relieved of some silver. At Capetown, Australians are "in bad" with the people and for a long while no leave has been given there - there is I believe a strong pro-German element there. There are a large number of Indian colonials (natives from Madras, Calcutta, etc.) round and about Durban. These form a comparatively cultured section and are more than a cut above the aboriginal class. The waiters at the hotels and restaurants are Indians. They speak English remarkably well for the most part.

Beat wishes to all from, Your loving son,

**Monday, 15th January 1917, to Mother**

At sea.

Dear Mother,

As a mail closes this afternoon at 2 p.m. I am writing this letter though there is little news to relate. We left [Durban] yesterday in hot fine weather. Yesterday was one of the hottest days I ever experienced. It was very hard to keep cool. We reach our next port of call very shortly - hence the reason for collecting a mail; whether we get leave there or not is very doubtful but are living in hopes.

Last night a cool change set in and a strong wind sprang up. There was stormy weather on the coast and it, was a fine sight to see from the deck. This morning,, is rather cold.

Yesterday after Church parade we were all given a tin containing tobacco and cigarettes (50) which should prove very welcome. We have been in sight of land most of the time since leaving port. .

With this mail I am sending letters to Jack, Bert and Auntie Maggie.

Remember me to all, With fondest love, Frank.

**Monday, 15th January, 1917 [Durban – Capetown] to Bert**

Dear Bert,

It is now a little over 24 hours since we left last port. Here we were given leave on Friday and Saturday from 2 p.m. - 11 p.m. Had a splendid time - its a fine town and we enjoyed every minute of our leave. The harbour is easily the best we've struck since leaving Sydney though of course it can't compare with "our 'arbour". Rickshaws are very numerous and I had more than one ride. The runners are Zulus and are fine stamps physically though they don't last long at the game.

The ocean beach, or marine Parade as it is called, should be an example to some of our seaside suburban aldermen. The actual beach and surf are not so good as Manly or Bondi, but they are set off by esplanades, wide lawns with ponds and fountains, large surf baths surrounded by a semi-circular promenade; Just behind the beach are also the best swimming baths (calm), I've yet seen as far as beauty uniformity of design, etc. are concerned. We had a couple of swims (one a swimming parade) while on shore.

I wrote a letter to you about 4 or 5 days before entering the port but it may have been destroyed because I inadvertently headed the letter with the name of the ship.

One of the doctors on board - **Capt. Mansfield** while having a yarn with one of our chaps asked after me. I suppose you told him you had a brother on board, should the opportunity occur I'll try and have a talk with him.

I haven't spoken to your friend **Dr. Roberts** though young **Biggs** (a brother of the ex Fort St. man) has.

How are things musical going in Sydney?

Any more conservatorium concerts with little Verbrugghen swinging his baton to the strains of Beethoven and Wagner. I'll hear some of the London orchestras if ever I get the chance.

We reach our next port, which will be the fourth port of call since leaving Sydney in about 48 hours. Whether we get leave there is very doubtful. I certainly hope we do as I am told it is a grand place to see.

Best wishes for success at the March exams from - Yours always, Frank.

**At sea, 24th January 1917, to Mother**

Dear Mother,

A mail is closing in a day or two so I'm writing to let you know I'm O.K.. The censorship is so strict that one can hardly say more.

We only stayed 6 or 7 hours at the last port and had to catch the convoy which had 10 hours start. We were with it about a day and a half.

During the port stay we had a route march through the city during which we had a good look round. Its a very pretty town with its magnificently impressive background the famous mount overlooking the town., We would fain have stayed longer and had leave but "it must be as it may".

The weather has been as usual beautiful and the sea continually calm. Of course its been getting very hot lately and we expect to cross the line very soon.

I was introduced to **Captain Mansfield** one night when on guard by one of our fellows. The former is a Varsity friend of Bert's.

There's a chap in the AMC named **Hillcote** who is an ex-Maitlander and who knew George well at school. He also met Bert at the University.

I don't know what port we're going to, but we expect to be there in about 3 days.

Best love to all from Frank.

### **10 February 1917, North Atlantic to George**

PS met an AMC man on board named Hillcote who knew you at school in E Maitland in the days gone by.

Dear George, I sent you a post-card from Durban which you doubtless received. Events since then are briefly as follows: Left Durban at 6 am on Sunday 14th January and arrived at Capetown the following Tuesday at 4 pm. As we only stayed at the latter place for eight hours we had no leave but were taken ashore for a route march - thus enabling us to see quite a lot of that fine town. We left at midnight at full speed to overtake our convoy which had sailed 10 hours before us. On the second day we caught it up now making the convoy seven steamers and one escorting cruiser HMS "Cornwall". Included in the number were the "Orsova" "Medic" & Berrima" all carrying Australian troops.

Ten days later we entered the port of Freetown in the British protectorate of Sierra Leone in North West Africa. There were about half a dozen cruisers at anchor in the harbour. We lay there for five days but the troops were not allowed ashore. The convoy left on February 2nd and since then we have been on the waves. Weather is changing quickly and today is dull and very chilly. We expect to reach Plymouth in about four days, so that if you get this letter you'll know that all is well, though I'll possibly cable on arrival.

Best love to Stella and the Misses Evatt. Also to those at Te Waree. Frank.

### **10 Feb 1917, to John (Jack)**

(HMT Orontes)

Dear John, I last wrote to you just before Capetown. Here we arrived on January 16 and though our stay of eight days hardly permitted us to be given leave we wwere taken ashore for a route march and thus saw most of the city.

Of course we had two days leave whilst at Durban so one can't growl. Since leaving Capetown we have been in a convoy of seven steamers (including the Orsova" "Berrima" and the "Medic" – all Australian troopships) escorted by a British cruiser – HMS "Cornwall".

About 12 days from Capetown we entered port – a small town called Freetown in Sierra Leone (NW Africa) and while here took on board a naval 12 pounder and a gun crew of British sailors – This of course as an antisubmarine precaution. There is also a permanent submarine guard armed with rifles and ammunition on board. We left Sierra Leone on February 2<sup>nd</sup> and have since struck some pretty chilly weather and heavy seas. It is said that the convoy reaches England in about 4 days. I'll post this letter as soon as we arrive.

I had an attack of mumps about a fortnight or so ago but am quite OK long since.

Hope Grace and the little'un are both in best of health as well as yourself. Yours to a cinder, Frank.

PS Dinna forget them theatrical cuttings.

#### **North Atlantic Ocean, Sunday 11 February 1917, (Flinders) to Bert**

Dear Bert, I last wrote to you just before arrival at Capetown. We entered Capetown Harbour at 4 pm on January 16th and went ashore for a route march during which we saw quite a lot of the town. Leaving at midnight we entered the Atlantic ;and two days later had caught up a convoy which had left 10 hours before us. The "Orsova", "Medic". "Berrima" all carrying Australian troops were among the seven steamers escorted by a British cruiser the HMS "Cornwall" [photo] The convoy moved very slowly at about 10 knots.

On January 29th we entered our fifth port since Sydney viz Freetown – a very small town in Sierra Leone (North West Africa). Here we coaled and took on board a 12 pounder and a British naval gun crew. After 5 days at anchor in the harbour we left on February 2nd and have since been on the briny.

A chap who knew **Capt Mansfield** introduced me to him one night whilst I was on guard. I also met a chap in the AMC named Hillcote [cld be Hillcoat] who knew you at the Varsity. He also is a Maitland man who knew George at school.

We reach England in about 3 or 4 days. On arrival I shall write to the Surgeon-General and ask if I might meet him whilst on my 5 days leave.

Best luck from yours always, Frank

PS l'affaire de Coeur, comment s'avance-t. . . . [on large lined YMCA paper]

#### **At sea, 13th February, 1917 to Mother**

Dearest Mother,

A mail closes today so I'm writing this note to let you know all is well and that I am O.K. having long since recovered from an attack of mumps which confined

me to hospital for a week or so. We are nearing England and expect to arrive in about three days. The nights are getting bitterly cold and the "stormy winds do blow". Nevertheless we still sleep on deck though our original issue of 2 blankets has not been increased; a great coat and a waterproof make up for a deficiency of blankets.

I have written about a dozen letters which I will post when we land (including a long one to you describing the latter part of the trip in detail). The reason I'm not posting them on board is obvious.

Am very anxious to know how Ray is getting on and if perchance he is convalescing in England or is on furlough. If so I'll do my utmost to see him while on leave. I must also meet my esteemed uncle if possible.

They have been paying us 1/- per day on the voyage and a lump sum viz. the remaining 1/- will be given us just before our 4 days leave on arrival. I should thus have sufficient to ensure a pretty good time with a reasonable amount of economy.

I fancy that we'll begin to really miss Australia when we settle down to camp life in cold and drizzly February, with not a glimpse of the sun from one week's end to another.

Love to all, Your loving son, Frank.

### **11th and 16th February 1917 N. Atlantic, to Mother**

Dearest Mother,

I am commencing this letter on the last lap of the voyage within about 3 or 4 days of the old country. When we arrive I shall post this letter and as it won't be censored I can speak with liberty about the voyage. Our ports of call were Melbourne (21st December), Fremantle (29th December), Durban (12th January), Capetown (16th January) and Freetown (29th January). I wrote a short note to you just before arrival at the last port dated 24th January but doubt whether you got it.

Well, we left Durban on Sunday, 14th January, after a fine time there. I wrote you a couple of letters from there. On the 16th at midday the Cape of Good Hope was rounded in wonderfully calm weather and a few hours later we were in Capetown Harbour. The scenery around Capetown is magnificent and the town itself with the majestic Table Mount in the background is a sight for the eyes. As we were entering the harbour a convoy of six steamers and a cruiser could be seen on the horizon. This was the convoy with which we were to proceed home and which we later overtook. A route march ashore enabled us to see the town. It's a very pretty place and leave ashore would have been welcome. However, we left at midnight and went at a pretty fast clip after the convoy, which we overtook two days later.

Included in the convoy besides ourselves were the "Orsova (Orient)", "Medic" (?White Star) and the "Berrima", all carrying Australian troops. By the way, wasn't the "Berrima" the ship on which Ray went to Egypt with the 20th Inf.?

The British cruiser escorting us was the H.M.S. "Cornwall". The convoy moved very slowly at about 10 knots.

About 11 days later (Jan. 29th) we reached our fifth port - Freetown, a little town in Sierra Leone, a British protectorate in North West Africa. For five days the convoy lay at anchor in the harbour coaling etc. The troops were not allowed ashore though the officers and nurses were. I don't think we missed much as the place is hardly more than a native village with very few white people. It was extremely hot all the time. We bought a good supply of fruit from the natives in their canoes about the ship's sides. On February 2nd we left and have since been on the waves.

Since leaving Capetown there has been a permanent submarine guard armed with rifles; and at Freetown a naval gun was put on board as well a gun crew from a British cruiser. I think that all the transports in the convoy have at least one 12 pounder aboard. At present and for a long time since we have been in dangerous waters up till now all has been well.

Friday, 16th February

We expect to arrive at an English port (no one seems to know which) tomorrow morning. Last night (15th) at midnight the convoy disbanded the cruiser, "Orsova" and another fast mail boat making off at full speed. We followed at top speed in another direction. This morning on waking up we found ourselves alone having left the slower boats well behind. A destroyer patrol was expected at any hour and at 10.30 four were sighted on the horizon making in our direction. Half an hour later one of them, the "48" was as close as a hundred yards to starboard. More were seen in another direction. Probably a patrol of about 10 destroyers are looking after the interests of the other ships of our convoy and any other vessels in the lane.

This morning the ship blankets were handed in and at 2 p.m. two blankets are issued to us permanently. Also ship's plates, mugs, knives, forks etc. are to be handed in and in future we use our regimental mess tins and knives and forks.

8 p.m.

Destroyer "48" which is the H.M.S. Hope. has been keeping close to us all day dodging about from one side of the ship to another. Now everything is safe and the men tonight are all excitement packing their kit bags, polishing boots and leggings, finishing off letters, etc. ~

I have written a letter to Surgeon-General telling him of our arrival at port and asking him if I could see him should we get furlough. I addressed the letter to his London club address but it is probable that he is out of town at this time of the year. At any rate it will be forwarded on and I should get a reply before we get our leave.

It appears that we are going to Plymouth and will get in at 6 a.m. tomorrow morning (Saturday). Tomorrow reveille at 5.30 and parade in uniform at 6 a.m. to hand in our hammocks. Tonight is of course our last on the ship and I don't think anyone is sorry for the tucker has been pretty rotten towards the end - absence of vegetables being particularly felt; from what I've heard we have a stiff time in front of us in camp in England real hard going all the time and not too much in the way of leave. I am looking forward to any letters that might be

awaiting us. There's bound to be a good few for we have been nearly twice as long as the ordinary mail steamer.

Saturday, 8 a.m.

Arrived in Plymouth Harbour early this morning. There has been a thick fog all this morning but it is not exceptionally cold. We are just about to parade in full kit and are to entrain immediately for Salisbury.

Best wishes to all from, Your loving son, Frank

**17 Feb 1917 card of Mayoress of Exeter**

Included in a parcel of "eats" given to us at Exeter on the journey from Plymouth to Tidworth (Salisbury Plain) Feb 17<sup>th</sup> 1917

**19th February, 1917.**

Parkhouse Camp No. 3 Salisbury Plains, Wiltshire.

Dear Mother,

As I told you we arrived inside Plymouth Sound early on Saturday morning (17th) in the middle of a thick fog. It was impossible to land until the fog lifted so we were obliged to stop on deck in full gear with both kit bags till midday. After tucker the fog had cleared and at 3.30 we were all taken ashore in a tender and entrained immediately for Tidford [Tidworth, Wilts] in Salisbury Plains. The journey took us through Devonshire, Dorsetshire and Wiltshire and in the late afternoon we saw quite a lot of the former county and some very pretty scenery. At Exeter - capital of Devon - we were given tea and roll per courtesy of the mayoress. The train arrived at Tidford [?] at about 10.30 p.m. Soon after we started on a 31 mile march through the fog to camp staggering under heavy kits - it was great. We got into bed about 2 a.m. being issued with three extra blankets.

We were all quartered in huts - 30 to each. Our little coterie is again intact and we have a good hutfull of chaps. In every hut there is a coal stove which is dashed nice at night. The routine of the camp is pretty fair. Reveille at 6.30 a.m. but no parade before 9 a.m. Breakfast at 8 a.m. Dinner 12.30 p.m. Parade again at 2 and tea at 5 p.m. From 4.30 p.m. - 9.30 p.m. we are at liberty to go anywhere within a 5 miles radius - some nice villages being included in this area. There are hot and cold showers available and also drying rooms for wet or damp clothes. Mud is the best word for describing the parade grounds and this I believe holds good all over Salisbury. Tucker is good though not lavish.

Well, no leave whatever is given to troops except four days' disembarkation leave which we will not get before being in camp one month. No weekends off or anything like that.

I have written again to the Surgeon-General giving my correct postal **????**

**Sunday, 25th February, 1917.**

Same as usual.

Dear mother,

I wrote to you last on the 19th. Since then we have quite settled down in our new camp and are as happy as can be expected. Last Tuesday we were all issued with water proof cloaks - dire necessity in this country and at this time of the year, though so far it has not been exceptionally rainy. At tea-time the same day our first Australian mail evidently a very early one - was issued. This contained for me the grand total of one (1) envelope, enclosed in which was a Xmas card from Shakespeare, a chap I'd never written to since leaving Sydney. However, we are all looking forward to a bigger one soon. I must have written about 100 letters on the trip so I deserve one or two.

On Wednesday I received a letter from the Surgeon-General. He is lodging with Aunt Sophie and daughter at Earls Court, London, but expects to be in a new home in March. Ray he said has had leave and stayed at Llainbula (?) [Camberly?] with him several days. He asked me to write and let him know when we get leave saying that he would arrange for me, etc.

We were inoculated (Para Typhoid) that afternoon and were allowed 48 hours no duty on the strength of it. It didn't affect me much. On Friday while still on duty some of us went for a tramp over some land belonging to Stephens the Ink King who lives in Wiltshire. Some wonderful country in this county. Got a letter from Ray that day dated 13th February when he had got back to the 20th (Batt'n).

Saturday afternoon and all day Sunday off. Yesterday afternoon I met a chap from the 20th who was wounded and goes back tomorrow, to the front. He was in "A" Co. and was a cobbler of Ray's. Ray was at Perham Downs not far from here before returning to France.

[ending as usual]

**3rd March, 1917. Parkhouse Camp 3, Salisbury.**

Dearest Mother,

Since I last wrote (last Sunday, 25th February) little of importance has occurred. I caught a pretty rotten cold in the head but have got rid of it now. We were given our second dose of para-typhoid inoculation during the week with the accompanying 48 hours no duty. Also we were issued with our new pay books and paid about £4, the money which was owing to us from the trip. Have been playing a little football lately.

Another big Australian mail arrived today but nothing for me, I'm sorry to say, so far. I know you are 'writing regularly so letters are bound to turn up in due time. I believe its not uncommon for a fellow to get letters over a month later than when he should have.

We are still at Parkhouse Camp but may leave it anytime. It is almost certain that we go to **Larkhill** a very big place containing over 30 different camps.

It is about 6 or 7 miles from here. Larkhill has a rather unenviable reputation among Australians. The O.C. is an object of hate and fear to men and officers alike. Also the camp is one big stretch of slushy mud, the routine and discipline are ridiculously severe, and pneumonia is rife. These facts are told us by men who've been there and are true enough, I believe. Anyhow there is one good thing about Larkhill and that is that they do turn out soldiers.

Our 4 days disembarkation leave may come along in a fortnight. On the other hand it might'nt come along at all.

Mail for Australia closes on Monday 5th March at this camp.

Best regards to all from, Your loving son, Frank

**5th March, 1917.**

Dearest Mother,

At last I have got a letter from you dated 5th January. Glad to hear you had a good time at Christmas - and that you received my Melbourne and Fremantle mail. So the disc turned up. I thought it would all right for I knew I hadn't lost it outside. I haven't received it or -the kneecaps yet but doubtless they will soon put in an appearance. Anyhow, I have another disc now, though as yet it hasn't been engraved. Glad to hear **Clive** has had a good time in Q. and hope that the life has done him some good.

With this Australian mail many of the chaps have been getting papers (Bully, Sun, etc.) which have made us all homesick. It's great to be able to read a Sydney paper again. There is mention of a launch ferry service to Mosman and of course much about the terrible Q. floods. I wish that **Clive** could manage to send the Sun, etc. now and again. Aunt Sophie must have moved since you heard for she is now at Neveon Place, Earls Court, but Uncle is to be in his new London home sometime this month.

It was bad luck that I should have missed **Ray** by only a week or so. Had we arrived to time - Feb. 3rd - I would surely have seen him for he was then at Perham Downs. Never mind, I'll see him in France easily enough.

All the English newspapers are raising their prices and cutting down the amount of paper. Food is getting very short, a potato famine in London. Our rations have been very materially reduced, during the last fortnight, but of course we have sufficient. One just begins to realise that there is a war on when one is in England for the prices are exorbitant here (as English prices go). No doubt you have long since read about the import restrictions for Britain, which will make a still larger increase in prices.

Yesterday (Sunday) was bitterly cold and at night we had a snowstorm (the first since arrival). This morning the ground was covered inches deep with snow - a pretty sight indeed. Some showers have since dispersed it. Today a half holiday was allowed us on account of the rain. We are very happy and comfortable in our weatherboard hut, with a bonzer stove in the middle, kept going all day. At meal times we make toast (which goes well with the excellent margarine issued us) and often make cocoa, bovril, etc. Cards and reading help to wile away the

hours. **Today Ray is 21.** I have written congratulating him on his "accession to manhood".

Fondest love to all from Frank.

**14th March, 1917.**

Address as usual

Dearest Mother,

Since I last wrote (5/3/17) I have got two more letters from you (dated 13th and 20th January) and I can tell you they were more than welcome. Pleased to hear that you and the rest got the cards etc. I sent from Perth. So far the disc and kneecaps have not turned up, but the latter are hardly necessary now that the spring is coming. Our strides are tight around and below the knees so that the latter are never cold when in uniform.

We are still at Parkhouse Camp but will not be here much longer. Things are A.1. here. Considering the severe food shortage all over England at the present time, we do very well indeed, and have plenty of potatoes, though a large percentage of the civilian population are obliged to go without. In a few weeks' time there will be no potatoes whatever in England. There is still for us plenty of beef, mutton, bacon, puddings, margarine (as good as butter) but a great shortage of Jam (1/4 rations).

Shipton village is a little over a mile away. It's a very small place with only one street and not a very long one - rather dead and alive but very pretty. We generally go there with laundry - ridiculously cheap with washing. This is perhaps because nearly every place in the village takes in washing. Tidworth is a railway village and much larger than Shipton, but about 3 miles away from our camp. There are markets there and large barracks in which British permanent cavalry are quartered. There are a few theatres there and a large number of decent shops. I have gone in occasionally of a Saturday afternoon but it's rather far to go in often.

At last our 4 days' leave seems within grasp. Half our quota are already in London having left last Monday morning for Waterloo Station. We are due to leave the following Monday but I won't be sure of it till we are actually on our way. The latest is that the men who return from leave on Thursday night

(15th) proceed the next morning to Larkhill Camp. Those who have not had their disembarkation leave wait on here till Monday when they get their leave after which they follow the others to Larkhill. This is how we now have it but I don't know whether thing; will turn out thusly.

I have had two letters from Aunt Sophie since last writing. They seem to like Ray immensely. In the first letter Aunt told me that she was moving into her new maisonette on the 27th March. She is still at Earls Court in flats. I told her when we would be getting leave and she has asked me to stay while in London. I shall probably accept, though I should feel more easy about it if they were in their own home. As I will only be there a few days, however, I don't suppose it will matter much. We're all looking forward with eagerness. I have over £8 so

will have plenty even if I put up at a hotel (bed breakfast, etc. varying from 5/- to 7/- per day).

The weather is becoming much milder though showers are pretty frequent. We had a pretty heavy snow fall the other day and had some great sport tobogganing on the hillside, etc. Am in O.K. health and hope you and all at home are the same.

Best love to all, Your loving son,

Frank.

**Sunday, 18th March, 1917.**

Dearest Mother,

Are leaving on four days' leave tomorrow. We get the train at Tidworth station at about 10 o'clock and arrive at Waterloo Station, London. For at least part of the time I'll be staying at Earls Court, London, but I may join some of the chaps later at one of the hotels - I'll see how things go.

The fellows have all been busy cleaning up boots, leggings, and clothes all day. I'll only be taking a pair of pyjamas, toothbrush and a few other things in my haversack. Our dress is - hat, greatcoat, bandolier and whip. All Australians on leave are dressed in this manner, distinguishing them from Canadians, N.Z.'s, Tommies, etc. We return from leave on Thursday night. After that we might go anywhere - probably to Larkhill, but nothing is known as yet. They are forming a new Australian division - the 6th - and I hope that we can get into one of the new Artillery brigades. Reinforcements are not up to much as compared with a new unit. There is a rumour that the 6th Division may go to Mesopotamia.

I hope to see a theatre or two in London. There are a couple of good things on but the opera season hasn't started yet. I'll write later and tell you about the leave.

No more Australian mail as yet.

Your loving son, Frank.

**18 March 1917, Parkhouse Camp Salisbury to Geo**

Dear George,

We leave tomorrow morning for London on four days disembarkation furlough. Shall stay part if not the whole of the time at Earl's Court with Uncle George and Aunt Sophie. Have been busy all day cleaning up for tomorrow, polishing boots, leggings etc. It will probably be the only leave we'll have in England so all intend to make the best of it.

Are still at Parkhouse Camp but on our return we shall probably go straight to Larkhill Camp, the artillery training camp. Nothing definite is known as yet. I'll write later and tell you about our leave.

Your affectionate brother. PS Love to Stella and the young ones, Frank

**Friday, 23rd March, 1917.**

Dearest Mother,

On Monday 19th at 8 a.m. we left camp for Tidworth station and got the train for London at 9.30 a.m. After a three hours' journey through some beautiful country we slowed in Waterloo Station (L & S.W. Railway Co.) about dinner time and marched from there to Horseferry Road crossing Westminster Bridge and passing by the Abbey and the Houses of Parliament. At the A.I.F. headquarters we were dismissed and after dinner at the War Chest proceeded into the city. In the Strand I had a clean-up, haircut, etc. and then took a taxi out to Earls Court to the place where Aunt Sophie and Ettie were staying. When I arrived they were ready waiting for me and I was shown to a splendid room in the flat. I then went with Aunt to Uncle George's rooms almost opposite where he has been staying for six years. He is a fine old chap, very dry and too energetic for his age. He has not been too well lately, I'm sorry to say (heart trouble). Aunt Sophie and Ettie are charming people, extremely kind and anxious to make one happy and comfortable. It was like a real home there with them and I had a splendid time.

Earls Court is very near Kensington and a rather fashionable residential locality - only about 15 minutes from the heart of the city via the Tube. Aunt Sophie's new home is also in Earls Court very close to where I was staying. She moves in there on the 26th of this month. I saw the place once - very pretty indeed.

London is a wonderful city - what little I saw of it during our short leave. It was impossible to see even 1/10th of all that is worth seeing in four days and I wasn't as foolish as to try. However I managed to visit such famous places as St. Paul's Cathedral, Tower of London, Tower Bridge, Buckingham Palace, Westminster Abbey, Law Courts near the Temple Inn, Mme. Tussaud's waxworks, etc. I was in the city quite a lot and now know my way well about such places as Piccadilly, The Strand, Pall Mall, Trafalgar Square, Regent Street, Oxford Street, the latter two streets comprising the fashionable shopping area of London. I won't bore you with descriptions but everything was wonderful and well worth seeing. St. Paul's and the Abbey especially were fine sights, the magnificent interiors being awe inspiring in their lofty splendour.

Great sights though these be, I derived equally as much enjoyment from the shows. Unfortunately we only had 3 nights but on two of these I went to the theatre. The first was "Chu Chin Chow" at His Majesty's described as a "musical tale of the East" and featuring Oscar Asch and Lily Brayton, who are both splendid histrionically, having little or nothing to do in the strictly musical side of the play. Ray also saw "Chu Chin Chow" while in London. The other night I booked a couple of seats at Daly's and went with Ettie to "The Maid of the Mountains. a really clever English comic opera reminiscent of "Gipsy Love" in the high standard of the music and the numerous dramatic intervals. "The Maid of the Mountains" should find its way to Australia. Daly's is a fine theatre

in Leicester Square, very pretty inside, it was crowded but we had excellent seats.

At night London is in darkness almost, every fifth lamp post is alight but shaded on top. Great food restrictions have been made. The amount of food you may have is limited - the whole of the populace is rationed - so much per week per person. No man in uniform can be served in a restaurant with food after 10 p.m. The war is beginning to make itself felt. At present and for a long time since the city is crowded (though this is not the London season). It is very hard to get flats or houses - so many of the country homes have been closed since the war. Officers are as thick as flies and one has a busy time saluting them in the streets. Daly's was crowded with officers the night I was there.

London traffic is very heavy despite the fact that the place of trams is taken by a wonderful underground -railway and the famous Tube through the heart of the city. Motor bus service is also splendid. A bus ride from Piccadilly Circus to Earls Court brings you past the famous Hyde Park (Rotten Row and Park Lane), the Kensington Gardens (Serpentine R.) the Albert Hall, Albert Memorial and about half a dozen fine art galleries and museums. In fact you can see all of London splendidly from the top of a bus.

The Mall is a beautiful wide walk from Trafalgar Square straight to Buckingham Palace in front of which is the huge Victoria Memorial. I heard the Grenadier Guards Band play a musical programme there during the changing of guards at the Palace. Buckingham Palace overlooks St. James' Park and is near St. James' Palace. Uncle George's club in Charles Street in this centre quite close to Pall Mall - I never went inside as the Surgeon-General had not been in the city for over a week, but it is a fine building, the Junior United Service Club.

Altogether I had a great time but four days were not nearly long enough, so all of us thought. At 8 p.m. on Thursday night (22nd) we had to get the train at Waterloo for the Plains and got back to Parkhouse about midnight very tired and depressed. Aunt is very anxious to see me if we ever get leave again but I fear me its impossible. Our next leave will, if ever, be from France. They are very fond of Ray whom they saw while he was in hospital at Wandsworth, London, as well as during his furlough. In a letter dated about March 14th to Aunt, Ray tells them that he may be sent home for a few months to instruct. They also informed me much to my pleasant surprise that he now has two stars.

On Monday morning next we leave Parkhouse Camp. Those left of the December Artillery are being again splitup. One lot is to go to the odious Larkhill Camp, the remainder, including I'm glad to say, myself and pals, are going to the more inviting Bullford Camp.

Best love to all, from your fond son, Frank.

**1st April 1917. R B A A Details Bullford Camp.**

Dearest Mother,

Left Parkhouse on Monday, morning last (26th) and reached above camp before dinner unfortunately I wasn't too good - had a touch of influenza which the

march over didn't improve. **Bullford** appears to be a splendid camp - ideal huts well ventilated but not draughty, shower baths etc. in each. Also good food, and plenty of good places for rest, refreshment &c. In the afternoon we were arranged definitely in squads and I found myself and most of my friends in **squad 307 (Gunnery)** attached to "B" Battery of the Royal F Artillery, this for training purposes only - the R.F.A. is a British Regiment but we train with them and are instructed by Tommies while here. We were also allotted to huts, medically examined. etc. On sick parade next morning - had a temperature and was sent to hospital (just opposite our own camp) What was worse I had an abscessed tooth which gave me a pretty rotten 24 hours after I went to bed I got it out eventually Am O.K. now and quite well enough to start work but am still here [presumably hospital]. Will probably leave tomorrow.

The other day I got a letter from Ray (dated 3rd March and also one from Ettie enclosing 2 more from Ray dated 14th ~ 21st March. Ray told me about his second star.

Best regards to all, Your loving son, Frank Evatt.

1.4.17. ~

R.B.A.A. Details, Bullford Camp.

Dear George,

As you will observe we have shifted camp being now in the R.F.A. Training Camp at Bullford. We have only been here about five days and as I've been in bed most of that time I can't say much about the place' but it seems to be an ideal camp, good huts, tucker, no mud, plenty of conveniences, etc. I have had the bad luck to get a touch of influenza, the day we arrived but I'm O.K. now though still in hospital.

I had a grand time in London. Aunt Sophie, Ettie and the Surgeon General are charming people, very kind and considerate. Saw quite a lot of the city in the four days at our disposal, including a couple of shows. London's a wonderful place and it was hard having to leave after such a short holiday.

Received a letter from Ray the other day. No more letters from Australia though, worse luck. Have been here over six weeks and only 3 letters from home. There's been a lot of messing round somewhere along the line.

A 6th A.I.F. Division is being formed, but only of returned men so we hav'nt had any chance of getting into it - worse luck. I had enough of Reinforcements they're no good.

Best love to Stella and my many nieces, Yours brotherly,

Frank Evatt

**Mon 9th April, 1917.**

Same old address.

Dearest Mother,

Although Australian mail is for me still an unknown quantity, I am writing every week. Life at Bulford camp is going well. I was in bed for a few days last week (I told you I think), but am in the best of health now. The routine is most interesting and in about 6 weeks' time when we have finished our course of training we'll be at least nearly gunners. There is still more training to be gone through in France, before we actually go into a field Battery.

At night time here there are a number of amusement places actually in the camp. On Sunday I heard a splendid concert at the Garrison Theatre - orchestral items and some good singers - see programme. There is always something to see or do - plenty of soldiers' rests, tuckshops, etc.

The latest is that men under 19 don't leave for the front till they are that age. Probably nothing to it, which I hope is so, because the prospect of more months on Salisbury Plain, without any more leave is far from inviting. Anyhow there's only one thing to do and that is await developments without worrying.

Got another letter from Ray dated 20 March - he is very happy in the 2nd Division School at Flesselles. **Bill Hordern** is in the same school..

Next Saturday the King reviews all the A.I.F. training on Salisbury Plains. Last Saturday (7.4.17) was a preliminary - about 50,000 slouch-hatted colonials mustering on the huge review ground close to our camp at Bullford. It was a great sight. Sir Newton Moore - W.A. Agent-General took the salute. It should look even better on Saturday.

Leave is impossible at present but when we've passed through our course I intend to 'swing the lead' or 'work me nut' as they term it. I'll apply for leave and get the Surgeon-General to write also to the O.C. of the camp on my behalf. It may come off ???

Best wishes and love to everyone, Your loving son, Frank.

**Sunday, 15th April, R.B A.A. Bulford, tried to see Ray.**

Dearest mother,

Splendid news this week. First a letter from you dated 21st January and one from Ray, both of which came with yesterday's mail. Delighted beyond words to hear from Ray that he has got the M.C. and a letter from General Birdwood. Secondly a letter today also from Ray. He has arrived at Salisbury Plains and has been at Rolleston Camp (about 4 miles from us) for several days. As soon as I heard the news I made me ready and set out this afternoon (beautiful spring weather) for Rolleston. Rather a long walk passing through the huge Larkhill Camp. Well as luck would have it Ray was on the few days leave in London. However, I saw one of his particular friends in the officers' quarters, Lieut. Jones - a brother of Fred Jones - Bill Roper's mate, who stayed at Berowra.

He is a decent chap, very young for a 1st Lieut. Left Sydney with the 20th and was promoted on the same occasion as Ray. I explained to him exactly where I hung out. Shall probably see both next Tuesday when the King reviews the Australians.

Yesterday afternoon had leave to Salisbury Town (about 12 miles away) from noon to midnight. It's a wonderfully interesting town, very antique, with numerous landmarks of historic importance, eg., the old market place where many a martyr was burned at the stake, the ancient guildhall old-fashioned inns where many an English notability has stayed. Then there is the famous Salisbury Cathedral, the pride of Wiltshire county. It is a magnificent building, a type of Gothic architecture with the distinctive feature of the Renaissance suggestive of Rheims with the beautiful images carved on the facade. Divine service was in progress while we were there and the choir was a treat to listen to. '

King's review on Tuesday for which we have been

practising a great deal. Last review the men got 4 days leave. May history repeat itself.

Once more our hut is isolated - measles this time. Regulations as usual re quarantine are farcical. Men leave huts when they want to, drill alongside the others, etc. All it means is that we have our meals in the hut.

Am in good health except for my eyes. Had a cold in one eye, resulting in both becoming inflamed. Am being treated at the dispensary.

Best love to all, Your loving son, Frank.

Letter from Dot this week. PS Stick to same old address

**Sunday, 22nd April, 1917, R.B.A.A. Details, Bulford Camp**

Dearest Mother,

Five letters from Australia this week including two from yourself (3.2.17 and 10.2.17) and one each from Aunt Eva, Messrs. Sellor and Richardson/ sorry that Grandma did not hear from me when at Durban for I wrote several letters to her.

The real English spring weather is just commencing and this week we have had some beautifully warm days. I understand that in summertime here it is as hot as the winter is cold, which is something good to look forward to. On Tuesday the review came off, and for the first time mine eyes did look upon the royal personage at a distance of a few yards. This was as he rode away with his suite to the Railway Station when the road was lined by the cheering troops. **Ray** was there but I didn't see him. It was a great day and something to remember in the days to come. Am sending home "Times" account and "Daily Mirror" (N.B. remarks re marching of artillery).

Ray wrote from Rolleston Camp on Wednesday telling me he was off to London (Earls Court) till the end of the month and yet he doesn't like being sent back to England). He's a lucky devil - I envy him.

Federal election ballot is to be taken on May 1 by AIF who are eligible for voting. Lists of candidates, pamphlets for ministerial party and sundry notices have been put up. I see Ryrie (?) is elected unopposed so things won't be exciting on the shore. Also that Peter Bowling is a Senate candidate. Hughes' mob should win as the chaps here know nothing about politics in Australia except from a few nationalist dodgers distributed in Salisbury. By the way this will be **Ray's first vote**.

A draft is leaving here within a few day for France. It will probably be over a month before we are available for draft. Our hut is in isolation for measles - only a mild outbreak of German measles. No leave for us but the chaps leave the hut whenever they like and carry on with the training as usual.

**Cec, Roper** does not appear to have done anything sensational at the L.C. Keep **Clive's** nose to the grindstone. He'll never go to Duntroon if he doesn't work.

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

### **RBAA Detail, Bulford Camp, Salisbury, 23-4-17 (Flinders)**

Dear Bert, Have been in the above "joint" for about four weeks and like it very much. There are only a few hundred Australians here and we are attached for training purposes to the 3rd Reserve Brigade Royal Field Artillery. The "tommy" Sergt Majors are excellent instructors and it is a fact that they turn out as good gunners and drivers as ever leave England though the routine is not nearly as difficult as at Larkhill Camp where most of the Australian Artillery is trained. Reveille at 7 am. First parade 9 am - 12 noon. Second parade 2 - 4. No parades at week ends.

On Tuesday last (17.4.17) the King reviewed about 40,000 Australians here at Bulford. The "Times" makes mention of the magnificent marching of the artillery. Altogether it was a grand day.

Ray's camp in Salisbury (Rolleston) is about 3 or 4 miles from our camp. He is at present on leave in London staying at Earl's Court. [rest indecipherable; written on large size sheet with Australian Commonwealth Military Forces badge.

### **3rd May, 1917. Bulford Camp, met Ray**

Dearest Mother,

Since I last wrote (23.4.17) have had a few days leave in London where I stayed at Aunt Sophie's. Ray was there. He is looking splendid, in the best of health and some class in officer's uniform. He hasn't altered much in appearance (to my mind) though he thinks I have. We were together all the time and saw a few shows - "Theodore & CO--" a Gaiety musical comedy, and a Sunday afternoon concert at the Palladium. Ray will be decorated at Buckingham Palace in a week or two. He is fed up with Salisbury Plains and anxious to get back to the front.

Aunt is in her new maisonette at Earl's Court Square and it is some shoko [??] too. Uncle George is as dry and absent-minded as ever and is very well. So also are Ettie and Aunt. While there I met some relatives of Aunt, her brother (a colonel in the Censor's Office) two sisters, and a brother-in-law, a captain in the navy who was in the "Jutland" fight - all extremely charming people with whom Ray is obviously a favourite. Ray and I returned to the uninviting plains on Sunday last (29th April), he to Rolleston, myself to Bulford. I am going over to see him next Sunday afternoon. Tomorrow we "pass out" in gunnery and after a musketry course will be ready for France. I wish to get on draft as soon as possible while the weather is good, but at present it is impossible to say exactly when we leave for the front - it may be weeks or months.

Voting for Fed. Election this week at camp - most of the chaps are strong for the Ministry.

**Bert** is 23 now. I suppose he will be getting spliced soon.

Ray says that Clive should take a tumble and do some graft. He was sorry to hear he went down in the Mil. College exam.

Your loving son, Frank.

### **Bulford Camp 9.5.17**

Dearest mother,

No Australian mail since last time of writing. On Sunday last I walked over to **Ray's** camp and found him playing cricket with some other officers, He was decorated at Buckingham Palace on the Tuesday before (May 1st) having got a day off for the occasion. Ray was so kind as to slip me over a couple of notes - a very welcome reminder believe me. I shall probably see him again next Sunday.

We have now passed out in gunnery. There is still a week of musketry to do after which we will be ready for draft. All are keen to get over to France while the warm weather is on.

Paid a trip to Salisbury on Saturday and attended divine service in the Cathedral. Enjoyed it greatly. Fine singing by choir including one beautiful anthem "Lauda Sion" by Mendelsohn. After service made a detailed inspection of the Cathedral which was more than interesting. The choir is constructed of solid oak with wonderfully carved figures of the Bishops of Salisbury for the last 4 centuries over each seat. The Holy Table, lofty Gothic ceiling and stained windows are beyond my powers of description. Then there were the ancient circular Chapter House a 1000 years old. and cloisters such as Il Penseroso loved to frequent. With true poetic taste, I went to some rotten vaudeville show in the evening, compared to which Harry Clay's choirs are high class and refined. It's a funny world, n'est ce pas?

The grand opera season has commenced in London with the opening of the Carl Rose and Beecham Opera Companies. If I get any more leave I'll have a look at one.

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

### 9.5.17 to George

Bulford Camp

Dear George,

Things are going well and strong "chez nous". The weather has been gloriously fine and hot during the last month and the country side is looking great.

Ray was decorated in London last week - 1st May. He had about 10 days leave and I met him in London having managed to get a week end off. I stayed with him at the Surgeon General's new abode in Earl's Court. Seems funny that after two years we should meet in London. He is looking very well indeed . We had a good time together seeing a few shows. He is tired of Salisbury Plains and very anxious to get back to the 20th again.

We have now qualified as gunners and will no doubt be on draft in a short time.

I saw Ray again last Sunday at Rolleston Camp and had some cricket with him and other officers. He tipped me off a couple of notes which was very welcome to a "2 bob-a-day-ite". Believe me.

Best love to Stella and the children.

your affectionate brother,

Frank

**to mother 16.5.17 Bulford Camp. Salisbury.**

Dearest Mother,

I saw **Ray** again on Sunday afternoon last. He was playing in a cricket match at Fargo Hospital - close to Rollestone Camp. Ray got 13 runs but batted well. He left late on Sunday night in charge of a draft of infantry for the Base (Etaples) via Boulogne. He has no doubt returned to Rollestone ere this. I met a chap named Sgt Pryor at Fargo who told me that Ray was one of the most popular men in the 20th.

After I left Ray I walked to Stonehenge. This is the relic of an ancient temple - 3600 years old - built in the days of the Stone Age. Time has naturally played havoc with the original structure but enough remains to give a good idea of the enormous size and curious plan.

I may have sent you a picture of it included in some views of Salisbury. Each pillar of stone forming the outer wall of the circular temple is about 4 times the height of a man and is of immense bulk - one solid slab of sandstone. How they got there is the great question which puzzles the highbrows of the day. There are of course many legends concerning its construction.

The weather still continues beautiful with the daylight saving stunt in vogue. It is quite light till 10 p.m. I think the idea is a great one tho' I believe it didn't catch on in Australia,

Havn't got any letters for "several" weeks (as Ray says).

Best regards to "mes freres". Your loving son, Frank.

**Bulford Camp 30.5.17.**

Dearest Mother,

I received a large batch of delayed letters yesterday including 5 of yours - 17.2.17, 3.3.17, 10.3.17, 17.3.17, 30.3.17, the last enclosing a list of University Results. **Bert** 's a marvel true enough. I noticed Percy Anderson's success, also York's and others, but was very sorry to see that Mick Roddy, was plucked. Other letters were from Jack, Aunt Flo, Dot and others - I got one from **Clive** and another of yours a few days ago. It's great to get a few letters from the homeland, believe me.

All seem to take it for granted that I should have no trouble whatever in seeing Uncle Tom but Salisbury Plain isn't 'exactly like The Warren. There are hundreds of huge concentration camps where Australians may be training and no one has thought of mentioning Tom's camp or address. If I strike him it will be by the merest possible chance. He might not even be on the Plains at all but in one of the many camps on the S. Coast of England where a great number of A.I.F. are in training.

**Ray** has left Rolleston Camp and is in a school in London somewhere - Clapham I think. I haven't heard from him since he left but will see him when I go on leave for another four days which may be next week or possibly later. see P.S.

It is rather lucky of us to be getting another leave for though Australians are only entitled to 4 days' Disembarkation leave, they have no record at Bulford of our having had it at Parkhouse.

We hear that no parcels are to be sent from Australia to the troops. A good thing too. Hundreds of parcels which have been mentioned in letters have never reached the chaps they were meant for - previously nipped on the way.

It is a pity that mail doesn't arrive regularly but as long as they turn up eventually and as long as you get mine, I don't mind.

After we finish a course of musketry at the end of this week, we will be fully trained gunners.

Best regards to everyone, Your loving son, Frank.

P.S. : Enclosing a snap that **Ray** just sent me from London. Bill Jones is the short chap holding quoits on the right. The others I have met at Rolleston but forget their names. Ray expects to be returning to Salisbury next Sunday so it's hardly likely we'll meet again in London this time.

The envelope - a souvenir of a trip to Salisbury and a dinner at the Old George.

**Wed June 6th, 1917. Artillery Camp, Bulford.**

Dearest Mother,

We passed out in musketry last Friday and I fancy it won't be long now before we go to France. A draft of 100 gunners and drivers are leaving here in a few days but unfortunately none of us are among them. **Ray** thinks it is time I was over there especially now the warm weather's on. Our squad will certainly be included in the next draft which I hope will soon follow this one.

Disembarkation leave didn't materialise this week but I am hopeful of getting it next week. **Ray** is back at camp on the Plains and I'll go over to see him on Sunday most likely and if possible nip him for a few £s.

The other day I had a trip into Hampshire to a fine little town called **Whitchurch**, on escort duty. Had to bring a prisoner back from there to the camp. It was rather a good job as the N.C.O. and myself had about 4 hours off in the town.

I am sending home some snaps taken in the trip over by one of our chaps. They may be interesting, I would have sent them sooner only they have just been developed and printed. I have made explanatory jottings at the back thereof. It might be interesting to remind that out of our convoy of 7 ships, 5 were either torpedoed or mined within a month or so after our arrival at Plymouth. The snap of **Skit Roseby** might interest **Bert** who knew him well at the Varsity.

The **Beecham Opera** is a huge success at **Drury Lane** and more than one reviewing critic has demanded a peerage for **Beecham** for his grand work, **Frederick Ranalow**, (who toured in Australia with **Melba**) **Lalla Miranda**, **Robert Parker**, **Felyce Lyne** and other ex-**Quinlan** singers are performing. The opening

performance of "**Othello**" was declared to be a far greater performance than any at **Covent Garden** with **Caruso** and the rest in the caste. Next week "**Tristan and Isolde**" and "**Tannhauser**" will be given. All in English by the way.

Today is **Clive's** birthday. I should have remembered it before but it's not too late to wish him the best of luck.

I shall most likely be well in France before you get this but will of course cable when I'm off

Best regards to all, Your loving son, **Frank**.

Get **Clive** on to the garden to prepare it for the spring-time. How did those hydrangeas I planted prosper? It'd be some garden if watered and weeded and dug regularly. I kept it going for about 3 years so now it's **Clive's** turn. FE

**Sunday, 17th June, 1917. R.B.A.A, Details Bulford., London, Aida**

Dearest Mother,

You will observe I'm still in camp in England though its quite high time that I was well over in France. Of course its no fault of mine. Yet had I not been on four days leave last week I might possibly have been wanted for the present draft of about 80 gunners and drivers which leaves in a few days ~ the second within a week. While I was in London Ray rode over. This is about the fifth time that we have tried to see each other and been disappointed. The chaps in the hut gave me a graphic and amusing description of how he came rushing into the hut, bathed in sweat, asking after me. How he went crook because I wasn't on this last draft, etc. Had it not been so infernally hot and oppressive or had I been able to borrow a bike I would have gone over and seen him this afternoon. Last Sunday I walked there and back (Rollestone) on a broiling afternoon - about 12 miles to find that he had left for Wareham about a week before on his return from London. Wareham is a seaside town on the S. Coast of England. Ray had omitted to acquaint me with the fact and of course I was doomed to disappointment and chagrin.

But I had a grand time in London. The weather was perfect - rather hot if anything. There was a big air raid on the city on June 13th and though I didn't actually see any of it, I heard the anti aircraft batteries in action and later on saw some of the damage done not far from St, Paul's Cathedral. The casualty list was something appalling. It appears to me that if enemy aeroplanes wish to bomb London they do so and no one says them nay. Not one German plane was brought down.

At Drury Lane - most historic and ancient of London's theatres - I saw "Aida", Verdi's glorious masterpiece. The portrayal was magnificent. Frank Mullings, a tenor of the Coates' type, yet apparently a greater one, was Radames, Jeanne Brola was "Aida" and Edna Thornton was "Amneris" The singing and acting of this trio was divine - thrilling. The famous last act duet was wonderfully sung - so also the other great duets and arias. Eugene Goossens conducted an orchestra of 60 strong. It was absolutely the finest thing, I've ever seen or wish to.

I saw other operas - "La Boheme" at Drury Lane, "Cavaleria Rusticana" and "I Pagliacci" at the Shaftesbury Theatre (Carl Rosa Company) - all splendidly given, but suffering in comparison with the Verdi opera. The prices are moderate, a good seat in the circle being obtainable for 6/- or so.

I also went to the Hippodrome and the Coliseum, famous London variety theatres. A brilliant revue "Zig Zag" was at the Hippodrome with George Robey starring. He is one great comedian is Robey - probably England's best. At the Coliseum amongst other turns was "The Fringes of the Fleet", a number of naval poems by Rudyard Kipling set to music by Elgar who conducted in person. Also the famous George Graves and numerous other celebrities. Then too I saw the well-known D'Oyly Carte Opera CO. in the "Gondoliers" which, needless to say, I enjoyed immensely. Of that there is no possible doubt . . .

I wasn't exactly overburdened with coin but managed excellently nevertheless, dined sumptuously on occasions at some of the far-famed London restaurants - Trocadero, Princes, etc. The parks are beautiful in London just now' and the Serpentine in Kensington Gardens is a sight for the gods. Society turns out

every morning in Hyde Park, and Rotten Row is thronged with people having their daily ride.

Uncle George is always hard at work in his study sorting correspondence mostly pertaining to the Evatt family history. He is a fine old chap with a splendid army career - but a man who has never received his due for the work he has done. Aunt told me of men who have been honoured or decorated coming to the Surgeon-General and saying 'Sir, it is because of your help and instruction (?) that I have gained what I have.' Reforms in Army Medical Admin. proposed by him decades ago have since been carried out, but he has received no credit for them. If he had been a conservative instead of the staunch democrat and home ruler he has always been, things would have been far different."

Uncle showed me Clive's letter enclosing his photo. He is pleased to see the great interest Dub takes in the E.F.H. While I was there Aunt received those splendid photos of the two young nieces and thinks them extremely pretty children. Clive's letter mentions that you heard of Ray's MC.

Best regards to everyone, Your loving son, Frank.

#### 17.6.17 Bulford to Bert

Dear Bert,

Am ashamed to say that I xxxx still on the Plains but I fancy that it wont be long before I'm in France as they're sending the trained men away very quickly.

I was on four days leave in London last week from 5pm Tuesday till Saturday night. Needless to say had a great time seeing about half a dozen shows. I visited the Drury Lane Theatre (Beecham Opera co) twice seeing "**Aida**" "La Boheme". Aida was magnificently performed Gianne [Jeanne Brola] the ex-xxxx [?Quinlan] star an xxx and Edna Thornton xxx was Amneris, the Egyptian princess. The part of Radames was taken by a splendid dramatic tenor, Frank Mullings - a lively fellow with a powerful voice yet xxxx sweet and gentle on occasion.

The whole thing was exciting and when the brass instruments blazed forth the glorious triumph march in the second Act you were moved to your very soul. At the Shaftesbury I saw the Carl Rosa Co give an excellent rendering of "**Cav Rusticana and "Pagliacci**". I also saw a Gilbert & Sullivan opera **Gondoliers** as well as a variety of shows at the famous Coliseum and George Robey in a superb revue at the Hippodrome - so I did very well. Yours affectionately Frank

which he has been in London and also Wareham for a few weeks. FE ?????

[NOTE: Jeanne **Brola** Harrison: American soprano (New Orleans: 12 Jan 1871 - Denver: 7 Sep 1956): La Scala, Paris Opera, Covent Garden, Grand Opera of Nice. Married John Harrison (1910). Soprano who was first American diva to perform at La Scala (1909). Toured with Beecham Opera Company, under direction of Sir Thomas Beecham, who classed her among the six greatest interpreters of Tosca of all time. Climax of her career was selection by Puccini for the role of Minnie in the English Premiere of The Girl of the Golden West (1911). Sang 39 lead roles in Europe, including Marguerite in Faust, Gilda in Rigoletto, and Suleika in L'Africaine (all at the then-highly-regarded Nice

Opera House). Won special acclaim for her Wagnerian roles including, Eva in Die Meistersinger, Elsa in Lohengrin, and Elisabeth in Tannhauser. Obituary: New York Times, 10 Sep 1956, p. 27. Bio courtesy of James D. Simmons.]

[Frank **Mullings** Tenor Born 10 May 1881 Walsall Died 19 May 1953 Debut as Faust in Faust (Gounod) 1907 Teachers:- Fred W Beard, George Arnold Breedon Pupils :- Eric Bowler, Joyce Gartside, Dorothy Reid, Frederick Westcott Created Apollo in Alkestis (Boughton) Sang in premiere of The Critic (Stanford)]

**Tuesday, 26th June 1917.**

R.B.A.A. Details, Bulford.

Dearest Mother,

On Sunday afternoon last I hired a bike and rode over to see **Ray**. He is still at Rolleston and has given up worrying about getting back to the trenches though God knows he is anxious to be amongst it again. Incidentally he gave me some comfort for I'd been in a state of gloomy despair at having been omitted from another small draft of about 30 which included all but about 4 of my own mates. I was cut up for a while but am quite recovered and have resigned myself to what fate may hold in store for me. There may be another draft tomorrow, in a week or in two months' time - one never knows. Such is life.

In the meantime I've got a good easy job in the Q.M. Store - nothing much to do and plenty of time to do it in.

A few days back I got two old letters from you which had gone to the 1st Brigade in France before they eventually reached me. In future send all letters to me c/o Aunt Sophie, 33 Earls Court Square, S.W. 5, and she can forward them to me wherever I am. Today a fresh Australian mail arrived bearing 3 for me, one from yourself (23.4.17), Clive and Miss Elaine Pitt. I knew you'd be glad to hear about Ray's success. The Mrs. Byrne you mention is the mother of Ray's great friend Captain **Byrne** (originally Sergt.); you might often have noticed his signature on Ray's censored letters. He has been `wounded quite recently, having had an operation on the ankle.

Strangely enough the whole of our tent at "The Warren" and the mess on the "Orontes" are still here and with the exception of two are in this camp. The other two are at Larkhill. Ray has met Eric **Hewitt** and also Taylor, a friend of Hewitt's and a C.S.R. man.

Am in the best of health and as fat as a pig.

Best wishes to all, your loving son, Frank.

**Monday, July 2nd, 1917. Bulford Camp**

R.B.A.A. Bulford Camp.

Dearest Mother,

Since I last wrote about a week ago I have received six more Australian letters, making about 10 altogether for the April mail. Included in these were two more of yours (7.4.17 and 14.4.17), one from **Bert**, Aunt Minnie and others, all very interesting and good to read.

I saw **Ray** again yesterday. He got about 50 letters this mail - all about his M.C., congratulating him, etc. I found out **Tom's** reinforcements [??] for the first time from Ray who suggested that I should call in at the 9th Training Battalion lines near Larkhill on the off chance of finding out something about Tom. Imagine my pleasure and surprise when I found him in. We had a good long yarn and I had tea with him there. Uncle is in Signalling School an exceptionally long and difficult course of training and he won't be going to France for several months yet.

He also received a large batch of mail last week' from Australia. Tom has only had four days leave and I've already had 10 days since Feb. 17th. 'But he expects to get some more leave shortly. I told him to visit Uncle George and gave him the address but I don't know whether Tom will call or not. I don't think he is too keen on that sort of thing. I also told him where Ray was and he will look Ray up as soon as he gets a chance.

Eric **Hewitt** is on draft and will be leaving for France shortly. Ray has met him a few times but I only saw him once - at the Review- - and then only as he was marching away.

I'm still stuck in this "convalescent home" as the fellows call it, and Lord only knows when I'm going to do a bit of the real stuff. One feels such a futile ass, [58 - 2] doing nothing whatever in England.

Amongst others from whom I heard were young Fraser who gave me all the news from the Varsity.

I understand that quite a number of last year's freshmen enlisted after failing in the posts. **Bert** has promised to send me 'Hermes' and I am looking forward to getting it."

I weighed in the other day and surprised myself by tipping the beam at well over 11 1/2 stone - about a stone gained since leaving Australia which is good considering that I lost a good bit on the trip after the rotten orcutis. I suppose Clive is quite 12 stone now. I don't think I've gained much in height since I left.

**Bert** tells me that **Clive** has at last bestirred himself. Keep him on the go."

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

### **11.7.1917. R.B.A.A. Details Bulford Camp**

Dearest Mother,

There is not much news this week. This letter should reach you about September. Many happy returns of the 5th. I sent a little booklet which you may and may not get. I would have very much liked to have sent both you and **George** something a little more pretentious but couldn't for obvious reasons.

Am enclosing a few snaps of slight interest. One of them will give you a good idea of the typical English meadow in June - a mass of buttercups and daisies. Some of us imagine we are "soldiering" here but the snap of our hut with its beds, mattresses' shelves, and the rest, rather gives the show away. In the remaining one, my face is turned away from the camera - I'm getting very sleek as you will observe but don't seem to be elongating very much.

I didn't see Ray or Tom last Sunday as I was on duty but will probably look them up again next Sunday.

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

### **July 17th, 1917 R.B.A.A. Details Bulford Camp.**

Dearest Mother,

There is absolutely no news but I'm writing so as you'll know I'm still O.K. and in England. No Australian mail has arrived since I last wrote. We heard that a lot has gone down both going to and coming from Australia, so don't be alarmed if you don't hear from Ray or me for weeks at a stretch.

If we're here much longer I may try for leave - a week end at Bournemouth possibly, a famous bathing place. However, I'm hoping we'll be out of the country before then. It was 5 months today that we landed at Plymouth on a bleak, misty, drizzling February morning.

Today the sky is cloudless and the countryside a mass of glorious green. It is quite hot though, the temperature is just on 80 - one feels it quite as much as 90 or 95 in Sydney.

A few more snaps. Best wishes to all, Your loving son Frank.

### **20th July 1917, to mother, Bulford Camp.**

Dearest Mother,

Only a few days ago I wrote a pessimistic letter to you, wondering how long it would be before we would leave England. Yesterday we were warned "to be in readiness to proceed overseas at short notice". In other words we are on draft. Fifty gunners are leaving from this camp but we join up with a larger contingent from Larkhill Artillery Camp. Four of our old tent and ship mess, viz., Stuckey, Wilson, Small and self are going. We are all madly delighted and

keen to get away as soon as possible. At present we have no idea when we leave but I think it will be either Sunday next (22.7.17) or Tuesday (24.7.17).

I have been very busy yesterday and today. Being on draft we are confined to camp and consequently I had to wire Ray telling him to come over and see me. I sent a cable to you this morning (I'll of course have been long in. France ere you get this). We had a very "rough" medical examination yesterday, the M.O. merely asking all if they felt fit. Naturally not many would reply in the negative.

We take very little kit away with us - 2 flannel shirts (no singlets during the summer months), 2 pairs underpants, 1 cardigan jacket, towel and socks and the uniform we're standing in. All the rest is handed back to the Q.M. I'm sending a box to Aunt containing private breeches and tunic and some khaki shirts, all my socks (except the 4 or 5 pairs I'll take away) and the rest of the woollen items. When the cold weather comes she will send them over as I need them.

We sail from Southampton (probably) and land at Le Havre. Thence we march to the Artillery Base Depot A.I.F some 6 miles away. We may be here a week or two and then sent up to the line - this of course after passing [62 - 2] the necessary gunnery tests.

If you havn't already done so, address any letters for me c/o Aunt, 33 Earls Court Square, London and she can send them to me wherever I happen to be.

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

### **20 July 1917. Bulford Camp to Geo**

Dear George,

A line to let you know I am on draft and ready to proceed to France in a day or two. We're all delighted to be off at last and to strike the continent in warm weather.

Best love to Stella and the children, Yours etc Frank.

### **25th July 1917, to mother, Australian Base Depot, France .**

Dearest Mother

We left Salisbury Plain on the afternoon of the 23rd for Southampton. Embarking here, we sailed at dusk and had an unusually calm passage across the Channel. In the early morning of yesterday we entered the French port of Le Havre and marched to the A.I.F. Base

Up till now, I haven't seen very much of France but our camp is situated in a particularly beautiful spot a little way from the historic town of Harfleur before which Henry V waxed so eloquent. Today we went through the gas school.

I'm sorry to say that the draft I left with - 300 trained gunners from Larkhill and Bulford - have been transferred from the artillery to the Trench Mortars. I

was very keen on the F.A. work and am of course a little disappointed. But the Mortars are not at all bad and we'll soon be used to the change (very few of us have seen a mortar yet). There is an ultimate possibility of returning to the artillery but only a vague one.

**Ray** leaves England today for return to his battalion. I saw him at Rolleston the afternoon before I left. The Trench mortar joke was only a rumour then but now it's a reality. I might strike Ray here tomorrow but I think he will go straight to the 20th without calling at the Base

I am OK. and in best of health,

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, FRANK

**France. July 30th 1917.**

Dearest Mother,

My last letter to you was dated 25.7.17 but possibly it won't reach you because of my rather liberal description of the departure from Salisbury Plain to France.

At present we are in the A.I.F. Base and have been here a week. Tomorrow we leave here for the line - or probably a depot camp close to it - where we should go through a Trench Mortar School. (I have already told you of the transfer of a large number of the gunners into the mortars).

Ray arrived at this camp about 3 days ago but left again this morning for the 20th Battalion.

Yesterday I had some leave into Le Havre. It is a fine large town with good beach, pretty boulevards and squares. In one of the latter was a fine concert of which I am enclosing a programme - particularly the great 5th Symphony by the orchestra.

My unit is now the 14th Light Trench Mortar Battery but keep on addressing them to Aunt in London and she will forward them on.

I have seen a lot of **Eric Hewitt** who is a signaller. Ray also saw him. There are crowds of chaps I have met at the Base whom I knew in days gone by.

Your loving son, Frank.

[Letter written on small notepad, and pinned to the program of this concert 29 July 1917]

**France. Mon. Aug. 6th 1917.**

Dearest Mother,

We left the Base last Tuesday (July 31st) and after a 26 hours' train journey and a long march at either end reached our present abode; that is, the headquarters of the 14th Light Trench Mortar Battery. Twenty of us were transferred from the A.F.A. to this Battery and all are good chaps. K.C. Small and W.H. Wilson - mess mates all along the road ~ are with it.

Ray knows an officer in this Battery - Lieut. Bennett who looked me up soon after our arrival. He had got a note from Ray; is an ex-Varsity man and a fine chap.

At present the brigade to which we are attached - 14th Inf. - is resting so it may be some time before we enter the line. The new work is very interesting and being in it now I intend to make the best of it.

Tomorrow we are going for a four days' training stunt which should prove "tres interessant". I am beginning to pick up my French a little.

Our billet is an old farm and we hang out in a dilapidated barn. I am good oh and very keen.

Best of love to all, Yours affectionately, Frank.

**France 12.8.1917 Mother**

Dear Mother,

I got a number of Australian letters which now seem to come in monthly spasms. These were all May letters and there were three from you, and letters from Aunt Eva, Maggie and George, as well as some interesting Herald clippings from the latter.

We have Just returned from a 5 days' training expedition during which we saw some beautiful country. We were billeted in an old village at the bottom of a wonderfully pretty valley. Our quarters were in the barn - the typical French farmyard described by Bairnsfather as a "rectangular enclosure with a triangular stink in the centre" where pigs, fowls, geese, mud and refuse daily mingle.

There was also the old water mill near which we had the first bath for a week (such things as bath houses for troops are unheard of in these parts) .

The 20th Batt. are quartered in a nearby town. The other day I went in with Sep. Welch (Frank's brother) and looked Ray up. We struck him as he was returning from a swimming carnival. He got 2nd in the Officers' race.

Have no idea when either Ray's division (2nd) or my own (5th) will be going into the line but hope it's soon, for the autumn will soon be here.

Best love to all, Yours affectionately, Frank.

## Letter, about 14 August 1917 to Bert (Flinders)

Part letter from Frank: "of Ray's division as well as the one I'm in, is out of the lines. The 20th are quartered in a town not far from our billet. I looked him up a few days back. He was returning from a swimming carnival [this took place on 11 August, letter about 14 Aug] where he had met Geo Murray who is in the 18th Batt. Ray got 2nd in the officers race.

Geoff **Street** was a Staff Captain in our brigade (14th Inf) but is now Brigade Major of the 15th.

My unit is now the 14th Light Mortar Battery attached to the 14th Inf Brigade (1 Battery to each Brigade) The new work is interesting and very simple after the 18 pounders. Some very fine chaps were transferred along with me to this unit. Young Small (a BA) & and Arts II man, Wilson who have been mess mates all along are here. Also 'Sep' Welch and many other good chaps.

Received quite a bunch of Aust mail a few days back which was good to read.

The French spoken round these parts is of course not the correct Parisian speech. It is easy enough to understand and to make oneself understood, but as to improving one's accent and grammar it is not very helpful.

There is no possibility of a transfer back to the FA so I have decided to make the best of it and see it through.

Best of good luck, Yours affectionately, Frank [rest not there, very small sheet]

## France. August 20th 1917.

Dearest Mother,

These envelopes are issued very occasionally and are not censored. Our division (5th) as well as the 1st and 2nd are still in billets behind the lines and we have no idea when we'll be going up. Where we are, one would hardly realise there's a war on in the day time. Then, the only signs of war are the aeroplane patrols, flying to and from the lines and the burst of an occasional high explosive in the neighbouring town of **Hazebrouck**, sent over from Fritz, long range siege artillery. But in the night time when all else is silent, the terrific bombardments in the lines can be heard, a ceaseless rumbling from 15 or 20 miles away.

Of late nights, too, enemy planes have made raids on Hazebrouck - we are about 9 or 10 kilos away from that town. It is a weird and wonderful sight - the muffled reports of anti aircraft batteries, shrapnel bursting high in the air, like huge rockets, powerful searchlights sweeping the sky in every direction and the buzzing of the planes they are trying to locate. It is all like some great fireworks display, a beautiful spectacle.

Friday last was my 19th birthday. Five of us went into **St. Omer** for the day and had a pretty fair time. St. Omer is a fairly large old town with the usual market Square and cobble stones of the French towns. There is a splendid cathedral - early Gothic in style - whose ancient grandeur and beauty is sadly impaired by modern additions of gaudy confession boxes and images - many of the latter an outrage upon the feelings of anyone with the slightest artistic sentiments. There

is also a ruined abbey, public gardens, hotel-de-ville, etc. All decent restaurants - and there weren't many - were for officers only, so we couldn't get a very classy feed.

The weather has of late been glorious and the harvesting is almost finished. We only drill in the morning and in the afternoon play cricket, read, write, visit the neighbouring villages, etc.

The battery is giving a concert in a few nights and it should be some show. ~ A clever amateur ex-actor manager (who was at The 'Warren and played "Charley's- Aunt" is arranging things - scenes from "M. of Venice" and a few original burlesques, vocal items, etc. I am to figure in a "Darkey Minstrel" chorus and take the bass part in some quartette refrains!!! Talent will out and no mistake! I'll tell . you how it goes off later.

We get paid in francs. 40 francs (£1. 9. 4.) per fortnight.

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

[Have the original letter; and the program of Entertainment by Members of 14<sup>th</sup> Aust LTM BTY on Wed 22 August, 1917, with annotations by Frank. He sang with a group "Songs of the Farm" and "Songs" K Small played Gratiano, friend of Antonio, and WH Wilson played Antonio.]

**France. Mon. 10. 9.17.**

Dear Mother,

On Saturday last I went into the town where Ray is billeted (managing to get a lift there and back on a motor transport lorry) The first person I bumped into was Mealey, of all persons in the world. I'd written to him about 3 months before but my letter was returned to me unclaimed. I had no idea what had come of him. He is in the 5th Field Ambulance (which is attached to the 5th Inf. Brigade). We had a good long yarn. He was to leave for Blighty on his 10 days furlough (which I will get after having been 9 months in France). Mealey came to France in November last (with the 3rd Division 9th Field Amb.) out has since transferred to his brother's unit in the 2nd Division.

I then went on and saw **Ray** and as usual he gave me some "sugar". A birthday present no doubt. Ray is as always, in the pink of condition.

Have been playing a lot of footy in the last week. I played with the Battery against the 54 Batt. (Rugby League) we were beaten on two occasions but managed to make a draw of the other match. Am naturally not in the best of nick for football but its good sport.

In a very short time we'll be going into the trenches. Ray's division will be in at the same time so I may see him up there.

The Russians appear to be getting well and truly "strafed". They have their backs to the wall - the wall of German steel. (as I heard one wag remark).

Ray seems to be keen on entering the Indian Army. It is a jolly good chance for him - being so young. No doubt after 3 or so years away from Aust. he'll be keen enough to return."

Encore, pas de lettres. Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

[NOTE: It is definitely "Mealy" Arthur Russell Healey enlisted December 1915, originally in 9th, shown as 5th Field Ambulance; RTA Dec 1918 (his mother lived at Little Walker St, N Sydney; there is also an Albert in 5 Field Ambulance, but his mother is in Ipswich.)

**France, to mother, 16.9.17.**

Dearest Mother,

Tomorrow we are moving from this area and are going to the lines - probably some distance behind for a while. Ray left some days ago - they passed by near our billet on the march up.

A big Australian mail is expected any day but so far has not turned up. It seems quite a while since I last heard from you, but I hear pretty regularly from Aunt Ettie and Uncle George.

There is no news whatever. I will write again at first opportunity.

The mail is Just about to close, so I will do likewise.

Best love to all, Yours fondly, Frank.

**Belgium, to mother, Sat 22.9.17 : *about to engage enemy***

Dearest Mother, ~

On Saturday last we left our billets in the rest area and set out on a two days' march. On the second day we crossed the Franco-Belgian border and have since been in the land of sorrow. We stayed three nights near a fairly large Belgian village - a rather quiet spot - but near enough for a gas guard and for some of Fritz's big guns. I was on guard one night when he put a good few shells into the town. Yesterday we made another shift and are now much nearer the "strafe". We are camped on a large field covered with shell holes. The flashes of the guns, the bursts of shrapnel, the anti-aircraft searchlights, and the beautiful flares sent up by the Huns are a splendid sight. Early in the night we saw an enemy plane attack one of our observation balloons and fire it. The huge conflagration was a sight I'll always remember.

Enemy aeroplanes came over repeatedly during the night and dropped any amount of bombs.

Tonight (probably) we go in for our stunt. Have no idea how long we'll be in but it mightn't be for long. I am as fit as a fiddle and am looking forward to the fray (excuse alliteration) but of course I'm well aware of the fact that it will be no joke.

We are quartered in little huts alongside a road along which artillery ammunition supply and the D.A.C's are going all day and night. The artillery is a pretty strenuous game even it they don't do much tramping about with a 20 lb "bluey".

Ray's mob have been amongst it for some time but may be coming out for a spell shortly.

Best wishes to all, Your loving son, Frank.

**29.9.17, to Bert, Princess Christian Hospital, Weymouth, England.**

Dear Bert,

I arrived at this hospital yesterday from Boulogne. I am OK. - a few small scratches from shrapnel. On the morning of the 26th after the successful attack of our troops three University men - K.C.Small, B.A., W.H. Wilson (Arts II) and myself were with a mortar in a shell hole when the enemy counter-attacked. A shell hit our position and poor young Small was killed instantaneously and the remainder were wounded. Wilson was rather badly knocked but I was extremely fortunate to get off with a few slight scratches on the shoulder. We three had been together ever since enlisting. Small, was such a fine little fellow - always cheerful and optimistic. I hope Ray is alright but I heard a very grave rumour which please God isn't true. *It is a hellish front which we have just left,* and so many officers have been killed there in the last week or 2. There is some comfort in the fact that we have had a huge victory there and that the end is perhaps not far off. I have written to an officer in the 20th to find out the truth about poor old Ray and am waiting for an answer.

I may be at this hospital over a month and also at a convalescent home for another month. After that we will get a fortnight's furlough. I won't draw much pay, so if you could possibly do it, I'd be very glad if you could send a few pounds to Uncle's account at Cox's London. You can send it through your own bank and they will cable it on.

Best of luck and success. My regards to **Miss Erhard**, [NOTE that Marina Garlick has letters from Bert to her; they were close at that time; MG also has a letter from Frank's mother to Miss Erhard (Her mother)]

Your affectionate brother, Frank.

**Princess Christian Hospital, Weymouth England. 29/9/17, to mother**

Dearest Mother,

I trust you have long since received a cable which I asked Aunt to send letting you know I was O.K. and had not been badly hurt. I arrived at this hospital.- a beautiful place - yesterday and will have a good sojourn here; everyone is so kind and attentive. Last Wednesday - Sept. 26th - I was wounded in one of the worst stunts for many a month. I heard a disquieting rumour about Ray who was in an equally rotten affair on the same front six days before - I trust God it isn't true. I wrote to one of his mess mates at once to find out the exact truth, and am waiting for a reply. If the worst has happened try and take it as bravely as possible. I won't dwell on the subject till I know everything.

*The war is terrible.* A young University boy - Small - who has been with me ever since we enlisted was killed at my side. He was such a decent little fellow too. Thank God it is soon coming to an end this last push should bring the goal in sight, but at what a sacrifice.

My few scratches were on the left shoulder and will soon be right. I am terribly fortunate when compared with most of the poor fellows here and should be more than thankful.

It is the end of September and yet the flowers and green leaves are still with us and the sun shines with all its warmth, and the good God is above.

With best and fondest love, Frank.

#### **LETTER TO Aunt, 4.10.17**

##### **The Princes Christian Hospital, Weymouth Thursday 4th Oct 1917**

Dearest Aunt, Evidently you hadn't received my letter which I sent from France a week ago to day and which I thought you'd have had long since. In it I told you the dreadful news I heard from some of the 20th Batt of poor Ray's death. I don't know the facts yet and I'm trusting to God that it isn't true but I fear the worst. I have written to one of his mess mate and am awaiting a reply. It seems too hard to believe that dear Ray [orig: my dear brother] is no more. I can't realise it. Poor mother will be terribly upset. If the worst has happened Aunt, try and take it bravely; Ettie and Uncle too.

In my other letter I asked if you would not mind sending a cable to mother letting her know my wound was slight and that I was doing well. Mother would only be notified that I had been wounded and I don't want to have more to worry about than she has. All that you need send would be EVATT, GRANTHAM, MILSON'S POINT. SLIGHTLY WOUNDED SHOULDER. FRANK I didn't write before because I was waiting to hear from Lieut Jones of the 20th. But evidently my letter from the base Hospital, Boulogne, didn't reach you. Uncle's wire arrived last night and the reply was sent immediately. Had I dreamt for a minute that you were ignorant of my condition, I would have written as soon as I arrived.

Of course I am OK, just a few scratches in the left shoulder. A piece of shell has to be taken out but otherwise there is nothing the matter. It is a lovely private hospital, and everyone is so kind and attentive. It makes one forget one's troubles, It seems hard that young men like Ray and Raleigh - dearest of sons and brothers as both were, should be cut off so ruthlessly in their prime. It is at such moments that one realises the bitterness, the cruelty of war.

May the dear God comfort you, Ettie, Uncle and my own people. and may He soon bring to an end this awful war. My fondest love to you all Your loving nephew Frank

**Cable 5 Oct 1917, N Sydney**

Evatt Grantham Milsons Point, Slightly scratched Shoulder, Evatt

**The Princess Christian Hospital, Weymouth, October 7 1917, to mother**

Dearest Mother,

Aunt wrote to me telling me that she had heard the dreadful news from a Colonel Paul - one of Ray's best friends. Some 20th men who were near him when he fell told me that both Ray and his Major were killed by machine gun bullets. It is so hard to realise - dear old Ray was looking so splendidly fit when I last saw him at Arques. He was looking forth with eagerness to another 'stunt'. He was a real soldier and the bravest of the brave officers of the 20th have told me - tho' never himself - that he was sure to get his captaincy soon. Overwhelming tho' the news is, one can feel pride in the fact that he died the bravest and best of deaths that even man could - and he himself would have been content with such a fate. Seek comfort in that fact, dear old Mater, and please try and not worry. Think of poor Aunt Sophie and Uncle George whose only son - their idol - made the same *glorious sacrifice*. It seems hard that two such splendid men should be cut off in their prime - but God has willed it so.

My wounds are very slight. I have been about a great deal ... Weymouth is a pretty seaside town and it does one good to get a lungful of the ocean air and stroll along the beach. Everyone here in hospital is very kind and attentive - it is an excellent place.

Dearest Mother, try and keep well and strong and cheerful.

"Your loving son, Frank."

**Princess Christian Hospital, Weymouth. - Tuesday. 9th Oct, to Uncle**

My dear Uncle,

The cable from Bert seems pretty clear to me. The University of Sydney wish for my return to finish my medical course but they of themselves can do nothing. As Bert has put it, London directs, so that application must be made to the AIF Administrative HQ, Horseferry Rd. Scores of medical men have successfully applied for their return to Australia in order to complete their course. It would therefore be necessary to get into communication with Horseferry Rd. They have there all particulars relating to me - attestation papers etc. The cable is very important in that it is the only document we have so far that the University Senate favours my return.

Such an opportunity is well worth following up, and altho' I haven't seen much actual fighting, I am very keen to get back to my course, esp. now that Ray has gone. Of course there will probably be weeks of weary red tape business before we know anything definite.

I am getting along splendidly. There will be a slight operation to take a small piece of shell from my shoulder, but it is nothing to speak of. I feel quite OK.

My best love to Aunt and Ettie. Your affectionate nephew, Frank S. Evatt.

**Princess Christian Hospital. Weymouth. 14.10.17, to mother**

Dearest Mother,

On Tuesday Aunt Sophie enclosed to me a cable from Bert to the General re my return to Medicine. Uncle George wanted to know if I could give him any information as to where he should apply. I told him what little I knew, which was to get in touch with HQ at Horseferry Rd. As a matter of fact I'm pretty sure that nothing will come of it, tho' it's well worth trying. I would be delighted to get back to the 'Varsity but of course I shan't worry if I have to 'soldier on', esp. as there is a chance of getting into a Howitzer battery and when all is said I haven't actually done much as yet.

Don't let Clive enlist, no matter how keen he is, not even if he is 18. Two are quite enough from one family. Anyhow, the rotten show will probably be over long before Clive is old enough to join.

I rec'd a batch of Aust. letters - June - a few days back incl. 3 or 4 from you. I don't like to hear of your being alone in 'Bella Vista' or having to go to 'Berowra' to avoid it. But of course Clive must have his holiday and I sincerely trust that you yourself have a good spell when the chance comes.

After my furlough is finished, I will make an alteration in my allotment. I'd like to have as much as I can get together while on leave but after then 1/- a day will be quite enough for me.

My wounds are almost healed up - they were only very slight ones on the left shoulder and a bit of graze under the chin - the latter having healed long ago. There is a tiny piece of shrapnel still to be taken out of the shoulder.

Ettie is doing war work at a [London hospital. She sends me papers daily and writes regularly - Ettie was so fond of dear old Ray - in fact everyone he met, was. Aunt told me that all the people he met in London were distressed at the news.

A great friend of Ray's, Lee Scott, of the C.S.R., was killed on the 26th September and his brother Humphrey Scott, a Colonel and only 27 years of age, was killed the same day. The latter was the senior Colonel of our brigade, a D.S.O. and one of the bravest of soldiers.

I do hope that Clive and Bert are hard at it - particularly Clive. He is very fond of Manly and Blackheath and those places, but he should remember that there is plenty of time for them after exams.

The winter weather is fast drawing on, but we still have some fine warm days. On such days it is good to walk along the beach parade and have a whiff of the briney. Weymouth is both a port and a sea resort. There is the usual pier (no seaside town in England is without one - why should Manly, Bondi, etc.) and theatre on the pier - free admittance to wounded soldiers on Saturday afternoon. The beach is about one third the length of Manly and is not nearly so clean ~ no surf of course. Keep cheerful, and in best health,

Your loving son, Frank.

**14 October 1917, Princess Christian Hospital Weymouth to Geo**

addressed to George at Shirley Rd

Dear George, Just received two letters from you (dated June) and two bundles of cuttings for which many thanks. I am getting on splendidly. My few wounds were only slight and I will soon be as right as pie.

Aunt and Ettie write regularly and have been very kind and sympathetic about dear old Ray. They were both so fond of him - everyone was - he was the most liked man in the 20th, poor ill fated battalion. god knows it's a sad cruel world/war!

My best love to Stella & the kiddies. Yours affectionately Frank Evatt

**15 October 1917 to GOC AIF Depots England**

Sir, I hereby beg to make application for a transfer from my present unit, the 14<sup>th</sup> ALTM Battery to the Australian Field Artillery. I left Australia in December 1916 with reinforcements of the 1<sup>st</sup> FAB For four months I was with the RBAA Details at Bulford, Salisbury Plains. I qualified; there as a first class gunner in the RFA Gunnery School at Bulford.

On July 23<sup>rd</sup> I was drafted to France and transferred to the 14<sup>th</sup> LTM Battery. On September 26 I was wounded at Ypres and am now at Princess Christian Hospital Weymouth.

Ato 31079, Gunner Francis S Evatt (c/o Capt Douglas RN, Manor House, Buckland Ripers, near Dorchester.)

**17 OCTOBER 1917, card to Thelma**

I was slightly wounded on left shoulder on 26 Sept. Am almost right again. Poor old Ray – my brother and the best friend I ever had was killed in the same battle, Ypres.

**18 October 17, AIF Bhurtpore Barracks Tidworth**

to Gnr 31079 FS Evatt a Princess Christian Hospital

In reply to your memo of the 15<sup>th</sup> instant I am directed to inform you that on your being transferred to a Command Depot, and when you are classified as fit for training, you may submit an application for transfer on Form T.1 through the Commandant of the Command Depot.

**Buckland Ripers, Dorchester. Sun. 28.10.17.**

Dearest Mother,

Last Monday a fresh convoy of wounded came to the Princess Christian Hospital and we were shifted to the above. Buckland Ripers is the name of a manor house in the country about 3 miles from Weymouth and an equal

distance from the town of Dorchester. It is a convalescent home for about 20 or so patients. The owner is Capt. Douglas, R.N., a fine old chap. He and his wife make things exceptionally comfortable and happy for everyone. It is more like home than anything connected with the army.

It is well into Autumn ~ but of late there have been some gloriously fine mornings. Many of the trees have long since commenced to shed their leaves but enough of green remains to make the woods and hills of Dorset a perfect picture.

I have been out for long strolls over hill and down dale. From the top of each of the neighbouring hillock one can look around and in every direction can see the beauty of God's handiwork. A good fresh breeze comes from the sea which can be seen - a thin blue sheet towards the South East, a bright background for the spires and buildings of Weymouth, three miles away. Apple orchards abound in this district and though nearing the end of the season there are scores of big sweet apples to be had for the mere picking. It is also a sad sight to see the thousands lying on the ground. Labour is so scarce that such waste is unavoidable.

We are fed like princes here - no ration or meatless day' or anything like that. Those restrictions are only for the unfortunate civilians and soldiers.

Indeed I seem to be getting more and more fat - vide photo - on the sumptuous fare of this convalescent home.

It is too good to last and I fear me it won't last long; tomorrow, most likely, the four Australians here will be sent to our Command Depot, close by where we will be classified fit for training, and where we will be sent on furlough. This morning I was pleased to get a large bunch of Australian mail - four from you (July letters), two from **Bert** and also from **George, Clive, Seller,** and Mick Roddy.

I'm so glad you got the Military Cross and I will try and get the "Times" announcing the honour conferred on dear old Ray.

**Uncle George** went to Horseferry Road and saw Sir Neville Howse - surgeon-General and double V.C. - who promised to do what he could. It's awfully good of Uncle to take the trouble he has about my return but I don't fancy that anything will come of it. Bert should have got into communication with the Defence Department and found out the full strength of the matter before cabling to London. In any event I haven't seen much fighting yet and it's only right I should see lots more before ever hoping to return to the much quieter - and believe me much-yearned-for-by-me life of a student.

Enclosing a few photos taken by the nurse in charge of the convalescents here. (Should you not recognize me I am 3<sup>rd</sup> from rt to left in back row)

Best wishes to all, with fondest love to all, Frank.

**No.1 Australian command Depot, Sutton Veney, Salisbury. 5.11.17.**

[written on Salvation Army paper]

Dearest Mother,

Am now in khaki; once more. And back in camp. We left Weymouth this morning and arrived at this place in the afternoon. How long we'll stay here. I've no idea, but I shall get my furlough (14 days) from here; and after, once more to La Belle France. I shall be there probably weeks before you get this letter. I intend to apply for a transfer back to the 18 pounders for most of my particular pals are no longer in my unit - the 14th Trench mortar Battery. W.H. Wilson who was wounded alongside myself, was badly knocked and may never see France again. Another of our clique, poor young Keith Small, was killed also, and most of the others have gone back to 16 pounder batteries.

I have struck quite a number of old pals here - some chaps who left Australia with me - also young Hutchinson from Fort Street (a great friend of Bevan, George's acquaintance). He had often spoken to Ray when he was a sergeant in Egypt and was very upset to hear that he has gone.

Enclosing a few more snaps taken at the Manor House when I was a convalescent.

Your loving son, Frank.

**6 November 1917 AIF Horseferry Rd**

From Surgeon-General DMS AIF to no 31079 Gnr FS Evatt, Princess Christian Hospital Weymouth

An application has been made for permission for you to return to Australia in order that you may complete your Medical studies.

It is now asked that the following information be forwarded, in order that such application be fully considered -

1. Date of enlistment.
2. Date of embarkation.
3. How far in your Medical studies you have proceeded.

Will you please forward me this information as quickly as possible. (endorsed in F writing "Permission refused by AIF General Hqtrs in France 30.11.17.

**13.11.17, to mother, 33 Earl's Court Square, S.W.5, concerts**

Dearest Mother,

Am as you will observe on furlough. I arrived here on Friday last (9.11.17). Aunt, Ettie and Uncle are all quite well but poor old Aunt seems terribly sad and upset at times. They were all so passionately fond of dear old Ray and it is a severe blow for them all. Aunt is so kind and good to me, it is quite touching.

I have been fairly active since my arrival. On Sunday afternoon I went to the famous Albert Hall. It is a wonderful hall - of awe-inspiring magnitude. The dimensions are astounding. They take your breath away.

There must have been thousands here though it could have held two or three times as much again. High up, hundreds of feet above, the people are to be seen. I sat in the arena, ie, in the middle of the hall - the best place in my opinion both for listening to the concert and for absorbing the grandeur of the place.

Landon Ronald's orchestra - a 100 strong - played the overture to "Die Meistersingers", a beautiful suite of Grieg's, and Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance" March. There was a wonderful girl violinist, Tessie Thomas, who played with the orchestra Mendelssohn's glorious concerto - you remember the Andante which R.W.M. used to play so well - it was an inspiring performance. ~ A great soprano sang an air from ~Elijah.. I am sending Bert the programme.

On Saturday afternoon at the **Chelsea** ground Stamford Bridge (quite close to Earl's Court) I saw the home side defeated by the Crystal Palace by 1 goal to nil. Much though the standard of association may have deteriorated since the war it was to me an eye opener ~ a brilliant exhibition.

last night at the Adelphi I saw a famous comedian, W. H. Berry, in an adaptation of one of Pinero's comedies "The Boy", with music by [Lionel] Monckton. It was a splendid show. Though Robey is called the prince of comedians, I consider Berry a greater.

Drury Lane. opera (Beecham) is still on but up till now I have seen none .

My fondest love, Frank ~

**33 Earl 's Court Square, London, 23.11.17, to Bert**

Dear Bert,

My furlough ends today. I have had a great and a very memorable time. Aunt, Ettie and Uncle have been wonderfully good to me. They are most anxious that I shall not go back to France. The Surgeon-General is often reminiscent and relates interesting facts and anecdotes of his family. He is very keen on tradition the passing on of family history from father to son, father to son through the ages. You would never guess how much he has done on my behalf. It is splendid of him though as yet nothing definite is known about what is going to be done with me. For my part I am content to return to France - if to a Field Artillery Battery.

I went to the Albert Hall two Sundays - a magnificent edifice - and heard Landon Ronald's orchestra. Am sending the programmes to you' you can well understand how I enjoyed them. I took Ettie to the second. I tell you the playing of Lohengrin~ prelude, music from Parsifal, Flying Dutchman., etc. was enthralling, wonderful. You might give the programme to Jack when you're finished.

Best of luck for March, Yours affectionately, Frank

**Sutton Veney, Salisbury Plain. Friday, 23.11.17, to mother**

Dearest Mother,

Today I returned from furlough back to the above place; I had a most enjoyable fortnight in London - it's very hard having to return to the monotony and drab surroundings of camp life - but it's part of the game. I went to a number of theatres and took Ettie to a few shows. We went to the **Albert Hall** again last Sunday afternoon. The programme was splendid and when Landon Ronald's orchestra of a hundred played the prelude to "Lohengrin~ I was spell-bound it was wonderful. Wagner was prominent that afternoon for the overture to the "Flying Dutchman", the beautiful Good Friday music from "Parsifal", and the startlingly realistic "Ride of the Valkyrie. were also given. A Suite of Grieg's and a melodious symphony of Mozart completed the orchestral portion of the programme. Ettie enjoyed the programme thoroughly. Poor Aunt Sophie used to be so fond of music but cannot bear to hear it now, it awakens too many bitter recollections for her. For my part I find more solace and comfort in music than in anything else.

I think I may safely say that I know London thoroughly. At the Abbey is a statue of Lord Robert Manners, a distinguished admiral of a century ago and a forbear of your brother-in-law-the indigo planter. (You will see I know the connections of our family.). The Surgeon-General is most keen on tradition - the handing on of interesting facts and stories from father to son for generations. He has told me some wonderful things which I shall never forget; his is a great personality and a great brain - it is something accomplished to have seen and spoken with him.

If I tried to tell you all I have seen I should bore you but I have improved my knowledge of London greatly. It is a great place.

Ellen Terry is appearing in scenes from the "Merry Wives". I saw her at the Coliseum. She is a wonderful actress still though well over seventy. At the Drury Lane theatre I was present at the performance of "*The Magic Flute*" a quaint fantastic plot with light melodious music - Mozart's of course. Robert Radford, tho celebrated basso, was the star performer.

One of my mates in France once took me to a very close friend of his at Botley ((Hampshire), a Miss Lyons. When I was in hospital she wrote regularly to me and last week was in London for a few days. She asked me to dine with her at Ruben's Hotel (Belgravia) and met her sister, a Miss Watson, (both Australians and from Darling Point, Sydney). By a strange coincidence the latter is an old acquaintance of Aunt's. Both are very charming people.

I don't know how long I will be here or what is going to be done with me. When I return to France - as a Field Artilleryman I hope - I shall of course cable to you. Uncle has done a tremendous lot to see about the possibility of my returning to the University but I am not optimistic with regard to the matter at all and shouldn't expect it a few months in France is not very much you know.

With fondest love to you and all, Your affectionate son, Frank.

PS I have sent you the 'Bystander' Annual

### **23 NOVEMBER 1917, Sutton Veney Camp to Geo**

Dear George, Have just returned from my fortnight's furlough. I had as usual a splendid time in London and saw quite a lot.

I have owed you a letter for some time, for I received one from you dated 5.7.17 & 12.7.17 some weeks ago. For God's sake, don't you entertain the idea of ever joining up - our family has done quite enough. I hope mother won't think of letting Clive go away.

At Weymouth Camp I met young Reg Hutchinson - brother-in-law of Bevan?? - and who used to work in your office. He was cut up to hear the awful news; he had seen quite a lot of dear old Ray in Egypt.

The Evatts in London are well but poor Aunt Sophie will never recover from the tragedy in her life. Ettie tells me that you would never know how changed she is since poor Raleigh's death. It is heart rending to see such grief. No one could feel a loss to the extent that she does. She is most keen that I should not return to France - but if as a Field Artilleryman - I shall cheerfully return.

The Surgeon-General has done quite a lot with regard to my return to medicine but I am pessimistic of the outcome.

My love to Stella and the kiddies. your brotherly Frank.

### **Overseas Training Brigade, Sandhill Camp. 2.12.17, to mother**

Dearest Mother,

Am in the above camp but will be drafted back to France next week ~ and not sorry to be going either. Since returning from furlough we have been humbugged about without intermission. It would drive me crazy to stay here much longer. You will know I've returned before this, for I shall send a cable before leaving.

Yesterday Ettie sent me six letters from Australia. 3 from you (30.9.17, 7.10.17, and 13.10.17, 2 from Bert and one from George. And today came a batch of about 20 letters (with the military address), 8 from you, 27.7.17 to 21.9.17), 4 from George, and letters from **Clive**, Aunt Flo, and M.B. Fraser. I also had October letters from Aunt Eva, "Twit", George (14.10.17) and others.

So far, however, never a parcel though Ettie forwarded on one to me from Aunt Eva which hasn't yet arrived. No doubt they'll turn up some time. I'm glad you

got that little present. I would so like to have sent you something worth while, but things have such a habit of going down to the bottom these days.

You had heard the awful news when the letters I received yesterday were written. I'm so glad you're bearing up well. God knows it was a terrible blow. I was absolutely stunned when the 20th Batt. chaps told me as I was walking out of the line at Ypres, it seemed overpowering. I do hope you won't worry about me when I'm back there. I haven't been a great success in the army - Heaven knows there haven't been many opportunities. Promotion can only be got in the field and I was wounded almost as soon as I saw action. Now I intend to go back and put my soul into the work, to try and make army life a poss. profession in after life; to try and lead a life like Ray's if it were possible, and to strive to gain the glorious success which was his.

Ettie has written telling me that the money which Bert cabled arrived. I did not expect or want a quarter of that, I got along on my pay splendidly when on furlough. I shall leave the money in the bank - it may come in handy some time.

Meanwhile I am going to apply for an alteration in my allotment to you which won't be much but will be a little help perhaps .. The trouble is that it will take some time before it is in working order.

I have met of all persons in the world, R.W. Marks, who is quartered in the same lines as myself! at this camp. His foot is lame and he will very probably get a trip home. I hope he does. We have been to some picture shows and concerts together; and he took my photo with his Kodak. He will send them on to you. He hasn't altered much.

God bless you. My fondest love to all, Frank

### **Overseas Training Battn. Sandhill Camp, Salisbury Plain. 3.12.17 to Bert**

Dear old Bert,

I got two letters of yours yesterday 1st and 15th Oct. You had heard the awful news. God knows it's hard to realize the truth at times. In France and England I had always looked to **Ray** for advice and comfort and never had he failed me. He was the most generous and thoughtful of chaps. There was ever a sense of security in the knowledge that he was close by to help me. And now that he is gone, I look back and think of the different times we were together, I don't think anybody can realise *what a difference in my outlook* on life his loss has made. Within a few days I shall be going back to France and I'm going back with the earnest endeavour to try and live a life as brave and good as his, I feel so unworthy - such a "dud" when I think of his glorious life.

The dear-mater's letters were most touching. I do so hope she is in good health and that she won't worry at all. Don't you think it would be better for her to leave the old place. It is so big for just mother and **Clive** and the mater must often feel lonely there. Whatever Clive decides upon for a career, he must stick to it. I hope mother won't ever let him come away. I think we've done more than sufficient seeing that George and Jack are married and that you are ineligible.

I'm sorry that permission for my return has not been granted, not so much for my own sake than on account of the trouble both you and Uncle George have taken. The Director-General of medical services Horseferry Road - Surg.-Gen.

Sir Neville Howse whom Uncle interviewed several times, was in favour of it and promised to help. But, though recommended by Horseferry Road, General Hdqrs in France refused permission. Candidly I never dared to hope that it would be successful because of my fitness as well as my short service.

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Should the war last very long I may see in the army a possible or even probable means of livelihood in after life. When in France there was an offer of commissions in the Indian Army for men under 21 - the usual qualifications regarding education, etc. being necessary as well as a monetary guarantee - some 30 pounds which of course is eventually refunded. Now that there is intact in Cox's bank the money which you most generously remitted (by the way I didn't expect or require a 1/4 of the amount; as it was I managed to get along on my pay; however, it may come in handy at some future date D.V.), there will of course be no trouble in that direction. I intend to do nothing in the matter till I hear from you. You might talk it over with George, John and the mates. It would mean immediate training as an officer in India, and no more fighting in France of course. Had I not completed part of my course I wouldn't have hesitated at the chance and this consideration still weighs heavily with me. For tho' army life doesn't improve one's scholastic abilities, I somehow feel that I shall be able to get into stride again should I get the opportunity. Understand of course that the Scheme I outlined is merely a suggestion and that I have more sense than to do anything rash in the matter.

Now that I have some money awaiting me should I ever get furlough again, I was thinking of trying to increase Mother's allotment by 1/- a day. It wouldn't make much difference I know, but it might help a little. What do you think? I shall be returning to my old unit, the 14th Trench Mortar Battery and I intend to try hard for promotion. Promotion can only be won when in the field with your unit, and of course I was wounded almost as soon as I saw service. That's the reason I'm still the same as I left home - a plain gunner.

I saw in the casualty lists that Eric Hewitt has been wounded but I don't know what hospital he is in.

Russ Marks whom I met at this depot and with whom I've been the last four or five days has been classified for home service -, possibly a trip to Australia ~ after 10 months hospital, convalescence, and no duty here. His foot is lame and will I'm afraid always be so.

I do hope you will have the usual luck in the final in March.

Best of luck, Yours affectionately, Frank Evatt.

**Sandhill Camp England. Sun 16.12.17.**

Dearest Mother ?

There was some good news for me this week - my transfer to Field Artillery having come through. I am more pleased than you can guess to get back among the 18 pounders and the gee-gees . I never did care much for the "Stove pipe" artillery as the mortars are termed.

Tomorrow I go to the R.B.A.A. (Reserve Brigade Artillery) at Heytesbury Camp. (They have moved from Larkhill). I have no idea how long I shall be there, it may be a few days only. It is getting close to Xmas and as yet I don't know where mine will be spent. Nor am I minding much, for after all there's little difference between Christmas in camp or on the troopship, or in the field. I may be put through another gunnery school, but I'd prefer to go away with the first draft so as to join up with a battery as soon as possible.

Fancy, in a few days it will be exactly a year a since I left Sydney - and my active service in France only amounts to a few months - no fault of mine I suppose.

**Marks**, who is on home service in England, is at No. 1 Command Depot close by at Sutton Veney.

On Saturday I met Lieut. **Cameron** of the 20th. I had met him at Arques when I last saw dear Ray. Cameron lost an eye on the 21st September and won the M.C. He told me he was completely overwhelmed when he heard the news. He is a very fine fellow and has offered to help me any time I should need it. Up till now the winter has been very mild, compared with the weather we had last February, March and April. There have been few snow falls up till now but of course the winter has a long way to go yet.

My best love to all, Yours affectionately, Frank.

**R.B.A.A., Heytesbury Camp' England 23.12.1917, to mother, Conscription**

Dearest Mother,

Arrived at the above camp - the artillery base in England - about a week ago. It is quite good to be back among the 18 pounders and the stables again. Today, however, I was warned for draft to proceed overseas to France - returned men never stay more than a few days here. At present I don't know exactly when I shall be leaving but at all events will be spending Xmas day here. I understand there is to be a bumper dinner served in the mess - 6 courses - so it should be a rather decent day here.

The returns from Australia show the NO's well in the lead and believe me I'm not at all sorry. The soldiers' vote will help to increase the majority without doubt.

So far I am sorry to say that I have had no parcels of any description since leaving Sydney just 1 year ago. The closest I went to getting one was when Ettie sent on one to me from Aunt Eva and which I never got. I know a few have

been sent so I suppose I must put it down to bad luck. You might: send Aunt Maggie's address for though Clive sent it I have lost it.

About 1000 artillery reinforcements are marching` into this camp tonight [from Australia). I might strike someone I know.

You see there: is little to write about, and this is the only letter I am sending this mail. I try to make a point of writing home once a week but don't worry writing to others except in reply.

Am well, fit and healthy after a good three months sojourn in "Blighty "

Best wishes to all, Your loving son Frank.

PS Hope sincerely that you and all the boys are doing OK. F

Two photos attached of group at Manor House 4 November. These seem to belong to letter of 5.11

*Continue at letter 6.1.18. in other document*

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