

Letter from Camp Spring 1915

No. 17 Hut,
Hare H.M. Camp,
Romford,
Essex.

March 22nd. 1915

In accordance with my promise to the School I am writing you a letter to give you some idea of what I am doing as a private in His Majesty's Army. Our life in London was not a very interesting or strenuous one; it consisted of drill in Hyde Park or in the courtyard of Somerset House, route marches through the streets, and occasional lectures on military discipline, musketry, and so forth. We expected over and over again to be sent off to camp but our hopes were not realised. The fact was that the camp was only begun after 'Xmas and took two months to construct. However, the day came at last. On Wednesday, March 17th (St. Patrick's Day), we paraded on the embankment at 10 a.m., having previously stacked our kit bags ready to be loaded on waggons. We wore our great coats rolled and carried the usual swagger cane. Then we marched off to the Horse Guards' Parade in Whitehall, where we were inspected by our Brigadier, General Kellett, who made a very nice little speech, commending our smart appearance and thanking us for the sacrifices which most of us have had to make by enlisting in the King's Army. Then we marched through London to Liverpool St. Station, headed by our Colonel (Col. Paget), and accompanied by three bands. The Lord Mayor did us the honour of standing outside the Mansion House in his full robes and taking the salute as we passed. We soon got into the trains at the station and after a short journey arrived at our destination. We marched into camp, and after being sent to our respective huts we spent the rest of the day in settling down. The camp is a splendid one; in fact it is said to be the best camp ever erected in this country. We live in huts (30 men to a hut) made of wood and roofed with zinc. Each hut has two stoves and is lighted with electric light. We sleep and have our meals in the huts, the food being fetched from the cook house by the orderlies. Two orderlies from each hut do duty for a day at a time, and they are kept hard at it: they have to do all the washing up (four meals a day), keep the fires going, mop and sweep out the hut, serve out the meals, and generally look after everyone's comfort. You would be much entertained and amused, Mr Editor, to see your Headmaster, with apron on and sleeves rolled up, washing plates and mugs for all he is worth. It is certainly a great change from Caesar Book III. and Macbeth, but I am rapidly getting accustomed to a soldier's life. We have not much time to think of anything else beyond our military duties. This is the usual programme:

6 a.m.: Reveille.
6.10: Orderly brings hot tea and biscuits.
7: Physical drill on parade ground, and running on the roads.
8: Breakfast.
8.30: Make beds, and peel potatoes.
9.30-12.30: Drill.
1 p.m.: Dinner.
1 - 4: Drill.
4.30: Tea.
5 - 6: Route March.

After 6 we are free to go where we like, but we may not go more than three miles from the camp without a pass. Supper is served out at 8, and "Lights Out" bugle goes at 10 p.m. This makes a fairly stiff day, but we are having fine, bright weather, and everybody is feeling all the better for the regular exercise. In a few weeks I hope to feel quite a different person. The camp is only a mile from Romford, a small market town, and we had a Church parade there on Sunday morning. Saturday afternoon is a holiday, and on Sunday we are free after Church parade. The country round here is delightful, with many large wooded parks, and I am looking forward to a jolly time as the Spring comes on. Of course we do not know how long we shall be here, but it will probably be three months: it depends a good deal on how long we take to become fit and efficient. Plenty of men will be wanted in the next few months, and I have no doubt that work will be found for us as soon as we are ready. Our camp is very complete, and has its own post office, tailor, barber, and boot maker. The huts vie with one another in fitting themselves out as completely as possible, and many have put names over the doors - we have called ours "Sweet Seventeen". Mr. Mellers is getting on well, but as he is now a Sergeant I do not see so much of him. Now I am afraid I have inflicted a long letter on you, Mr. Editor, but it may come in useful if you are short of copy. I shall be pleased to write you another letter next term, if you would like to have it, and by that time I shall be able to tell you what advance we have made.

I hope the School will continue to prosper.

I was delighted to find everything working so well when I visited you, and I know I can rely on every member doing his or her utmost to maintain the high standard which the School has now reached.

With all good wishes to you all for a good holiday and a successful Summer Term,

I am, Mr. Editor,
Yours very sincerely,
A. G. Jenkinson,
Pte. No. 2259,
B Company,
2nd Sportsman's Batt., Royal Fusiliers.

Letter from Camp Summer 1915

Hut B 9,
24th (Service) Battn. Royal
Fusiliers,
Clipstone Camp, Notts,

July 13th, 1915

I am endeavouring to keep my promise of another letter, and hope that it will be in time for your Summer Term number of the School Magazine. I have heard now and then how things are going with you, and I read in a local paper an account of the School Sports. I am very glad to hear of the School's continued success, and I must congratulate you all on the results of your loyal efforts. The Oxford Locals are once again upon you, and my heartiest good wishes go forth to all about to stand their trial. My lot is cast at present in the midst of a huge camp and successive days of very strenuous work. We moved from Romford to this place on June 26th, in order to be trained with other battalions. We are in the 99th brigade of Kitchener's Army, our brigade consisting of the 17th, 22nd, 23rd, and 24th R.F. There are about 10,000 troops here, and the camp, when completed, will hold 40,000. We are in huts as before, but the accommodation is not nearly so good, the food is poor, and altogether we have to rough it considerably. Our work consists chiefly of route marches combined with battalion and brigade drill, and we shall soon be doing some more musketry and bayonet exercise. Our longest march has been 22 miles. Today we started at 8 a.m., marched five miles, did extended order drill for several hours, and marched back five miles, arriving at camp at 4 p.m. This is a fair sample, and I find I am pretty well tired at the end of it. The camp is four miles from the nearest town. There are many collieries round here, most of which have been opened up within the last 12 years or so. The camp is situated on a high heath, and we have a splendid lake close by, where we can enjoy a bathe. After a hot and dusty march you may imagine how welcome that lake is. The other relaxations of camp life are not many; some battalions have very fine bands, which play of an evening on the parade ground and I often go and listen to them; there is a large Y.M.C.A. hut and there are plenty of stray footballs being kicked about, but if you want any other form of entertainment you must go to Mansfield. Camp rumours are as plentiful here as they were at Romford, and the latest news of our future movements is that we are to be sent over to some place in France in September, in order to complete our training there. I believe this is correct, but I cannot tell you what part of France it will be. In any case I expect we shall have some months of further training there before we are moved into the area of active operations. I am very well, though I am beginning to feel the strain of heavy work under the weight of a full equipment and rifle.

I hope you have had good news, Mr. Editor, of all the old boys who are serving their country. Mr. Mellers is well and prospering; he is now a Sergeant, and at present is taking a special course of training at Hythe.

To many of us the terrible reality of this war has been brought home by some personal loss; I hope that the School may suffer no such experience, and that the peace which we all so ardently desire may not be long delayed.

My best wishes to you all, Mr. Editor, and may you enjoy that boon which is at present denied to your Headmaster, a grand summer holiday of seven long weeks.

Yours very sincerely,
A. Godfrey Jenkinson

Letter from Mr. A. G. Jenkinson, M.A. 1916

(Extract)

The rivalry between the two houses appears to be keener than ever, and I wish them both success. Wake up, Tewington, and don't be down on your luck! School games seem to be in a very flourishing condition, and I heartily congratulate Richards on having captained his team with such excellent results. I expect the school will be top dog in the league before long, and it must not be content with anything less. In these strenuous days school games are worth a lot, as most of you realise, to judge by the Debating Society.

And now I must try and tell you something of what I am doing, though I fear I cannot make my letter very interesting, for I am not at the front, and life here is very dull. As you probably know, I am at the base: I arrived on December 11th after 5 days of uncomfortable travelling, sleeping one night on the boat, one night in a tent in pouring rain, and two nights in the train. Now I am in a comfortable billet, and we have an officers' mess for meals. My work is concerned with clothing, chiefly boots, and you would be considerably surprised to see the number of boots that go to the front every week. From this base we supply about 20 divisions at present, and every week we send away 20,000 boots or more. This is only one little item, but it will help you to understand how large and important is the work of the A. O. D., which supplies the soldier with every imaginable article of clothing and necessaries. The stores are housed in a row of large hangars along the quay, with the ships unloading on one side from England, and the trains to the front loading on the other. The Army Ordnance Dept. has a curious fashion of naming everything backwards: if an officer wants a hair brush he has to order a "brush hair officer's", or if a soldier wants a tin of oil for his rifle he gets a "bottle tin oil rifle filled". It takes a little time to get used to it, but you must not be surprised, when I see you all again, if I request the members of Form V to show me their "books composition English", or if I ask how the "Corps Cadet School" is progressing, or if I smilingly enquire who is going to win the "Race Relay House" at the next "Sports Athletic".

This town is not a very interesting one; there are some good streets and shops, a fine theatre, some picturesque old houses, and a splendid sea-front. In the summer there is excellent bathing, and there is a large Casino at present used as an English Hospital. The streets are always full of soldiers, French, Belgian and British. The Belgians wear khaki and look very much like British soldiers; the steel trench helmets (grey for the French, khaki for Belgians and British) are a common sight. Lately we have had the English Guards' regiments here; they came from the front for a short rest, and they have had drums and pipers here. While I have been here, two visits have been paid us by German Taubes, but they did very little damage. I saw one of them splendidly flying high over the town with the French shrapnel bursting all round it. There are a good many hospitals here, and the wounded are brought down the canal from the front in hospital barges - the smoothest possible means of progress: of course hospital trains are used as well, and there are hospital ships constantly going to and fro across the Channel.

I hope that later on I may be sent up to a division; every division of the army has an ordnance officer attached to it, and he has to supply all the requirements of his division. It is the most interesting kind of work, but I have to stay here at present: after all someone has to do the dull work too. I hear that my old division, to which I belonged as a private, is shortly coming into this area, so I may possibly see something of it, and of Sergeant Mellers. I am afraid I can give you no news of him, but perhaps you have already heard of him from some other quarter. Now, Mr. Editor, this letter has grown to an unconscionable length, and I expect I have tired you out. My thoughts and good wishes are, as always, for the school and all connected with it. Live up to your motto, and may we soon meet up again.

Tribute by the Prefects of St. Austell County School 1921

Following half-term we have lost our headmaster, Major A. G. Jenkinson, M.A., who has gone to take up a similar post at Hemsworth Secondary School in Yorkshire.

Major Jenkinson came to St. Austell County School in 1910, and soon after the outbreak of war in 1914 he enlisted as a private in the Sportmen's Battalion. After more than four year's service in England, France and Italy, during which he rose from the ranks of private to that of major, we were proud to welcome him back to take up his duties as headmaster once more, in Spring term, 1919. In the two and half years since then, he has done much to consolidate the progress made during the latter end of the war period, and to strengthen the organisation of the school in every direction. We, the elder pupils of the school, note that nothing has been overlooked in this process, that no branch of school work has been neglected in his untiring efforts. The different institutions which foster special developments of the students' work - the library, the literary and debating societies, the museum - have all been re-organised and put upon a firmer footing under the headmaster's care. We realise that all of these things are such that no one outside of the school, or no one who has but little real knowledge of what modern methods mean in relation to schoolwork, can appreciate them fully or at their true value. We know that by far the greater part of a headmaster's work - or an assistant master or mistress's work for that part - has to be done without hope of recognition or of thanks.

Some portion of Major Jenkinson's work at our school, however, has come before the public eye, and has been extremely popular in the district. It is with pleasure that we remember the enthusiasm which the performances of "As you like it" at Christmas, 1919, and of "Twelfth Night" at Christmas 1920, called forth among St. Austell people. Of course, these dramatic successes redounded to the credit of many who have connection with the school. But none of us who know, doubts that the whole "resort de l'action" the mainspring of the action - was the headmaster himself. Another matter which Major Jenkinson has undertaken successfully, since his return from active service with the Forces, is the scheme for the school war memorial. This has taken the form of a stained glass window - of beautiful design and exquisite colouring - which is now in position over the main staircase.

In taking leave of Mr. Jenkinson we thank him for all that he has done for our school during the last few years, congratulate him upon the school's progress under his care and upon the successes of which this year - the last of his headmastership - has been fruitful to a degree unparalleled in the school's history, and with him health and happiness in the work that he is now to take up at Hemsworth School in Yorkshire.

Mr. Jenkinson's letter to his previous school

The Secondary School,
Hemsworth,
February 10th, 1922

Dear Mr. Editor,

I think it may interest your readers to hear what my new school and its inhabitants are like - Companions are always "odorous" as Mrs. Malaprop would say, and in this case the odour is partly good and partly bad, a mingling of the sour with the sweet - we have no splendid sea views, no hills, no palms, no pasties We have much ugliness, much flatness, fog and grime. But to compensate for these depressions we have a really fine school situated in beautiful grounds, so that the dull drabness of the outside does not trouble as much. The school used to be a private house, and the classrooms are on two floors, all facing South, large cheerful rooms with big windows and polished floors. On the other side of the corridor, facing North, are staff-rooms, cloak room, writing room, reading room and one empty room which will eventually become a classroom or extra dining-room, but which is at present used for practice by Morris Dance enthusiasts. You will see that I have not forgotten the Morris Dancing which I learnt in Cornwall. We have taken up Country Dances with much enthusiasm here, and I have 2 sets of boy Morris dancers. The school is heated (verb - sap You may translate this as you think fit, Mr. Editor) by fires in the rooms and by a large coke stove in the corridor downstairs and upstairs, but the fact that the thermometer is generally below 50 degrees will show you that our condition is not unlike your own when a cold N.E. wind is blowing and the caretaker has omitted to look after the fire. So far we have had a good deal of very cold weather with rain and fog, snow and frost. We are anxiously looking forward to the time when the snow shall have passed and the Spring sunshine shall have brought into bloom the crocuses, daffodils, and other bulbs which are planted in thousands all over the grounds. There is a large kitchen garden which later on will be divided up into allotments and given over to school gardeners (girls and boys who will compete in seeing who can grow the largest potato and the most succulent cabbage, and who will sell their produce (at enormous profit) to the School Dinner Fund. We provide a school dinner every day for 66 pupils, and as we have an excellent cook, our menu has become the talk of the district, and it is rumoured that the Chef from the Savoy Hotel in London may shortly pay us a visit to pick up some tips! (Verb. sap again, Mr Editor) The school grounds include a good sized football field, which will accommodate both football and hockey for the present, a cricket ground not yet in order but destined to become an excellent ground in time, and a third field which having been ploughed into ridges is no use for hockey or football but which has the makings of a sporting little 9 hole golf course for members of the staff and older pupils. We have also (the Headmaster's pet joy) a Fives Court, which is in good repair and in which many boys will soon become adepts at the game.

The school has at present 112 pupils, divided into two Houses named respectively, Holgate House, and Talbot House, after Archbishop Holgate who founded Hemsworth Grammar School in the 16th century, and Mr. Talbot, Chairman of the West Riding Education Committee who performed the opening ceremony at the school.

Our school colours are red and blue, and the houses have distinctive colour badges of green and orange. Many St Austell institutions have been transplanted here, and you would feel quite at home, Mr. Editor, if you walked in at the front door and found yourself face to face with a Stars and Stripes board record on the notice board.

This letter has grown to greater length than I intended, but it may be useful copy for the Magazine. In closing, I would send through you, Mr. Editor, to the school, past and present, to my former colleagues and prefects, and to my very able successor my heartiest good wishes for their prosperity, one and all, and an assurance of my continued interest in all that pertains to St Austell County School.

Yours sincerely,
A. G. Jenkinson