

Letters from the First World War, 1916- 18



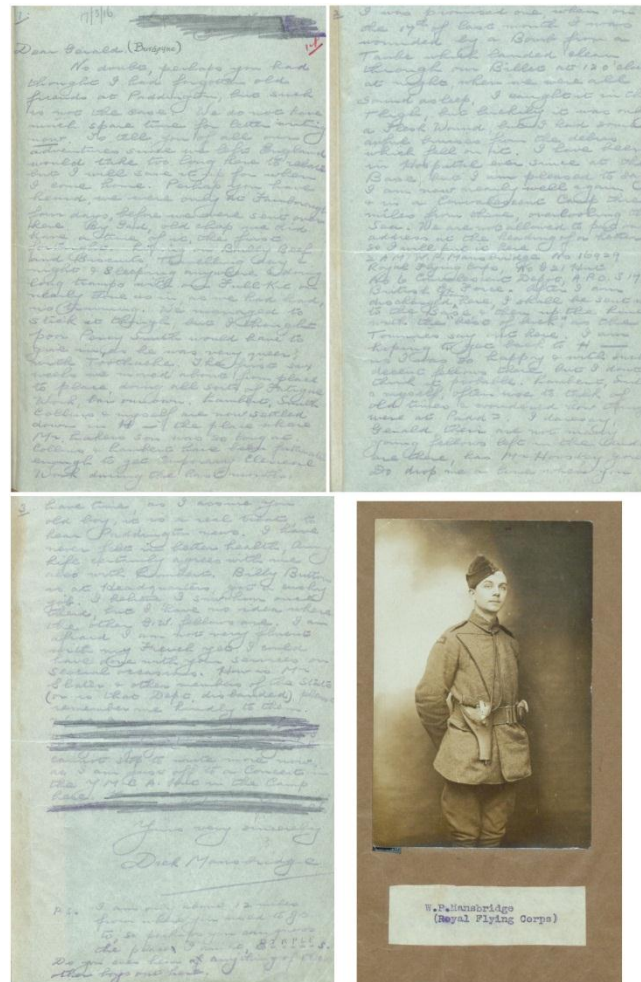
Here you will find all the letters and transcripts from this collection that relate to the soldiers' experience of hospital.

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Convalescence: 'wounded by a bomb'

William Perrin Mansbridge, 17 March 1916, France. **Born:** 11 February 1889, **Regiment:** Royal Flying Corps, **Regiment number:** 16929, **Died:** 1973



Transcript

Dear Gerald,

No doubt, perhaps you had thought I had forgotten old friends at Paddington, but such is not the case. We so not have much spare time for letter writing now. To tell you of all our adventures since we left England would take too long here to relate but I will save for when I come home. Perhaps you have heard, we were only at Farnborough four days, before we were sent over there. By God, old chap we did have a time of it, the first fortnight. Living on bully beef and biscuits, travelling day and night

and sleeping anywhere and doing long tramps with full kit on nearly done us in as we had no training. We managed to stick it through, but I thought poor Percy Smith would have to give in as he was very queer with toothache. The first six weeks we moved about from place to place doing all sorts of fatigue work, bar our own. Lambert, Smith, Collins and myself are now settled down in H— the place where Mr Laker's son was so long at. Collins and Lambert have been fortunate enough to get temporary clerical work during the last months.

I was promised one when on the 17th of last month I was wounded by a bomb from a taube which landed clean through our billet at 12 o'clock at night, when we were all sound asleep. I caught it in the thigh, but luckily it was only a flesh wound, but I had some awful bruises from the debris which fell on it. I have been in hospital ever since at the base, but I am pleased to say I am now nearly well again and in a convalescent camp three miles from there, overlooking the sea. We are not allowed to put our address at the heading of a letter so I will put it here:

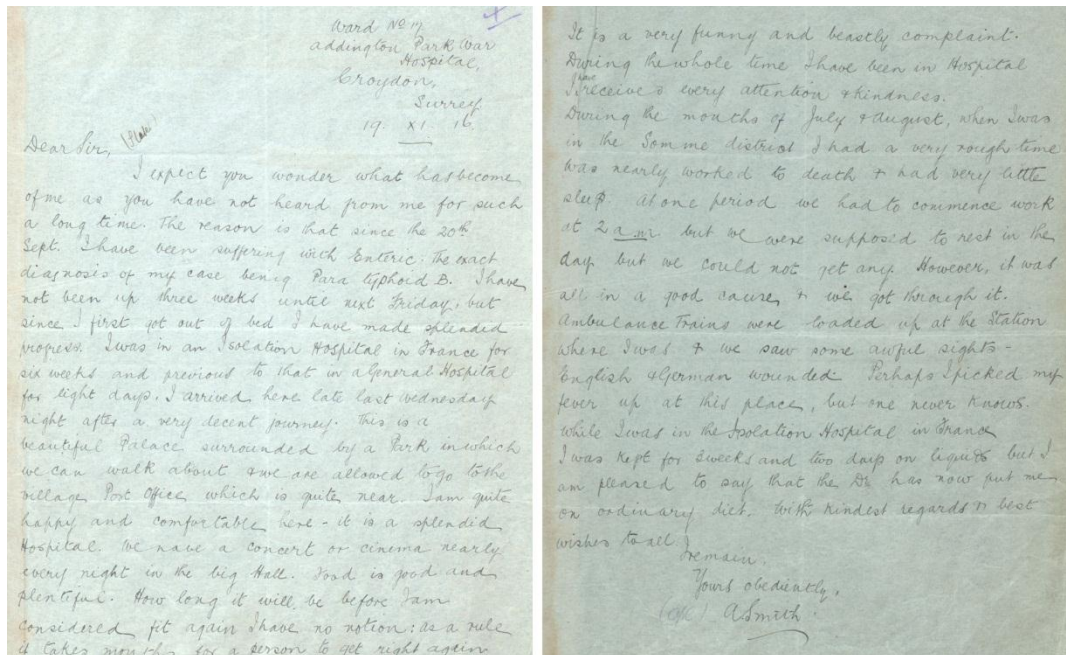
2AM /W.P. Mansbridge No.16929, Royal Flying Corps No. G 21 Hut no. 6 Convalescent Depot, A.P.O. S.17, British Expeditionary Force. After I am discharged from here, I shall be sent up to the base and then up the line with the "best of luck" as the Tommies say out here. I am hoping to get back to H— as I was so happy and with such decent fellows there, but I don't think it probable. Lambert, Smith and myself, often used to talk of old times and wondered how things were at Paddington. I daresay Gerald, there are not many young fellows left in the Audit are there, has Mr Horsley gone? Do drop me a line when you have time, as I assure you old boy, it is a real treat to hear Paddington news. I have never felt in better health, army life certainly agrees with me also with Lambert. Billy Button is at headquarters, got a cushy job. I believe I saw him once there, but I have no idea where the other G.W. fellows are. I am afraid I am not very fluent with my French yet, I could have done with your services on several occasions. How are Mr Slater and other members of the Stats. (or is that department disbanded?) Please remember kindly to them. (Lines censored)

Cannot stop to write more now as I am just off to a concert in the Y.M.C.A. hut in the camp here. (Lines censored)

Yours very sincerely

Dick Mansbridge

P.S. I am only about 12 miles from where you used to go to, so perhaps you can guess the place I am at, E- - - - s. [Etaples]. Do you ever hear anything of the other boys out here?

Hospital: 'beastly complaint'

Arthur Smith, 19 November 1916, Addington Park War Hospital, England. **Born:** 8 March 1895, **Regiment:** Railway Troop, Royal Engineers, **Regiment number:** 87760, **Rank:** Lance Corporal, **Returned to office:** 16 June 1919, **Retired:** 30 September 1955

Transcript

Dear Sir,

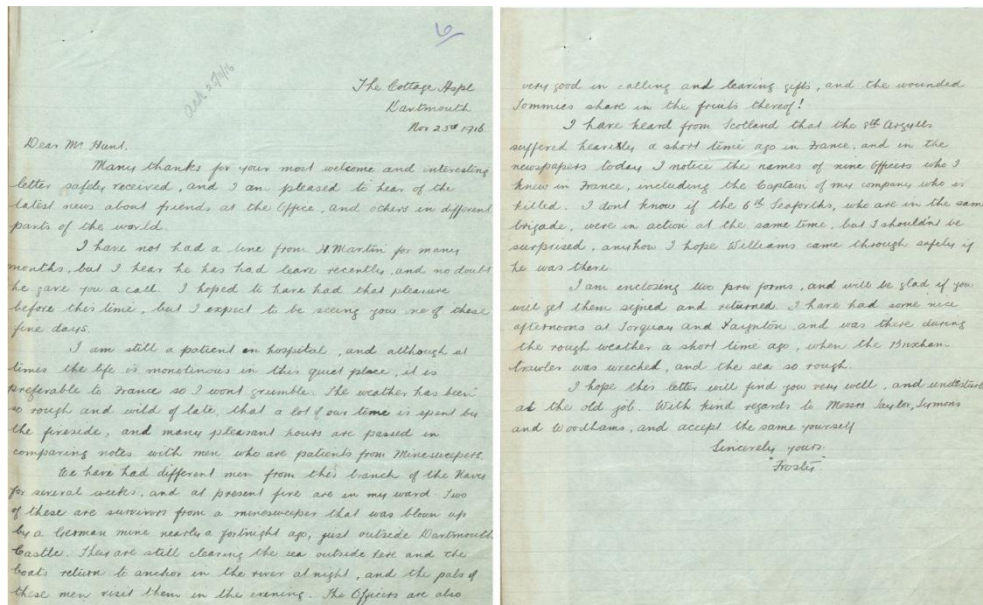
I expect you wonder what has become of me as you have not heard from me for such a long time. The reason is that since the 20th September I have been suffering with enteric (typhoid). The exact diagnosis of my case being para typhoid B. I have not been up three weeks until next Friday, but since I first got out of bed I have made splendid progress. I was in an isolation hospital in France for six weeks and previous to that in a General Hospital for eight days. I arrived here late last Wednesday night after a very decent journey. This is a beautiful palace surrounded by a park in which we can walk about and we are allowed to go to the post office which is quite near. I am quite happy and comfortable here, it is a splendid hospital. We have a concert or cinema nearly every night in the big hall. Food is good and plentiful. How long it will be before I am

considered fit again I have no notion, as a rule it takes months for a person to get right again.

It is a very funny and beastly complaint. During to the whole time I have been in hospital I have received every attention and kindness. During the months of July and August when I was in the Somme district I had a very rough time, was nearly worked to death and had little sleep. At one period we had to commence work at 2am but we were supposed to rest in the day but we could not get any. However, it was all in a good cause and we got through it. Ambulance trains were loaded up at the station where I was and we saw some awful sights. English and German wounded. Perhaps I picked my fever up at this place, but one never knows. While I was in the isolation hospital in France I was kept for three weeks and two days on liquids but I am pleased to say that the doctor has now put me on ordinary diet. With the kindest regards and best wishes to all, I remain yours obediently.

A. Smith

Hospital: 'preferable to France'



R.C.S. Frost, 23 November 1916, Dartmouth, England. **Born:** 30 January 1888, **Regiment:** 8th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders; Duke of Cornwall's Light Infantry, **Regiment number:** 1998; 300470, **Rank:** Private; Second Lieutenant, **Died:** 1962

Transcript

Dear Mr Hunt,

Many thanks for your most welcome and interesting letter safely received, and I am pleased to hear of the latest news about friends at the office and others in different parts of the world.

I have not had a line from H. Martin for many months, but I hear he has had leave recently, and no doubt he gave you a call. I hoped to have had that pleasure before this time, but I expect to be seeing you one of these fine days.

I am still a patient in hospital, and although at times the life is monotonous in this quiet place, it is preferable to France so I won't grumble. The weather has been so rough and wild of late, that a lot our

time is spent by the fireside, and many pleasant hours are passed in comparing notes with men who are patients from minesweepers.

We have had different men from this branch of the Navy for several weeks, and at present five are in my ward. Two of these are survivors from a minesweeper that was blown up by a German mine nearly a fortnight ago, just outside Dartmouth Castle. They are still clearing the sea outside here and the boats return to anchor in the river at night, and the pals of these men visit them this evening. The officers are also very good in calling and leaving gifts and the wounded Tommies share in the fruits thereof!

I have heard from Scotland that the 8th Argylls suffered heavily a short time ago in France, and in the newspapers today I notice the names of nine officers who I knew in France, including the Captain of my company who is killed. I don't know if the 6th Seaforths, who are in the same brigade, were in action at the same time, but I shouldn't be surprised, anyhow I hope [Gilbert] Williams came through safely if he was there.

I am enclosing two privilege forms, and will be glad if you will get them signed and returned. I have had some nice afternoons at Torquay and Paignton and was there during the rough weather a short time ago, when the Brixham trawler was wrecked and sea was so rough.

I hope this letter will find you very well and undisturbed at the old job. With kind regards to Messrs Taylor, Symons, and Woodhams and accept the same yourself.

Sincerely yours, 'Frosty'.