

CHIN-WAG Newsletter

Villiers Park Educational Trust's commemoration of the First World War through extracts from the Old Etonian's and Eton Manor's CHIN-WAG Newsletter

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Ted Hughes writes to CHIN-WAG from the Royal Victoria Military Hospital, Netley

My address will very likely surprise you a bit, but I suppose you can guess what it means. I have had a little bit of German lead catch me in the thigh, and it has put me out of action for a little while.

I caught it at about six o'clock on the morning of the 17th of March. We had just taken over the line, and on the night of the 16th we went into what were supposed to be trenches, but which were nothing else but shell-holes enlarged, and only about three feet deep, whilst all around was nothing but mud and water. These holes could only be approached at night time by a thin strip of solid earth and in the day time there was absolutely no communication whatever, and the only thing to do was to lie as low as possible. It was a rotten position. Soon after daybreak on the eventful morning I settled myself down to get a bit of sleep on a pile of sandbags, so as to get out of the mud. I had not been asleep long before I woke up and heard the bullets whistling over me from behind; the next second one caught me, and the force of it knocked me off my perch. The bullets had come from a German machine gun in a little valley almost right behind us. My pals soon bandaged me up, and I got as comfortable as possible in the mud at the bottom of our hole, and there I waited for night to come. That day I think was about the longest I have ever experienced but the night came at last, and the stretcher bearers managed after a struggle to get me out, and I was taken to a dressing station. The next day I got shifted to another place, and the day after that I had a train journey of nearly twenty-four hours, which landed me at a Rouen hospital.

I stayed there for two days and then I was put on the boat ready to go across the Channel to a place we used to know as Blighty, but which is better known as England. We had a very rough journey across, but we did not worry much about that, for we were looking forward to our landing on old England's shores.

Ted Hayes

Bert Woodruff writes to CHIN-WAG from the trenches in France

A line to let you know that I am still alive and kicking. At last we are out of the trenches for a real rest after spending close on eight months in and out of the trenches. We are now settled in a nice little village about 30 miles from the firing line. No doubt, we shall be back here for about six weeks. I am very glad that we are having a spell of quite good weather. We had a none too easy time during the winter weather, owing to the trenches being in such a bad state when we took them over. We had hardly any dug-outs, and our first job was to make them. As we were not greatly experienced in this art, the dug-outs, of course, fell in, and we had hardly any accommodation for sleeping purposes, until the Royal Engineers kindly consented to find us proper material for the purpose. Anyway, it was January before we had finished this job. During all this time the mud and water had accumulated far too much to be comfortable and we were well over our knees in it. It was impossible to go through the communication trenches, and the only way out was to 'chance it' over the top. However, after plenty of hard work we managed to get them respectable for the new relieving battalion.

Closing with best of luck to all the boys.

Yours Sincerely

Bert Woodruff



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