



In the News - Australia

WESTERN AUSTRALIANS IN CAMP

VISITED BY THE AGENT-GENERAL

THE TRAINING ARRANGEMENTS

(From our Special Correspondent)

London, April 12.

The Agent-General for Western Australia (Mr J. D. Connolly), who recently returned from a visit to the Australian forces on Salisbury Plain, informs me that during his tour, which was made at the invitation of Major-General Sir J. W. McCay (G.O.C. Australian forces in the United Kingdom), he was taken to the camps at Fovant, Hurdcott, Codford, Heytesbury, Sutton Veny, and Sutton Mandeville. He saw a great number of Western Australians (some of whom have since been transferred to France and Flanders) at the various camps. Among these were Lieutenant Price, who is an adjutant; Colonel Flintoff, of Fremantle, who is commandant of another camp; Colonel Mansbridge, late of Kanowna, who is also a commandant, and who assembled many hundreds of men to meet Mr Connolly, who had the pleasure of renewing many old acquaintances among them; Colonel Davies and Major Aarons, late of the Boulder; Lieutenant Staniforth Smith, Sergeant James Cornell, M.L.C.; and Captain Arnold Leschen (son of Dr Leschen), who has been at the front almost from the first, and who expects to be returning to the State very shortly. Mr Connolly also had an opportunity of meeting many of the young Western Australians who came over recently. Mr Connolly found that a great deal of interest was taken by the Western Australian boys in the many places of historic interest in the neighbourhood. Stonehenge, for instance, is only 15 miles from Sutton Veny camp; and there are the two Roman forts still remaining as relics of the Roman occupation, and the famous White Horse at Westbury, which is only eight miles from Sutton Veny. In the course of an interview on the subject of his trip, Mr Connolly said:-

“I was particularly taken not only with the beauty of the surrounding country, but the construction and the lay-out of the camps. I am well aware that considerable criticism has been offered in the past with regard to these camps, but whatever may have been wanting previously, there is certainly nothing lacking now, both from a sanitary and comfort point of view, in the buildings, the food, and the methods of supplying those to the men. The roadways through the camps are mostly concrete, water is laid on, there is a fine electric lighting service, the huts are solidly made, and well able to meet the rigours of the severest season. The messes, as far as I have seen, are like hotel dining rooms, as well as laid out as one would see in a club, both for men and officers. What occurs to one in looking at these camps is that we have indeed made up our minds that we are a military people and that we are making war an ordinary avocation. Then again, the training and the methods adopted are indeed excellent. I was particularly struck with the infantry camps at Codford, Fovant and Sutton Veny, and the splendid training that was accorded to the men both in physical drill and construction of wire netting. I think this latter will serve our boys as a good training when they return to Australia, as they will have had a good experience in erecting barbed wire fences, if they keep up the record they have made in these camps, also in the bayonet exercises, the system and training they

have received seems perfection itself. The artillery camps for reinforcements at Heytesbury are also very fine, and the Commandant, Colonel King, seems the right man in the right place. It is well organized and has perfectly comfortable accommodation, the drainage system and the road system are splendid throughout the whole camps, also the catering arrangements. It may be that it appears to us civilians in London as we have to do less than 1 lb. of meat while the camps are supplied with three and a half pounds per week per man. Altogether, judging from my few days visits through the camps I say, unhesitatingly, that Australia has nothing to fear by the transference of the training camps from Australia to England. Indeed, if I might offer an opinion, I would venture to say this, that, if any Australians saw the camps, with the excellent drainage, comfort and social arrangements, the Australian Red Cross and Y.M.C.A. being well represented, the general lay-out and management, not to mention the business-like training they get, he would agree that these matters are a sufficient guarantee for any parent to entrust his boy to come here and joining the A.I.F. I wish particularly to emphasise this, and I think that, with a certain amount of reason the Salisbury Camps were not all that could be desired at the beginning, but now, in my opinion, they approach, both from a health and training point of view, as near perfection as possible and I have taken the opportunity of congratulating Major-General Sir James McCay, the Commandant, and all his staff on this. The only thing in the way of criticism that occurs to one is the over-plus of senior officers. From a cursory glance, I should say, of the whole of the Australian camps from Weymouth to Salisbury, there must be a great number of excess senior officers. Let me say, in justice to these men, that they are all extremely anxious to return to the front, but I understand, that, to some extent, the same applies there. This, I presume, is on account of the shortage of reinforcements coming forward, and these facts account for what appears to a layman's eye to be a surplus of senior officers in the camps to-day."

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