

## A VERY HAPPY FAMILY

### Keith Tunks Writes of Our Troops in England

#### Tells "Argus" Readers all about Camp Life There

"The Argus" received this mail the following interesting letter from Keith Tunks, son of the late Mr W.H. and Mrs Tunks, of Parramatta:-  
"Australian and N Zealand Base Depot,  
"Monte Video Camp, Weymouth, 21st November 1915

"So much was written, and no doubt is still being written and published, of the doings in the various military encampments throughout Australia, that it may perhaps be of unusual interest to readers to learn a little in regard to the Australian and N Zealand camp here. The camp was established some six months ago for the purpose of accommodating and the further training of soldiers of the Commonwealth Military Forces who have been invalided to England from the Dardanelles with either sickness or wounds, and are now almost fit for return to the front. Weymouth is about 130 miles distant from London on the South Coast, and is considered one of England's finest sea-side resorts. The camp itself, however, is situated some two miles out from the township at a village known as Monte Video or Chickerell. The site is on a large hill overlooking the sea, and rather in an exposed position. The men are not accommodated in tents as perhaps would be imagined by the people at home, but wooden huts large enough to hold about forty men are provided. I fear we

#### Colonials Find It Rather Cold

in this country during the present season, and would find it more comfortable if we considered ourselves hot-house plants and lived in glass houses; but then of course we could not throw stone, and some of us became so careless at Gallipoli that perhaps at times we may forget to pull down the blinds. Beds are provided for each man, in the form of a mattress filled with straw upon a wooden framework. Each man is issued three blankets, and a fire is provided in each hut, so that altogether the men are reasonably comfortable. An account of the procedure of the men from the time their furlough after discharge from hospital has expired may be interesting. On the date of expiry the men have to report at the London offices in Horseferry-road at about 10 a.m. There they undergo a medical examination, and it is decided whether they are in a fit state to go into camp or should be sent to a convalescent home. In the former case, if a man is fit, he is sent to Weymouth by the midday train from London, arriving at Weymouth about 5.30 p.m., where at the station he is met by a motor which conveys him to the camp. Here a hot meal awaits him, after being issued with eating utensils and blankets, and being shown his quarters in a hut which is set apart for the sole use of new arrivals. On the following morning he is ordered to parade at 9 a.m. All particulars are then taken, and he is added to the strength of the depot. Again, a medical examination is necessary, as all men in depot are classed either A, B. or C, the A's being the fit men who are able to return to the front, B's the temporarily unfit men who may in a short time be fit or may be altogether unfit for further service, and C's the permanently unfit; that is, men who are useless for further active service and are to be

#### Either Invalided Home or Given Home Service

either in England, or their respective countries. The A's of course have to undergo further training in the form of route marches, etc., and for them the first parade is at 7 a.m., so that Reveille is sounded at 6.30, rather an early hour to rise on these cold mornings. Breakfast is served at 7.45, after which the men are free until 9.30 a.m. – the morning parade, which generally takes the form of a route march in Weymouth and back, lasting until 11.45 a.m. Dinner is served at 12.45 p.m., and the afternoon parade is sounded at 2. Another route march generally follows until 4 p.m. From that hour men are granted leave passes until 9 p.m., which enable them to visit Weymouth or go anywhere to please themselves. Tea is at 4.45 p.m. – rather an early hour – but it is quite dark then, and more convenient. I venture to say that the food served to the men in this camp is of better quality and in more variety than any received either in Australia or Egypt. Meals are carried out in an orderly manner, the men lining up outside the various mess huts, in each one of which permanent mess orderlies are employed to serve the food to the men, wash-up and attend to the meals generally, so that there is no messing about cleaning mess-tins, dixies, etc. Cooks have been appointed from among the men and have proved themselves very efficient. I omitted to say that most of the duties in and around the camp are performed by the "B" men. The "C" men, of course, amongst whom are cripples, do very little in the way of drill, but most of them enjoy walking at their leisure. From time to time men are picked from the A division

#### To Form a Draft to Return to the Front

They are then issued with full equipment – not the web equipment originally issued them at home – but leather articles, which are more durable although perhaps a little uncomfortable at first. Also, from time to time, men are selected from the "C" class unit for return home to either Australia or New Zealand. At present we have a few more in an auxiliary camp at Westham, midway between here and Weymouth. A band has been formed in camp, and now is performing very efficiently. On Thursday evening last they gave their first public performance before a crowded audience in one of the Weymouth halls for charity purposes. A barber's and tailor's shop has also been established, of which the men take full advantage. Here, as in every other camp, the Y.M.C.A. control a hut and are rendering great service to the men. They provide refreshments at moderate prices and also arrange concerts and lectures several nights each week. The Salvation Army people are doing similar work. Mails are distributed to the men regularly three times daily, and up to the present the manner in which letters have been coming forward is very satisfactory. The authorities have even gone so far as to provide a small

#### Picture Palace within the Camp,

where quite a large number of men pass away the evenings. No doubt you wonder how we manage with washing arrangements in this bitterly cold weather. Every effort has been made to promote comfort for the men, and hot water showers are provided as an absolute necessity. A splendid motor service between the camp and Weymouth has been established, and there is no difficulty in reaching town comfortably. Week-end leave is granted to men on application, and many take advantage of this privilege for visiting London, travelling as they do, at half rates. I may add that the colonials continue to uphold the good name they have established for themselves in this country, and conduct themselves generally in an orderly manner when dealing with civilians. At present most of the men who are able to afford it are dispatching Christmas gifts to their friends at home, taking advantage of the arrangements made for articles to be forwarded free of duty. Many of the men have also sent articles such as warm clothing to their comrades in Gallipoli, and much more would be done in this direction if a guarantee could be given that the men there received the goods. Everything considered, there is nothing to be desired, and were one to visit the camp he would find us all,

#### Australians, N. Zealanders and Maoris,

a very happy family. Of warm clothing we require none, but my experience is that if Australians at home desire to forward gifts to their relatives and friends at Gallipoli, not here, send them balaclava caps, writing material and cigarettes, not in separate small parcels, but if possible a number of people combine and send large parcels consigned to the Officer in Command of any particular Regiment. In this way it is almost certain that the men for whom the articles are intended will receive them. Cork or asbestos boot insoles would also be much appreciated by the men. – Yours faithfully,  
KEITH A. TUNKS (No. 1796)