

So here we were in England my first sight of this land of which I had heard and read so much. This was August and here they ~~having~~ have winter coming on and in South Africa you are looking forward to summer. Well I expect we will experience some cold weather and snow later. Well we had our first train journey and how beautiful the country side looked. We staemed on and seemed to passing through towns and viliages every few miles. We are used to travelling miles and miles in the Union before one comes to atown. and there are none of these little wayside sations nad sidings as we have.

It was a fairly fast train and we eventually arrived at Waterloo Station and every one started getting out One of our chaps asked a porter the name of the station and when told Waterloo he shouted - 'Eh chaps this is only Waterloo we have not arrived at London yet' He was soon put right and we soon got hols of a couple of old horse cabs and made for the Strand as we had been recomaded to go to Haxels Hotel next to the Strand Palace. This hotel as now been taken into the Strand. It was a very comfortable looking place. Well we signed in and were then shown up to the top floor and given two rooms ad by us all sharing two rooms we got a reduced rate. I dont remember what the charge was but must have been very reasonable. For I remember after the war the Strand and Regent Palace were chargeing 15/- double and 8/- single and there charges are now about five times that amount. Well having dropped our kit , and being too late for dinner or realy to get our first sight of london we decaded to go to a restuarant on the Strand. We had no sooner sat down and ordered Eggs ans bacon from a very polite young lady and said she guessed we were from South Afr- Africa. Just then four flashy young 'bit' walked in and guesing that we were strangers by our dress I suppose, ogled us. They evidently thought yhey had easy meat The young waitress I thought was very kind and thoughtful when she returned with our order for she said- (Now you boys evidently dont know these street girls so be careful' We thanked her and spoke to her for some time as sheseemed interested as to what we over for and how long we had been at sea. She had a brother in the navy. We saw her quite a number of times when we went there for a meal until we joined the forces.

None of us had at that time any idea as to what we were going to join. Three of us , having served with the mounted troops in East Africa, thought we would join King Edwards Horse.. We were to learn however that they were no longer recruiting for that Regiment.

We spent a couple of days sight seeing and then three of us went to call on an East London friend of ours who had come over with the South African 4th Regiment and had been wounded in France and was no on the staff in London Arthur Knibbs. We had a long chat with him and on his advice or suggestion finally decided to join the Royal Flying Corps as the-was.it then was.

London on account of Zeplin raids was blacked out when there were signs of these raids. All windows were blacked out or had curtains to drawn across at night. It was about the third night we were in London and were up in our two rooms in the attick when we heard the air raid sirens . We asked one of the staff and he said there was a raid and every one should go to the basement. The approach of a Zeplin hddbeen given had been spotted. However instead of going down stairs to stay in our rooms and get ready for bed as*it was getting late. Presently we heard a loud knock on our door and in walked the manager and a couple of policemen. There was another man too who found later was the hotel utility man. They wanted to know who we were and why a lig light was showing up into the sky from our sky light. Probably thought we were signaling to the raider. We produced all our discharge papers and other documents and I produced a letter I had to the South African High Commissioner Mr.Schneider from his brother. They were eventually satisfied and had a long chat with us while the manager and his carpenter battled to close the skylight which apparently had not been closed for years. and had stuck good and plenty. The carpenter eventually after one hard knock closed the skylight and the last Bobby retired