

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 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. We had our first train journey and how beautiful the country side looked. We steamed on and seemed to pass through towns and villages every few miles. We are used to travelling miles and miles in the Union before one comes to town. There are none of these little wayside stations and sidings we have.

It was a fairly fast train and we eventually arrived at Waterloo Station and every one started getting out. One of the 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 hold of a couple of old horse cabs and made for the Strand as we had been recommended to go to Haxels Hotel next to the Strand Palace. This hotel has 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 and by us all sharing two rooms we got a reduced rate. I don't remember what the charge was but must have been very reasonable. For I remember after the war the Strand and Regent Palace were charging 15/- double and 9/- single and their charges are now about five times that amount. Well having dropped our kit, and being too late for dinner or really to get our first sight of London we decided to go to a restaurant on the Strand. We had no sooner sat down and ordered eggs and bacon from a very polite young lady and said she guessed we were from South Africa. Just then four flashy young "Bits" walked in and guessing that we were strangers by our dress I suppose oggled us. They evidently thought they 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 don't know these street girls so be careful". We thanked her and spoke to her for some time as she seemed interested as to what we were 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 4<sup>th</sup> Regiment and had been wounded in France and was now 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 it then was.

London on account of Zeppelin raids was blacked out when there were signs of these raids. All windows were blacked out or had curtains to be drawn across at night. It was about the third night we were in London and were up in our two rooms in the attack 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 Zeppelin had been spotted. However, instead of going down the stairs we stayed 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 light was showing up into the shy from our sky light. Probably thought we were signalling to the raider. We produced our discharge papers and other documents and I produced a letter I had to the South African High Commissioner, Mr Schneiner, 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 with a cheerful "goodnight Boys and the best of luck". A lot of the

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