George A Weston Letter- First World War- Transcript

**George A Weston:** Dear Parents, I arrived here last night, and I can tell you I never dropped into such a hole in my nach. There is but one consolation, others have got to go through it, I am not the only one. It is not a patch on Wigston. It is all underground. The wall a 4 foot thick and all the roofs are arched brick. It is like living in cellars, and the fires that burn fill the place with smoke. The food is good but spoilt in the cooking, it is smoked and all the dinner is boiled. I was relieved last night when they told us there was no room in the barracks for us to sleep. We slept in sheds. They are new sheds, in fact they are hardly completed, boarded floors and walls. We have mattress and pillow, and the blankets, and sleep on the floor. I found a pal last night and we put our bed side by side, one blanket over the two and five blankets on top. So we were warm enough. There is no fire about. I have only seen one and that was in a field kitchen. The nearest place is Fareham, 2 miles away. This place is a fort, and you would be struck with the strength of the place. As I said the walls average 4 feet thick and in many places as much as 8 feet thick, anyone in an areplane could not see it, as it is all turfed over, only the chimdyes which stick out of the ground. There is a moat all around it 5 ft deep but it is dry now. On the embattlements there are the guns looking out over Portsmouth, and gun platforms are everywhere. You can walk miles underground in arched galleries, emerging in far off woods and fields, of course this is an old fort and is of no military use except for bivouaking us here. I thought I was coming to the world’s end when I got here. I was disappointed. We went over the drawbridge by the light of lanterns, which gleamed on the fixed bayonets of the sentries, and the heavy bridge clanged to behind us. It has been miserably cold all day, and wet. We aren’t many yards from the sea, and the fleet can plainly be seen when the mist lifts. The fleet were having firing practise today, and the thunder of the guns was terrible and grand, it made our fort fair shake. Nelson’s monument is here, with the gulls whirling and kicking up their fiendish cries, as if rejoicing over our rotten lot. There is an apology for a reading room here, but Glen Pava is a palace to this. It is like living in an opening hole, the cliffs rise up above the grim old fort shutting out all sunshine but not the wind by any means. And the officers are a mardy lot. All sorts of uniforms are seen here but the colors fade under the cote of dirt with which they are covered. I am only glad I am in the sheds they are at least clean. After dinner the thick mists roll up from the sea and blot out the landscape, but crumbs they don’t silence the gulls.

We were eight hours in the train I thought I should never get here. Two areplanes followed us till dark, this place is very interesting you know, but I wish I was out of it for all that. One good thing the Leicesters are all together, I think I should have gone mad if I had had to sleep with some of the men in the rooms underground. I hope we shall soon be shifted. I have not heard about the Army Service Corps, perhaps they are not wanting men at present. We are going to have a free pass at Christmas I suppose and 7 days leave. It only wants six weeks, so won’t be very long. I wish it weren’t so long though for all that. Perhaps my impression will change a little in a while when I have seen the district I have seen nothing yet scarsly. We fall out at half past three. The drawbridge pulled up at nine o’clock. Remember me to all at home. I am in the best of health only a little depressed. That will wear off. Remember me to Francie, Sophie, Grannie Eva, Tom and the kiddies, and all the others.

Your loving son George A Weston