

From the Maheno to Mornington



Fred Haig's Wartime Letters Home

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Letters Home**

Published December 2015



Haig family, circa 1908. Back row: Andrew, Mortimer, William, James, David. Middle row: Jessie, Frederick, James Haig (father), Edith, Jane Haig (nee Kerr, mother), John ('Jock'). Front row: Walter, Frances, Jane ('Jean'), Eveline



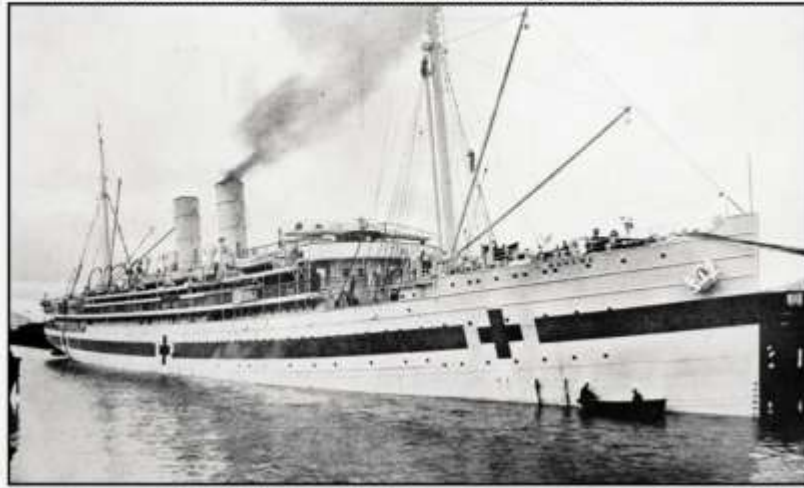
Frederick Haig in 1913 with the Mornington Presbyterian Young Men's Bible Class



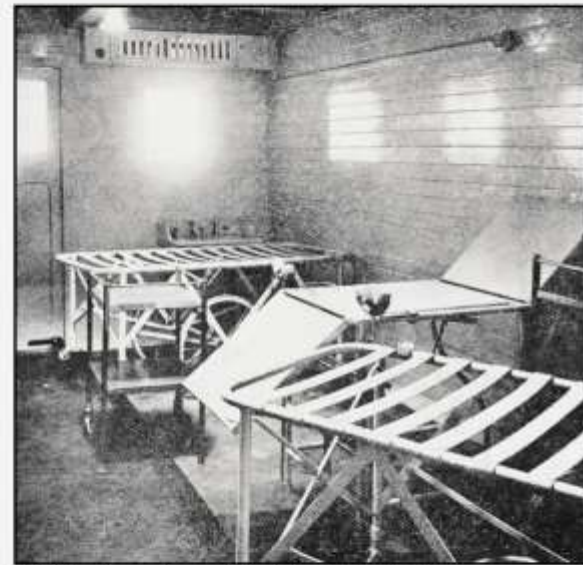
On July 11th, 1915, Frederick Hill Haig, the seventh son of James and Jane ('Jeannie') Haig of 2 Lawrence Street, Mornington, Dunedin, steamed out of Wellington harbour onboard the Hospital Ship Maheno. Over the next six months, in his role as an Army Medical Orderly, Fred would witness first-hand the tragic impact of the ill-fated Gallipoli campaign, helping to tend to thousands of sick and wounded Allied troops evacuated off beaches along the Turkish peninsula.

While serving on the Maheno, Fred wrote letters to family and friends describing his experiences onboard ship and his visits to places such as Alexandria, Malta, London, Glasgow and Londonderry. His correspondence included a total of nine letters home to his mother in Dunedin, all of which fortunately have been handed down and preserved to the present day.

To make it easier for Fred's many descendants to read and appreciate these letters, now and in the future, this book reproduces them in their entirety, along with photos of events and places mentioned in them.



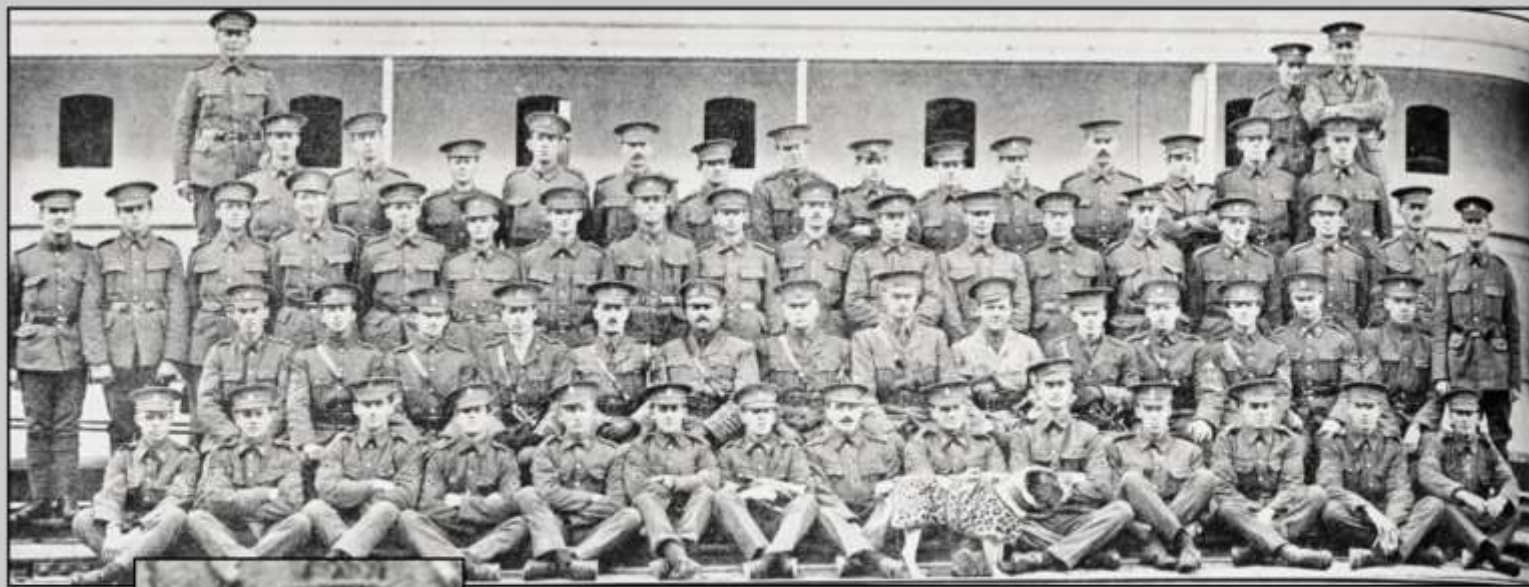
HMNZ Hospital Ship 'No. 1' the Maheno, about to depart from Wellington, July 1915, on its first voyage to Gallipoli via Colombo (in present day Sri Lanka), the Suez Canal and Alexandria (Egypt)



Refitted as a hospital ship at the Port Chalmers dockyard, the Maheno had previously been a trans-Tasman passenger steamer. This photo, taken in 1915 just after the refit, shows the ship's new surgical preparation room



The Maheno newly fitted out with hospital beds



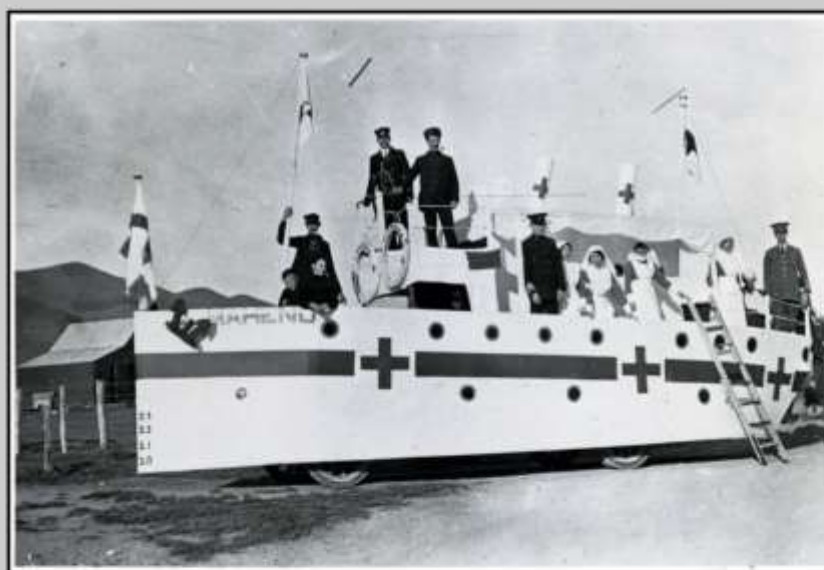
A photograph of the hospital ship Maheno's officers, non-commissioned officers and orderlies, taken prior to the ship's departure in July 1915. It includes the ship's mascot, a bulldog named Jock. Private Haig is front row, third from left



The New Zealand Army Nurses who embarked on the Maheno's first voyage. Fourteen of the group stayed with the ship throughout its Mediterranean tour of duty. The remainder, referred to as 'passenger nurses', were deployed to shore-based military hospitals in Egypt



Captain D McLean, skipper of the Maheno. The ship was crewed by officers and men from the Union Steam Ship Company, which at that time was the southern hemisphere's largest shipping firm, based in Dunedin



The costs of refitting and operating the Maheno were partly met by a nationwide fund-raising campaign initiated by the country's Governor-General, Lord Liverpool. This photo shows a model of the Maheno used in fund-raising parades in the Nelson district

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

12/3018

ATTESTATION OF

Hospital Ship

No. 3/780 Name: HAIG Frederick Hill

Regiment or Unit:

Questions to be put to the recruit before enlistment.

- | | |
|--|---|
| 1. What is your name? ... | 1. <u>Haig Frederick Hill</u> |
| 2. Where were you born? ... | 2. <u>Wanganui N.Z.</u> |
| 3. Are you a British subject? ... | 3. <u>yes</u> |
| 4. What is the date of your birth? ... | 4. <u>23 April 1895</u> |
| 5. What is your trade or calling? ... | 5. <u>Saddler</u> |
| 6. Are you an indentured apprentice? If so, where, and to whom? | 6. <u>yes</u> |
| 7. What was the address at which you last resided? ... | 7. <u>2 Lawrence St Morningside</u> |
| 8. Have you passed the Fourth Educational Standard or its equivalent? | 8. <u>yes</u> |
| 9. What is the name and address of your present or last employer? | 9. <u>J. C. Spiller Rattray & Co. Dunedin</u> |
| 10. Are you married? ... | 10. <u>no</u> |
| 11. Have you ever been sentenced to imprisonment by the Civil power? If so, when and where? | 11. <u>no</u> |
| 12. Do you now belong to any military or naval force? If so, to what corps? | 12. <u>yes. No 3 Field Ambulance</u> |
| 13. Have you ever served in any military or naval force? If so, state which and cause of discharge. | 13. <u>no</u> |
| 14. Have you truly stated the whole (if any) of your previous service? | 14. <u>yes</u> |
| 15. Have you been registered for compulsory military training under the Defence Act, 1909? If so, where? | 15. <u>yes</u> |
| 16. Have you ever been rejected as unfit for the military or naval forces of the Crown? If so, on what grounds? | 16. <u>no</u> |
| 17. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated? ... | 17. <u>yes</u> |
| 18. Are you willing to serve in the Expeditionary Force in or beyond the Dominion of New Zealand under the following conditions, provided your services should so long be required: For the term of the present European war and for such further period as is necessary to bring the Expeditionary Force back to New Zealand and to disband it? | 18. <u>yes</u> |

NOTE.—Your discharge will not be granted before your return to New Zealand unless permission for discharge elsewhere be obtained from the G.O.C. the New Zealand Expeditionary Force.

I, Frederick Hill Haig, do solemnly declare that the above answers made by me to the above questions are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagement made.

Signature of Recruit: F. H. HaigSignature of Witness: En. Catto. Two 12/88

Frederick Hill Haig do solemnly promise and swear that I will be faithful and

bear true allegiance to our Sovereign Lord the King, His Heirs and Successors, and that I will faithfully serve in the New Zealand Military Forces, according to my liability under the Defence Act, and that I will observe and obey all orders of His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, and of the Generals and Officers set over me, until I shall be lawfully discharged. So help me, God.

Certificate of Magistrate or Attesting Officer.

The above questions were read to the above-named recruit in my presence. I have taken care that he understands each question, and that his answer to each question has been duly entered as replied to, and the said recruit has made and signed the declaration and taken the oath before me, at Dunedin, N.Z., on this 26 day of May, 1918.

Signature of Attesting Officer: W. S. Walker Capt

An extract from Fred Haig's official military records. It shows that prior to enlisting he was employed as a saddler by a business in Rattray Street. Other pages from his records describe him as being 5 foot 7 inches in height, 11 stone in weight, with dark-brown hair and brown eyes.

Aug 26th

Dear Mother

I suppose you have heard
that poor old Dave is gone, he died a
terrible, he was ill for four days, I was
old that he died at that time. While we
were in port Bill walked on to the
boat, he is looking well. The fellow
Cargill from Cornwallton came on board
the next day & told me ^{about Dave} Bill didn't
know anything about ^{it} when I told
him the day before. He was saying that
he had a letter from Dave about a month
ago & he was in the best of health, I
died about 3 weeks ago. Gordon Catto
wounded & Jim Wallace is ill, he is getting
better, & Gordon is improving very much.
Of course I haven't seen them yet, but
the boy Cargill was telling me all.
We are going to Le Island of Lemnoo
we expect to get there at 1 o'clock, that
where Jim Wallace is. We had one day
at Alexandria & Bill & I went around
the hospitals, my word we saw
some awful sights, I couldn't describe
them. From what we have heard of

The Letters

Saturday August 14th, 1915

In the Red Sea

Dear Mother,

This is our half holiday today and by joves it is hot. We will be grease spots if we have to live in this climate much longer. We are wearing a pair of Pyjama trousers and a light singlet and still we sweat. If we stand still we sweat.

We have had a lovely trip. It was a bit rough for three days after leaving Colombo. The sea was coming on the top deck. It was lovely to see the waves right up in the air, you think they are coming right over the ship.

We are now in the Red Sea and the sea is like a mill-pond with hardly a breath of wind. The Nurses are getting off on Tuesday at Port Said. They are glad to get off.

We have been fairly busy lately putting our Wards in proper order. We can only work for about half an hour at a time and by that time we have to go and change, we get wet through in no time. I never thought I could sweat so much.

We had a Concert and Supper on Thurs night. It was given by the Auckland and Dunedin Purser. It was one of the Concerts we have had. Our fellows are giving one in return tonight. It is to be a farewell to the Passenger Nurses. Also, we are going to have a mock court.

We were supposed to be four days in Colombo but there was to be a big procession there and it always ends up in a big riot, so we had to go away in a hurry. We were disappointed because we thought that we might be able to go to Kandy. The Nurses tell us that is a lovely city, they call it the Fairy City.

When we get hosed down in the morning we can hardly tell whether it is hot water or not. We can't get a drop of cold water unless we get some ice.

Photo credit: Auckland Libraries, Sir George Grey Special Collections



After short stop-overs in Adelaide and Colombo, the Maheno took on coal at Port Said in the Suez canal (above). The ship was poorly ventilated for the hot climate and working down in the engine room was extremely challenging, especially for those tending the ship's boilers.

In the Red Sea (cont.)

There is not much news to tell you Mother just now, because we don't see anything new. We are passing a lot of boats this last day or two. We are leaving them all behind us. We seem to be the fastest we have seen so far. We can't sleep at night and we often see them passing at night. We lie on a rug on the deck, with a pair of Pyjamas on and then we can't sleep. We often get up in the night and walk the deck.

I don't know whether I told you before that we get our washing done at the Laundry free of charge. It is washing day today. We have been issued with 3 Ward coats, they are $\frac{3}{4}$ coats, white duck [canvas], they are giving us a lot of suits.

They are wanting fellows to go down and help the Firemen. They are all knocked out and they haven't any spare men to do the work. I said that I was willing to do a little bit, but we are not going down until the men are ordered to bed by a Doctor. For if they know we are willing to help, they will all sponge on us. I know it will kill us down there, but it is an experience for us.

Look here Mother, after we left Adelaide I remembered it was Vera's [wife of Fred's older brother Jock Haig] birthday on the 18th July. I properly forgot it. We were that busy working from morning till night that it clean slipped through my mind. In my short stay in Colombo I had to get a small present and get it posted by the Pilot.

Photo credit: NZ National Army Museum



Troopships in the Suez Canal, March 1915. Photo taken by Gordon Catto, a friend of Fred Haig's from Mornington.

In the Red Sea (cont.)

A big swarm of Porpoises were at the side of the Sea. We are going to have a Rehearsal this afternoon for the Concert tonight. I wrote to Jessie last mail and have written to Aunt Frances this mail. How is everything going on at home? Are the children all well and Mrs Cane still sticking to it? I will put a few words in before I get to a Port, so will close just now. We expect to get to the Suez about 2 p.m. today. We are going to stay there for 3 or 4 hours to put searchlights on our boat. I don't think we will get ashore there. We have land on both sides of us, it is very close.

We have had from 9 o'clock to the rest of the day off so that we can view the sights and also write letters. It is too warm to work.

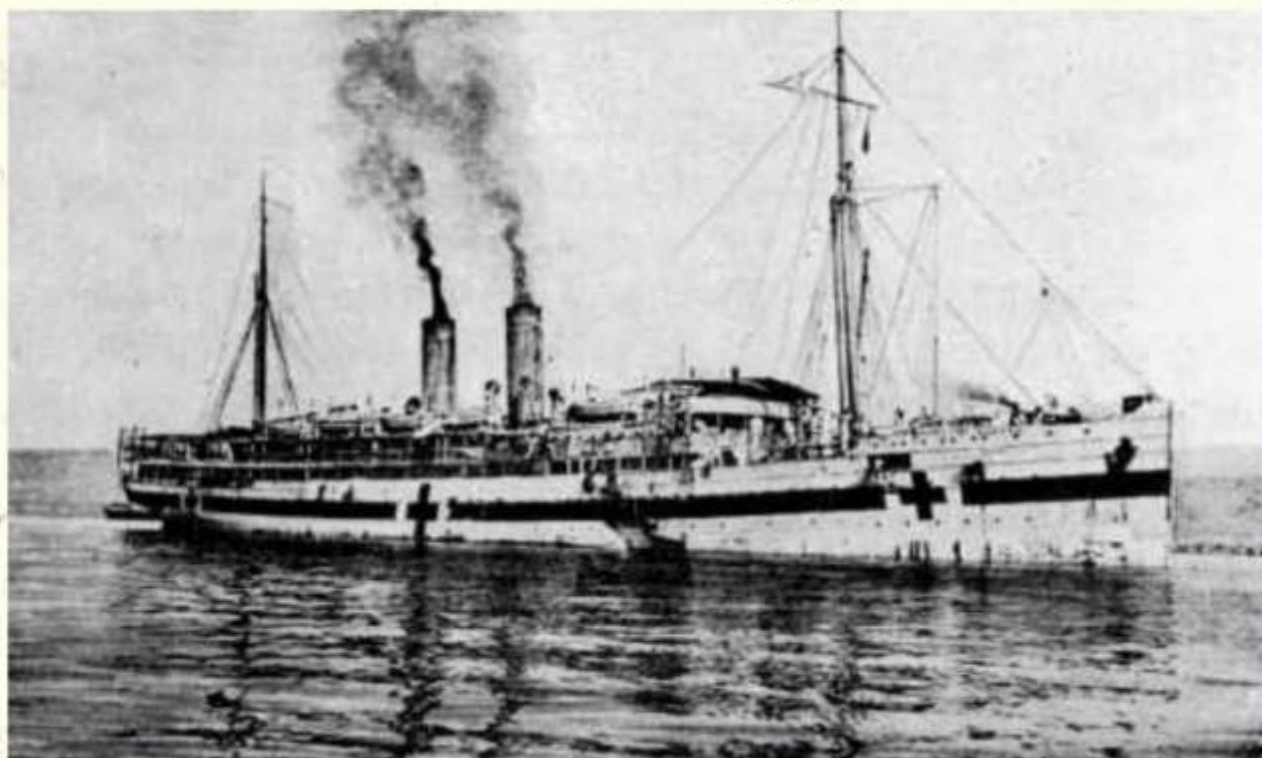
Remember me to all the Married people of our tribe and tell them I might write someday, but it takes me all my time to write, for you know I am not very good at writing letters.

The Nurses have been packing up. They expect to get off today, but I think they will get off tomorrow when we get to Port Said. I have not much more to tell you so I will close for the present.

Tuesday [August] 17th. We are now sailing up the Suez Canal, ever since half past eight this morning. It is very interesting, there is nothing but Fortifications on each side of us. They have the place well dug up for trenches. We have stopped and pulled to one side, early this morning, to let a ship pass us. We are now in one of the big lakes and we are going at 16 knots an hour. They are the lakes that were there before the canal was cut out. I haven't anymore news to tell just now. I want to get this posted because the mail closes as soon as we get to Port, so will stop here, hoping this reaches you and all the families in the best of health from your Son

Fred

P.S. We expect to see some New Zealand troopers at some of the ports, further up the Canal.



The Maheno on active service. Army medical personnel on its 1915 voyage included 68 male officers, NCOs and orderlies and 14 female nurses.

Photo credit: Auckland Libraries, Sir George Grey Special Collections

LETTER 2

Thursday August 26th, 1915

Between Alexandria and Lemnos

Dear Mother

I suppose you have heard that poor old Dave [Fred's brother] is gone. He died of enteric. He was ill for four days. I was told that he died on the boat that was coming to Alexandria.

While we were lying in port Bill [Fred's brother] walks on to the boat, he is looking well. The fellow Cargill from Mornington came on board the next day and told me about Dave. Bill didn't know anything about it when I met him the day before. He was saying that he had a letter from Dave about a month ago and he was in the best of health. Dave died about 3 weeks ago. Gordon Catto is wounded and Jim Wallace is ill. He is getting better, and Gordon is improving very much. Of course I haven't seen them yet, but the boy Cargill was telling me all this.

We are going to Island of Lemnos now. We expect to get there at 1 o'clock. That is where Jim Wallace is. We had one day off at Alexandria and Bill and I went round the hospitals. My word we saw some awful sights, I couldn't describe them. From what we have heard, we are going to the Old Country and then New Zealand very shortly. Every place they can get is made into a Hospital, the flash part of Alexandria is nothing but Hospitals.

Bill [Haig] and Bill Finlayson have had tea on the boat twice. They got a terrible surprise when they saw us eating butter. They said it is the best feed they have had since they left New Zealand.

You would take Bill for a Māori, he is that sun burnt. They are camped down by the Beach.



David Kerr Haig, brother of Fred, who served with the NZ Engineers at Gallipoli. He died onboard the British Royal Navy hospital ship Somali on July 27th, 1915, and was buried at sea

We had a good six course dinner for 8 piasters, that is 1/8 [1 shilling and 8 pence], in a French Café.

The slum part of Alexandria is awful, there are no sanitary Arrangements about the place, but the flash part is lovely and very pretty.

We saw 3 life boats and about a dozen life belts floating in the water yesterday afternoon. We lowered one of our boats and the sailors rowed out. They were trying to find out the name of her, but they could only get her number. They seem to think it is that boat that was carrying the RAMG men. The boat was Torpedoed or mined. There were only 400 out of 2 thousand men saved.

We saw two Hospital Ships on the way up and we saw about three more at Alexandria. One Hospital Ship went up to the Dardanelles to bring back 400 patients, but she came back with over a Thousand. It just shows the time we are in for. I can't settle down to writing so will close here hoping this finds you and all the rest in the very best of Health from your Son

Fred

Monday August 30th, 1915

At Gallipoli

We are now in the thick of the fighting, nothing but cannon roaring on land and guns firing on sea at the land. It is sometimes nothing but one big roar all the time. It must be something awful to be on land. We are getting our wounded from a place called Anzac, means Australia New Zealand Army Corps. It has just been called that name since the war started.

It is awful the sight and the conditions [of] the fellows [who] come on board. They are covered in blood and mud and haven't had a wash for weeks and haven't had boots and socks off for about six weeks. The smell is something awful.

We had over 500 men for our first load. We took them to Lemnos and then shifted them to another boat. I don't know where they are taking them to. We are going to [get] another load tonight. We are expecting to see them coming over any minute now. It is a case of get a sleep whenever we can, but we don't mind putting up with a bit for the poor fellows.

The New Zealanders [are] the best fighters about here. That is why there are so many casualties. The Tommies don't like the guns and charges. Of course that is not the Regular Tommies, they are grand fighters, but the other fellows are funks at the game. One New Zealand Officer turned the Machine Gun on them. They wouldn't go on, they wanted to go back.



Wounded and sick NZ and Australian soldiers being transported by hospital ship from Gallipoli to Egypt

They have been given trenches to hold and they have lost them. The poor old New Zealanders and Australians haven't a good word for one of them. We have had a terrible lot of Deaths, they are buried at sea. The three parsons are doing great work, especially old Rev Dutron from Dunedin. There is also a terrible lot of operating being done. The Battle on Friday night resulted in the capture of three lines of trenches, but of course big casualties. I will have to close just now and get some work done so will say goodbye just now.

With best love from

Fred



Soldiers being transferred off Gallipoli beaches onto the Maheno. At the end of August 1915, the Allies launched a major offensive against the Turks, suffering many casualties. Disease was also rife on the battlefield as a result of unsanitary conditions and shortages of water, proper food, medical care and shelter

LETTER 4

Sunday September 5th, 1915

Between Mudros and Gallipoli

Dear Mother,

We have been going day and night for this last two days. We have just got rid of our second load of wounded. It was an awful load we had, they were very nearly all dysentery cases. Some of the poor fellows have had no attention for 7 and 8 days. They are that weak that they can hardly walk.

We are travelling between Mudros and Anzac. Anzac is just near Gaba Tepe, the place where the New Zealanders landed. It only takes us about 4 hours to do the trip. We expect after doing this next trip to go to England. We have just finished disinfecting the ship from end to end, it is in an awful mess. We haven't had many New Zealanders on board yet, they are all Australians and Tommies.

How are all the little girls, wee Jean and Edith and Frances. Give them a kiss for me.

Remember me to all round about, and don't forget Mrs Cane.* I can't say any more just now because there is no fresh news to tell. I believe they are going to censor our letters, but we don't know for certain yet. I will close now hoping this will find you all in the best of health and spirit, from your son

Fred



The Maheno taking on wounded and sick at Anzac Cove, 1915. A lack of proper docking facilities at Gallipoli made this task especially arduous. Some of the patients would be given medical attention and returned to the beaches. Most, though, would be transferred to shore-based hospitals at either Mudros (on the Greek island of Lemnos), Malta or Alexandria

Photo credits: Liverpool, Lord (compiler), The New Zealand Hospital Ship 'Maheno': the first voyage, July 1915 to January 1916, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1918-9

* Mrs Amelia Cane, a widow in her nineties who lived with the Haig family at Lawrence Street

LETTER 5

Saturday September 11th, 1915

Malta

Dear Mother,

We have just arrived in Malta. We think we are on our way to the old Country.

We have had a very busy time of it. I got a letter from Gordon Catto while we were at Mudros. He is in the St Patrick's Hospital and is doing fine. If we get ashore, I will go out and see him, but I don't think we will get ashore.

I suppose a good part of this letter will be censored, but we have no Censor on our boat.

I have no more news to tell, only that I am fit and well, so will say goodbye for the present with best love from your son

Fred



Valetta, the main port in Malta where the Maheno disembarked sick and wounded for further treatment. The ship made four trips to Malta in 1915

Photo credit: Liverpool, Lord (compiler), The New Zealand Hospital Ship 'Maheno': the first voyage, July 1915 to January 1916, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1918-9



Patients in hospital beds on board the Maheno

Photo credit: Elliott, J.S. The New Zealand Hospital Ships. In: The War Effort of New Zealand, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1923

Saturday September 25th, 1915

Malta

Dear Mother,

It is a grand thing to get a letter from dear old home again and to hear that you and all the rest are still keeping well. The mail coming on board caused great excitement and commotion. I got 2 letters from you. I also got a letter from Gordon Catto. It was posted in Alexandria on Aug 2nd. We have had a little bit of excitement with our Firemen. They refused to work because one of these men were left ashore. We lay out in the stream all night and the Engineers had to make up enough steam to sail back into the Harbour.

Charles Tedy the Singer on board has a sister in Malta, so he took me out to see them. We had a grand time. The next day we went to Citta Recchia [Valletta], that is the old Capital of Malta. They have the loveliest Cathedral I have ever seen. I never thought they could build a place like it. It is called the St Pauls and St Johns Cathedral.

[27/9/15] Henry Kearns from Mornington was one of the Firemen that did not go out on strike. He said they were in the wrong, so he went down and did his watch just the same. He got a bit of a rough time. They were all up before court next day and were sentenced to 3 months. They should have got 3 years.

We have 8 of our fellows in the Hospital, 2 more went in to-day, they keeping going in and out all the time. It makes it much harder for us when we have a load on. One fellow has just had Dysentery for the last fortnight. He got nothing but pure boiled water.

I have been shifted up on Deck. We carried 176 patients and only a nurse and myself to look after [them]. We used to have others to help at meal times. I can tell you it was pretty solid.

[28/9/15] We have arrived at Lemnos today. We don't know what they are going to do with us at all. We are going ashore to have a swim. We had two bathing parades in Malta.

We have got 23 Maltese firemen and the rest, which number 7, are the ones that did not go out on strike. The Maltese were all seasick yesterday. It was fairly rough but we are used to it now.

Kind regard to all relations and friends, and also Mrs Cane, hoping this letter will find them in the best of health from your Son,

Fred



Personnel from the Maheno on the beach in Malta. Stop-overs here and in other places included some sight-seeing and recreation

Photo credit: Liverpool, Lord (compiler), The New Zealand Hospital Ship 'Maheno'; the first voyage, July 1915 to January 1916, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1918-9

Monday October 4th, 1915

Near Alexandria

Dear Mother,

I received another letter from you yesterday and glad to hear that everything is going on alright at home and that you are keeping well.

The letter was the first one you wrote since I left Wellington. It went home to the Old Country first.

I also got a letter and a Testament from the Bible Class. It is very good of them to send one isn't it.

I believe you are thinking of taking the house at the back of the Tramsheds. For goodness sake don't take that, it is too near the whistle and when we get back I will never get to sleep for the noise of the Engines. Try and get a house over Belleknowes or round Maryhill. I can see you want me to choose a house for you. Get one with a place that we can have a garden not a place where you can't swing a cat.

You were asking if I meant to leave as much money as I have done. If I had kept it myself I would always be spending it. I could spend a fortune if I had it, especially buying stuff that some of the fellows buy. You will need all the money that you are getting to keep the home going. We haven't been paid since August the 12th and I hope they don't pay us until we get home. If ever we want a few shillings we can always get it off the Paymaster.



Ambulances at Alexandria, 1915

I expect I will see Bill [Haig] again in Alexandria. I will go and look him up first chance I get. We have got over 500 patients this time. We have about 190 up on deck. We are getting used to it now. I haven't any more news to tell just now so will close hoping this reaches you and the family in very best of health from your son,

Fred

P.S.

I got a letter from Ernie Jeffs the other day. He is in the very best of health and wished to be remembered to you all. I also met a Sergt. of the Battery and he told me that Bill Brown was on the same Gun as him, so I sent him a little hurried note across. But I won't get the reply till we get back again. I also sent one to Ernie. Bill Brown is keeping very well.



Maheno disembarking patients at Alexandria, 1915

Photo credits: Liverpool, Lord (compiler), The New Zealand Hospital Ship 'Maheno': the first voyage, July 1915 to January 1916, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1918-9

LETTER 8 (notes in a notebook)

Tuesday October 19th, 1915

Trip to the Old Country in Company with Colin 'Vic' Reaburn

Starting from Southampton on Tuesday night for London, we stayed at the Union Jack Club.

20/10/15. We started off at 10.30 for Leeds up the Midland Railway. We arrived in Leeds at 3pm. Vic had a letter of introduction to a Mr Fred Elliot of the Royal George Hotel. We were made very welcome there. We went to a Concert, with Fred Elliot and his young lady, and Mr and Mrs Elliott. It was a Sunday school affair. We spent a very pleasant evening, we stayed there all night.

21st [October] we went through the Mmunition Works and saw the way they make the Bullets. It took us close on two hours to go round. Fred Elliot works there, he couldn't do enough for us. We went all round Leeds in the afternoon. At night we went to the Theatre which was very good. We then went to catch the 10 o'clock train to Heysham. There we caught the ferry steamer 22nd [October] to Belfast. We arrived there at 7 o'clock in the morning. We then caught the 8 o'clock train to Londonderry. We arrived there at 11 o'clock.

I didn't know the proper address, so I asked for Kerr, Castle Hill. We landed on the Waterside. Nobody knew of the place of Castle Hill. But, if I had just mentioned Burt [a town in Donegal] I would have found it easily. I was taken to about three families of Kerrs, but none of them were it. So I remembered that Kerr was the name of the people that took all the Photos. So I asked for them.

We had dinner there and Miss Kerr hired a Motor Car and we went out about ½ past two.



The Union Jack Club, Waterloo Road, London, in 1915, with Australian soldiers standing outside. Opened in 1907, the club offered accommodation for servicemen and their families

Poor old Aunt Mary Jane and Aunt Belle could hardly speak, she got a terrible surprise. We then had tea and, after looking at all the Photos, Miss Kerr took us for a walk to see the old [Burt] Castle. It is a great little place. While we were away, Aunt Mary was getting ready to take us down to see Aunt Edith. We still had the Motor Car. You ought to have seen the look on Aunty's face. She could hardly speak. My word Uncle is a big man, he must be about 6ft 3". He is a fine fellow. The boys and girls are big children like their Father, but Alice she is a fine little kiddie. It was about ½ past 7 when we left, so we got driven up the Lane and Miss Kerr left us and went into town on her own. She is a splendid little woman.



The Leeds (Barnbow) munitions factory

Photo credits: Heritage Explorer Images for Learning, Swindon, UK

Trip to the Old Country (cont.)

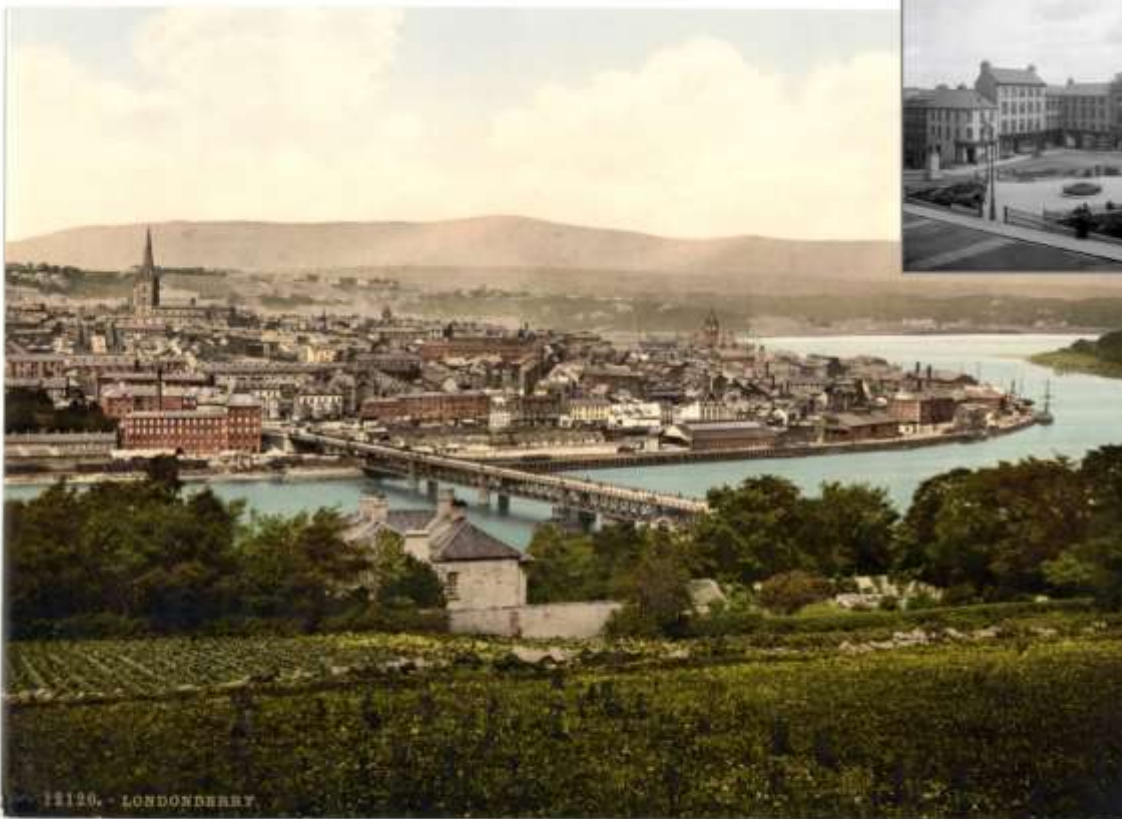
When we got in home, Auntie was annoyed because she didn't have any slippers for us to put on. We had a little supper and then I read a Chapter out of the Bible and then we went to bed. We slept in the room that Uncle David slept in. She did make it very cosy for us.

Before we went bed Aunt Mary told us to leave our boots out and she would clean them. I said you leave our boots alone. When we got up in the morning our boots were out at the door all cleaned.

Saturday 23rd October [1915]. After breakfast, Aunt Mary Jane and the two of us caught the train to Aunt Minnie's place. We had to walk for 20 minutes to catch the train and after we got out at the station it is a $\frac{3}{4}$ of an hour's walk. Aunt Minnie has been in bed for the last 5 weeks, but she was up when we got there. She is very much like Uncle Willie. Mr Morren is a fine man.

There are three children. Minnie is the name of the oldest girl. My word she is a fine help and such a big well built girl for the age of seventeen. The boy Andy goes to College in Derry, and Edith is just the same as our Edith. They have a fine place at Chrislaghmore.

After having dinner there, we left Aunt there and started off again. We arrived in Derry at $\frac{1}{2}$ past three. Aunt Edith and Uncle were in town, so Miss Kerr and her sister Mrs Elkin and Mr Elkin, Aunt Edith and us went for a walk round the town until it was near Aunt's train time. After leaving them, Mr Elkin took us all round the walls of Derry. Just before we started, we met Uncle and Mr John Platt. He [Mr Platt] said he was a great friend of Jeannie Kerr's. He was very highly pleased, I couldn't get away from him, I wanted to see the place before it got dark.



Londonderry, Ireland, circa. 1900; the area where Jane ('Jeannie') Haig (nee Kerr), Fred Haig's mother lived. In 1880, Jane Kerr, along with her parents, brothers and sisters, emigrated to New Zealand on the sailing ship 'Edwin Fox' (now preserved as a tourist attraction in Picton in the Marlborough Sounds). Other Kerr family members continued to live in Londonderry / Derry and nearby areas in Donegal



Grianan of Aileach view

Photo credit: jones55 at the English language Wikipedia
<https://commons.wikimedia.org>



Grange Graveyard—gravestone inscription "In Loving Memory of The Kerr Family, Castlehill"

Photo credit: Donegal Genealogy Resources



People Fred met in Ireland

Miss Kerr – Margaret Kerr (postmistress), daughter of Hugh Kerr (photographer), living in Carlisle Road, Londonderry / Derry

(Great) Aunt Belle – Isabella Kerr – widow of David Kerr (farmer) living in Castlehill

(Great) Aunt Mary Jane – Mary Jane Kerr, David Kerr's sister, living with Isabella in Castlehill

Aunt Edith – Fred's maternal aunt, married to Joseph McNutt (farmer), living in Ballymoney

Aunt Minnie – (Mary), Fred's maternal aunt, married to Thomas Morren (farmer), living in Chrislaghmore

The Elkins – Joseph Elkin (insurance inspector) and his wife Amelia Elizabeth (nee Kerr), living in Buncrana.



Castlehill with Burt Castle in the distance
 Photo credit: Greg Clarke via Flickr Creative Commons



Burt Castle

Photo credit: Iain Strain via Flickr Creative Commons

Trip to the Old Country (cont.)

After tea we went down to see Mrs Elkin and Mr Elkin off on their train to Buncrana. Then Miss Kerr took us for a walk round the town.

We had to leave by the 12 o'clock boat to Glasgow. The boat didn't leave till about 3 o'clock. We didn't wait till it left, we went straight to bed.

[Sunday 24th October, 1915] I was told that the boat only went $\frac{1}{2}$ a mile out and had to stop there, owing to the fog. It was going alright when we woke up. It was $\frac{1}{2}$ past nine when I woke, we were supposed to get into Glasgow at 4 o'clock this afternoon but I think it will be about 9 o'clock.

As far as we have gone we have had a splendid trip. Every where we have been we have been well looked after.



Buchanan Street, Glasgow, 1915

[Sunday night] The boat being ten hours late we didn't stay in Glasgow for longer than a couple of hours. We then travelled by the Midnight train to London. We arrived there at $\frac{1}{2}$ past eight next morning (25/10/10)

After having a good clean up, we went sight-seeing. We went into Westminster Abbey. We also saw the House of Lords and Parliament House. Went to see Buckingham Palace, Trafalgar Square. At night we went to the Gaiety Theatre. It was very good. After that we went for supper and then went home.



Buckingham Palace, 1910

Photo credit: Wikipedia Commons



The Gaiety Theatre, circa 1910

Photo credit: Wikipedia Commons



Houses of Parliament, 1915

Photo credit: Wikipedia Commons



Westminster Abbey, c.1910

Photo credit: Leonard Bentley

Fred Haig (left) and Colin 'Vic' Reaburn, photographed during their visit to London in October, 1915. Colin, also an Army Medical Orderly on the Maheno, accompanied Fred on his trip to Belfast, Londonderry and Glasgow.

Later in the war, Colin served on the hospital ship Marama, before returning to his home town of Palmerston North.



LETTER 9

Tuesday, November 16th, 1915
Between Alexandria and Malta

Dear Mother

I received your welcome letters and am glad to hear everything is best that can be expected at home.

We had a little experience over our mail this time. It was on board a troopship going to the Peninsula. There were 14 bags for our boat. They called for fellows to go over on the other boat and go down the hold and get the mail. We had to shift about 2000 bags before we got ours.

I got a letter from Bill [Haig], it was dated 26th Oct. He is in the best of health. I went out to the Camp to find him, but found out that they had all gone to Cairo. All the N.Z. and Austr. are sent there. They can't agree with the "Tommies" so they decided to separate them. They say there used to be awful street fights in Alexandria.

There is not much news Mother dear, as we have seen nothing new since we left England. I can tell you it is a hard job to get sufficient news to fill a page.

I got my photos from London while we were at Alexandria. I don't think much of them but it will do. The fellow I got taken with me is Vic Raeburn, the fellow that was my mate while in England and Ireland. It is a very poor photo of him too.



Patients convalescing on the deck of the Maheno, 1915

Photo credit: Liverpool, Lord (compiler), The New Zealand Hospital Ship 'Maheno': the first voyage, July 1915 to January 1916, Whitcombe & Tombs, Auckland, 1918-9

We have just heard that the Ship is to go to Mudros again. The Governor of N.Z. said that the Imperial Gov. can do as they wish with us, as she is badly needed over here. But orders can be changed any moment, so as far as that is concerned N.Z. is off. This is all news I can think of at present so will say goodbye for the present from your Son

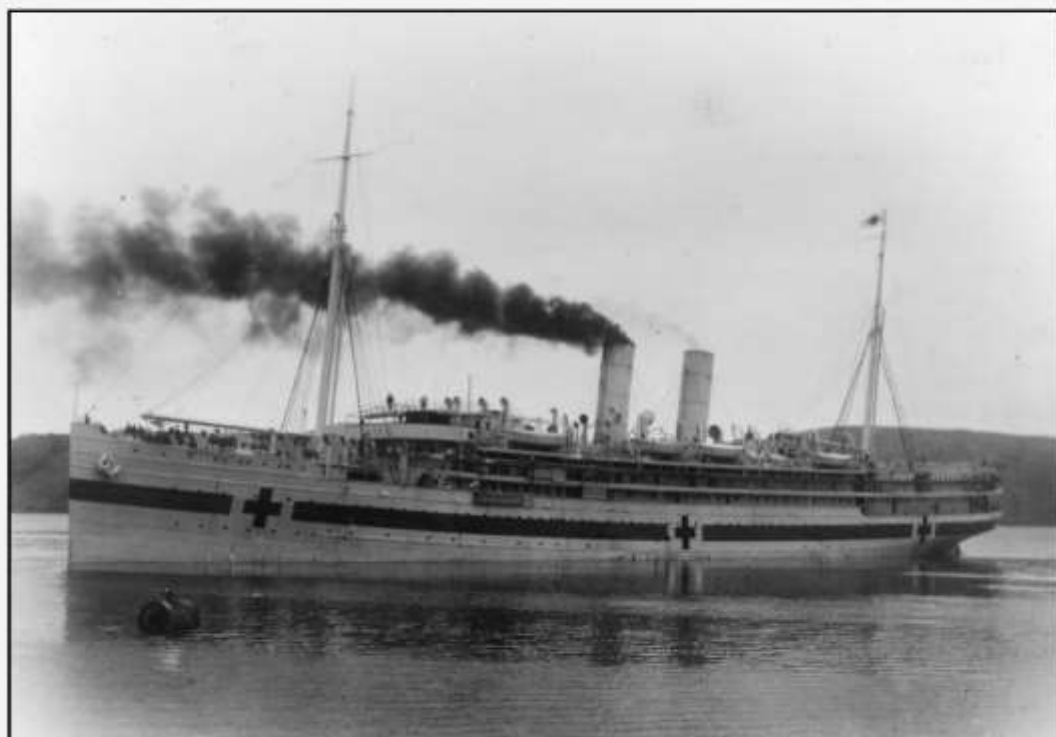
Fred

P.S. I will enclose one of the would be photos. Remember me to all that come round home, also Mistress Cane.

On November 26th, 1915, the Maheno steamed into the Suez Canal, having been ordered to return to New Zealand. Two weeks later, it was in Colombo. On New Year's Day, 1916, it entered Auckland's Waitemata Harbour. Within a few days, Fred Haig was walking down the Maheno's gangplank onto the Port Chalmers dockside. After a short train trip and cablecar ride he was home with his mother and sisters in Mornington.

Having contracted dysentery and pneumonia in the last months of his tour of duty on the Maheno, Fred was eventually invalided out of the army, classified as no longer fit for active service.

In time he recovered and resumed his trade as a saddler. He also renewed his involvement in many sporting interests, including prominent roles as a player in both the Mornington Cricket and Mornington Association Football club teams (photos at right).



The Maheno in harbour

Photo credit: Auckland Libraries, Sir George Grey Special Collections

In October 1927, Fred married Catherine ('Kitty') MacCallum, daughter of John and Agnes MacCallum of Mornington.

Fred and Catherine had two children; Agnes Hall Haig, born on February 2nd, 1932, and David James MacCallum Haig, born 22 July 1935.

Agnes went on to have three children and David four. Many of these children, and their children in turn - Fred and Catherine's great-grandchildren - still live in Dunedin today.



Fred and Catherine on their wedding day



Fred Haig holding son David, with daughter Agnes looking on, circa 1935



The Maheno made several more trips to Europe as a hospital ship, before returning to its peacetime duties on the Tasman passenger run. In 1935 it was sold for scrap, but ran aground on Fraser Island off the Queensland coast while being towed to Japan for breaking up.

The wreck is today a notable Australian tourist attraction.



The Maheno wreck on the beach at Fraser Island, Queensland, Australia

Photo credit: Peter R Carvell



Several books have been written about the Maheno and other wartime hospital ships. One of the most recent and best is by the New Zealand historian Gavin McLean

