

HURDCOTT CAMP

Salisbury Plains

There is a certain place called Hurdcott,
In the wilds of Salisbury Plains;
If I could only but escape
I would neer go back again.

The place is noted far and wide,
As a depot for Recruits,
French Digging and Rout Marches,
Which wears out all your Boots.

The Scenery is beautiful,
You should just see "Mystery Hill,"
Where we go through a performance
Which the poets call "Swedish Drill."

We rise at morn at half past five,
Just when Reveille blows,
And practice rapid marching,
In charge of N.C.O.'s.

Sometimes they send us shooting,
To try and earn our Bounties;
But all the shots I fired myself
Were found in different counties.

Hurdcott's alright in its place,
With all its Hills and Dells,
But I would rather be in France
Or in the Dardanelles.

To find a place like Hurdcott,
Many miles you would have to roam.
How I wish the War was over,
And I was safe at home.

(A postcard sent in December, 1915 by Sgt. Arthur Blades, East Yorkshire Regiment to his parents in Hull, Yorkshire.)

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HURDCOTT CAMP

There's an isolated, desolated spot I'd
like to mention,
Where all you hear is "Stand at Ease,"
"Slope Arms," "Quick March," "Attention."
It's miles away from anywhere, by Gad,
It is a rum'un,
A chap lived there for fifty years
And never saw a woman.

There are lots of little huts, all dotted
Here and there.
For those who have to live inside, I've
Offered many a prayer.
Inside the huts there's RATS as big as
Any nanny goat,
Last night a soldier saw one trying
On his overcoat.

It's sludge up to the eyebrows, you get
It in your ears,
But into it you've got to go, without
A sign of fear,
And when you've had a bath of sludge
You just set to and groom,
And get cleaned up for next parade, or
Else, it's "Orderly Room."

Week in, week out, from morn till
Night, with full pack and a rifle,
Like Jack and Jill you climb the hills,
Of course that's just a trifle,
"Slope Arms." "Fix Bayonets," then
"Present," they fairly put you through it,
And as you stagger to your hut, the
Sergeant shouts "Jump to it."

With tunics, boots and putties off, you
Quickly get the habit,
You gallop up and down the hills just
Like a blooming rabbit.
"Heads backward bend," "Arms upward
stretch," "Heels raise," then "Ranks changes places,"
And later on they make you put your
Kneecaps where your face is.

Now when this War is over and we've
Captured Kaiser Billy,

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To shoot him would be merciful and
 Absolutely silly.
Just send him along to Hurdcott, there
 Among the rats and clay,
And I'll bet he won't be long before he
 Droops and fades away.

BUT WE'RE NOT DOWNHEARTED YET.

(Independent (Footscray, Victoria, Australia) Saturday 6 October, 1917)