

Private McGhie's Journey

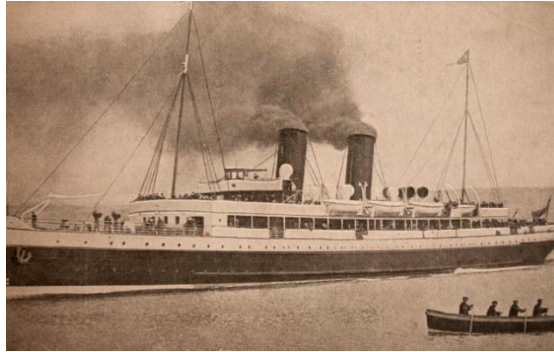
Private James McGhee or McGhie of the 12th Royal Fusiliers kept a record of his travels from his base in Birmingham to his war in Egypt.



His first postcard to his wife shows Birmingham. A city she had never visited, and after Helensburgh must have seemed like a world away.



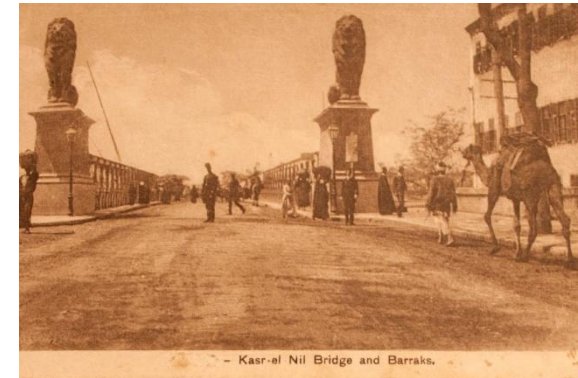
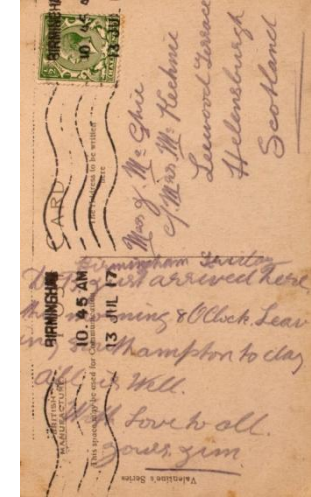
He then tells her that he is on his way to Southampton and his next postcard shows the ship that will take him over the Channel to France.



S.S. Viper had probably made him feel at home as she was built at Fairfield's Shipbuilding at Govan. She was 315ft in length and the 3 steam turbines powering triple screws enabled her to have a top speed of 22 knots. She served as a troop ship throughout the war.

'We are leaving today', he wrote. Posted before boarding the ship, keeping his wife, Bess, up to date with all that was happening. For a man who had served in the Boer War, travel was nothing new.

And, so he travelled through France and Italy. Cherbourg, Lemans, St. Germain, Lyon, Faenza, Brindisi and Fereno, finally arriving in Egypt.



Again, he sent home postcards letting his wife know where he was and sharing the images of new places.



The letter from his chaplain explains his death in Palestine.

31st March, 1915
 Dear Mrs. McGhie,
 After long delay, I am at last able to send you photographs of the trench in which your gallant husband was buried with several of his comrades in the Cactus Garden, 7 miles north of Beersheba (Map, I R G E I G (C 5), 1st Edition Provisional, 1:20,000, Lt. 20.C.). The large one was taken in a dust-storm and is not very good. Perhaps a ~~post~~ home from might be able to touch it up, rephotograph, and exchange. The O/C, Graves Registration Unit (E), Alexandria, Egypt, will have the grave fenced in and crosses erected in due course, why why he might be able to supply you with a photograph of the grave as completed. —
 With deep sympathy,
 I am, very sincerely yours,
 J. A. Somerville
 (Chaplain to the Battalion)

A note of his death and grave.

No. 1 Army Form B. 161-121.
 Infantry Record Office,
Beersheba
 1915

Sir/MADAM,
 In continuation of the notification sent to you regarding the death of the late (No. 4800) (Rank) Private
 Name J. McGhie
 Regiment 12th Bn. Regt. South Australia
 I beg to inform you that an official report has now been received that the late soldier is buried at Beersheba
the Military Grave at Beersheba

Yours faithfully,
 J. A. Somerville
 Officer in charge of Records.

1st 8/16/
 Dear Bess,
 just a few cards for you.
 I sent you my address in the letter, I was not quite sure of it, at the time, I learnt later that the following will find me quicker, 12th R.S.G.
 E.E. Egypt. Perhaps you will get this as soon as the letter
 POST-CARD
 With good love to all. Trusting this will find you all in good health as leaves me at present.
 From your ever
 J. McGhie

And the Widow's Penny.



Bess, his wife, received his belongings by post.

O.H.M.S. A.F.W. 3043.
 DECEASED MAN'S KIT. 4800.
 Regt^l No. and Rank 2406 Pte
 Name McGhie J
 Unit 12 R.S.G.

Unfortunately, Private McGhie was not to make the return journey from his travels.

Documents supplied by Irene McIntyre.