



World War One 'Letters Home' project

These fictional letters are based on brief descriptions in *The Great War: Devizes District Soldiers*, by Richard Broadhead. This book records all known soldiers from Devizes who died during the war.

They were kindly written by volunteers of all ages. Most were individuals who responded to a call for help, but two schools also took part. Wiltshire Museum thanks all the volunteers for their help.

Almost all the soldiers are commemorated on the War Memorial just down the street from the museum, next to St. John's Church.

The letters were posted around Devizes as part of the WW1 Centenary Commemoration weekend, 2018.



This totally fictional letter was written by Hugo, aged 7. It was not inspired by a real soldier and is totally from his imagination.

The Western Front

Dear Mum,

I'm writing this letter to tell you that I am Okay. A couple of tanks have broken through the German border. Hope the weather is better where you are because it's not going to improve here.

We've had a few attacks, but not many this week. I really wish the war would end so I can could get out of this horrid trench. There are rats and lice everywhere.

I've got malaria. I suppose I am going to die soon.

We've just been sent a trench cake from a spy at the home front.

I hope you're okay. I love you a lot

Arthur

xxxxxxx

Trooper Harold Banbury

Harold was in the 19th Hussars. He was married to Kathleen and they lived in Bridewell Street. He died on 28 March 1917 at Rouen, France, aged 24.

Dear Kathy,

Hope this finds you and the two little ones well. I think of you all the time. Remembering your smile and the children's laughter brightens up my day.

Mind you, I'm always glad I got into the Hussars, being with the horses. We look after them and, to a certain extent, they look after us. Sometimes, it almost feels as if I am back making harnesses at the saddlers in Devizes and not in France - almost!

Never mind, mustn't grumble when I am doing so much better than many of the poor lads I joined with.

Give my love to all our family, friends and our neighbours in Bridewell Street. I look forward to being with you again soon. May God bless you all.

Harold

Lance Corporal Frederick Bolland

Frederick was in the 7th Battalion Royal Dublin Fusiliers. His parents, Charles and Hannah Bolland, lived in Vales Lane, Maryport Street. He died on 14 October 2017 at Rouen, France, aged 22.

Dear Mum and Dad,

I got your last letter this week and it was good to hear you and our neighbours are well. Tell June I received her letter too.

I think about home a lot at the moment. I miss the green fields - it's so hot here, more than I think it was in Gallipoli or Salonika.

We're all doing fine, and I'm enjoying seeing the sea so often and how very blue it is - you would love it Mum. I'll see if I can find you a dress that colour when I come home.

Hope Dad's beans are doing well - they love broad beans here!

Love to you both,

Fred

Private Henry Chesterman

Henry was in the 1st Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. His next of kin was his wife, Elise and his address was recorded as being in Orange Grove, New Park Street. He died on 16 June 1915 at Gallipoli. He was 31.

Dear Elsie,

I hope my letter finds you well. I hope the boys aren't giving you much trouble. How I wish to hold you all close again.

My time here at the front has been hard. The mud has been a real problem. Each day we have to change our socks to avoid getting trench foot.

The Hun have advanced and pushed us back close to Ypres, but we have been preparing for the past week for a push that should help. I have a feeling it will work and we'll finally have a chance to force the Hun back.

The lads here are an excellent bunch and I trust them. The Boche won't know what's hit them.

As we wait, my thoughts are with you and I hope that I'll do my duty and then return.

Forever yours,

Henry

Sapper Alfred Cook

Alfred served in the 87th Field Company, Royal Engineers. He was married to Agnes and they lived in Wharf Street. He died at Passchendaele on 17 October 1917, aged 33.

To my best girl Agnes,

I have been thinking of you and our little ones a lot since since we have been encamped here. Fixing the wheels of all the carts and gun carriages here makes me dream of home.

Since I last wrote the summer weather here has been warm and settled, and we have been swimming in the river with the horses. I hope the harvest has been a good one. My brothers will miss the harvest home again.

We are not looking forward to the next big push. In the meantime, we are putting on a show in which yours truly is dressing up as Old Mother Hubbard – a sight for sore eyes!

I am sending you a kiss through the stars above we share. Thank you for the pastry.

God bless you all

Your own Alfred

Captain Edward Charles Cunnington

Edward was a Medical Officer RAMC in the 95th Field Ambulance. He lived with his parents, Maud and Benjamin in Long Street. He died tending the wounded in a dressing station near the front line in France on 23 March 1918. He was 28.

Dearest Mother

Since December the intensity of the action has abated, but we still receive casualties that require our attention. Whilst my present situation sees me learning new skills I cannot envisage having to use these too often in a country GP Surgery.

Once this year's campaign begins in earnest we will be busy again and doing our very best for the PBI. Please let Father know that I have seen men and officers from his old Regiment, but even if I could remember their names I doubt if it would mean much to him personally; though reassure him they are performing splendidly.

What wouldn't I give for a few quiet nights in the old attic room back home; a few of quiet would be most welcome. Please pass on my regards to all in the old town.

Yours ever loving son

Edward

Lance Corporal Alec Few

Alec was in the 2nd Battalion London Regiment. He was the youngest son of Elijah and Adelaide Few and had an address in Long Street. He died on 13 March 1915 Le Touret, France, aged 27.

Dear Mother,

Thank you for your letter with all the family news, I am delighted to hear that George and Elsie's baby arrived safely. I hope he will bring them great happiness.

It is much colder and wetter here than it was in our camp at Valletta. Jack, Bill and the other lads are all missing the bright Maltese sun, but I comfort myself knowing spring is not too far away. It is a shame that our overcoats are not as warm or smart as the ones with silk linings we used to sell at Barkers.

Jack thinks all the girls will say he looks a real dandy when he gets home and wears his uniform in Fulham and he says they are warmer than the ones worn by Fritz. We were issued with extra vests and socks this week so it is easier to keep warm and sleep at night. Send my best wishes to all the family.

Your loving son,

Alec

Private Charles Fillis

Charles was in the 6th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. His parents were Aaron and Fanny Fillis, and the address on his records was in Church Walk.

He died on 6 November 1916 in France (The Somme), aged 42.

Dear Mother,

I hope this letter finds you well, and the weather is being kind to you. The men out here seem so young, some of them struggling to find a beard to shave! They look up to me as an old campaigner, after coming over here to fight again, from a safe billet in Blighty just a year ago.

We are all doing our best for King and Country, and keep warm as best we can by singing songs from our different towns and villages. I've been trying to teach them Buttercup Joe, which you and Dad taught us so well, those many years ago, although they sounded so funny, trying to sing in Wiltshire accents.

The lads from the cookhouse are supposed to be following us over the top tomorrow, to give us a hot lunch, after our stroll in the park. We call the Royal Artillerymen 'Planks' but I shall not tell you why. They have been softening up Jerry for a few days now, so there can't be many left for us, or so my friend the sergeant keeps telling us.

I do hope Dad would have been proud of us all for doing our bit, in carrying the flag around the world, spreading our family across the oceans, and giving you four grandchildren in America. Tell Percy not to hurry out here just yet, because it all might still be over by Christmas.

Your loving son, Charlie

Written by Chris Greenwood

Lance Corporal Albert Goddard

Albert was in the 5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. He was the son of Eliza and George who lived in Avon Terrace. He died on 15 April 1917 at sea near Malta, aged 27.

Dearest Mother,

Just a few lines to let you know that I am alright. We have been very busy training and luckily the weather has been fine here so no more mud. We will be sailing soon, and I hope the sea stays calm.

The parcel from home arrived safe and sound and I shared the cake with the lads. They are looking forward to another one. The socks fit quite well.

How are you all? I hope they are looking after you well. I wish I was back at home looking after the garden. If the weather holds there should be a good crop of vegetables, as long as the slugs are kept under control.

I must sign off now.

Your loving son,

Bert

Private Victor Groves

Victor was in the 9th Battalion Ox and Bucks Light Infantry. His parents were Mary and Edward Groves, who lived in The Brittox. Victor died on 22 October 1918 whilst training at Fareham, Hampshire without having seen active service. He was 18.

Mum

I've been here for two weeks now, with my new regiment, the Ox and Bucks. We're still pretty much all together, the lads from the village and me. Stan still can't believe they let him, what with his eyes being so bad and Fred's still the biggest boy I've ever met. Man, not boy; we're men now, that's what Colour says. He says that now we're about to fight for King and Country that makes us men, real men. I left a boy, but I'll be home a man Ma you'll see.

It's strange to be away from home at this time of year, when you need us men the most. Is the harvest good? The Lads and I sit up late into the night talking about being back home and cutting down the hay, making up the bales. This is the first year any of us have missed it and there's less and less people at home that can help now. We hope you get a good yield, and more than anything we miss having a pint in the Three Crowns after a long hard day's work.

The weather's coming in now and the news coming back to us is that it's cold on the front. I wonder if you would be so kind Ma, as to knit me a new winter scarf? Do you remember our colours are white, yellow and purple; white for the snow, yellow for the sand and purple to show our valour! It would be a blessing, Ma to have something from home to keep me warm out there in the trenches. We've been told it won't be long now and we'll be off. There's a real sense of excitement amongst the men, I thought I would be scared but now we're getting ready to go, I just want to get there and give old Jerry what for.

You don't need to worry about me Ma, I'll be home again soon. They say that this is it, the real last push. That we will all be back home in the Brittox, sat around the kitchen table eating our fat Christmas goose. Well, we won't all be there, I know Albert's never going to sit at the table again, or carve the Sunday meat but he died doing his duty Ma. He was a brave soldier and because of him and his pals this war will be over sooner. I met some of his pals and they only had good words to say about him Ma, that he was a good soldier and fought valiantly. I only hope I can be half the soldier he was.

But let's not think about that, instead let's think about when I'll be back at home with you and maybe if Jinny is still as pretty I can finally ask her to be my girl. She's always in my thoughts Ma, I think when I'm home at Christmas after we've won this war I'll ask her straight if she'll be my girl. Sweet kisses Ma, give my love to Dad. I'll be home before you know it, love always

Victor

Written by Shelley Percy

Guardsman Charles 'Spencer' Hampton

Charles was in the 1st Battalion Scots Guards. His next of kin were Charles and Kate Hampton and the address on his record was Springfield House, Devizes. He died on 26 October 1914 in Belgium (Ypres) he was 26 years old.

Dear Mother,

Thank you for the cigarettes you sent with your last letter. They arrived last Tuesday, which is just as well as all weekend passes have been stopped. It hasn't stopped raining these past few days and the ground is treacherous.

I have never seen a landscape as desolate as this is. Dead trees, if any, muddy trenches and craters from the German shelling. I never realised how beautiful home was until now - the rolling, green fields and hills around Devizes.

The lads are all in good spirits, though. We have a good singsong of an evening and Harry is still full of jokes. The Brass reckon we will be back by Christmas, so mustn't grumble, eh? I am looking forward to a pint or two at the Pelican.

Give my love to Father and tell him not to worry about me.
From your ever loving son,

Spencer

Private Albert Hughes remembered on the Rowde War Memorial

Albert served in the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. He lived in Rowde and died on 26 March 1915, aged 22.

Dear Mother and Father,

Hope you are both well, I am missing you and being out in the gardens of Rowde.

I think about planting and weeding all the time, I'm still digging here in the trenches but it's not so nice.

These past few weeks I've been training, learning how to make a point and lunge with my bayonet. There's no place like home, the whizz-bangs keep you awake as they pass over.

Please can you send me some warm clothes, it's beginning to get colder, winter is certainly here. I'd love some food too, jam maybe? The tinned food is not as good as home cooking.

My happy memories of my brothers and you keep me going, even those pesky rats and lice that like to nip, can't spoil my thoughts of you.

Tender Love

Bert xxxx

Corporal Alfred Hunt

Alfred served in the 4th Battalion Middlesex Regiment. His parents were Sabina and Daniel Hunt and they lived on London Road. He died in Belgium on 21 October 1914, aged 26.

Dearest Mother and Father

I hope this finds you well.

It is turning Autumnal here in Belgium and getting slightly colder especially at night, we are starting to have foggy mornings too - just like home.

I miss the Wiltshire Countryside and especially the trains, and my old job back in Westbury, shunting the trucks.

It is certainly different in the Army this time around, but I am here with a great bunch of Lads.

How are all the family keeping? How are all our neighbours in London Road?

It is fine here but not at all like home, but I must not moan as I am better off than some.

Please send my love to all, and God Bless.

Alf x

Sergeant Sidney King

Sidney was in the 2nd Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. He was the fourth surviving son of James and Mary King and the address on his records was Giles Court, New Park Street. He died on 18 October 1916 in France aged 32.

Dear Mother,

I am writing to you from wet northern France close to the River Somme. My injury is healing well and I am anxious to return to the front.

Our shelling is deafening; occasionally it stops allowing quietness to descend. Amongst this melee, I'm sure the other day I heard the call of a Yellowhammer. After a period of 5 minutes the quietness is broken by the whistle of a fellow NCO. At this point we charge the enemy lines with varying degrees of success. Earlier today I was ordered by Officer Harris to prepare a troop of infantrymen to attack and clear out a series of Hun trenches called "Bite".

Are you and Dad and my dear siblings faring well during this dreadful time? Please don't worry about me as I can look after myself; beside which I hear the Kaiser will be surrendering soon and the war will be over ay Christmas!

I long to return home to my beloved family and sweetheart Edna.

Yours,

Sid

Eng, Room Art 4th Class William King

William served on board HMS Bulwark Royal Navy. His parents were Frederick and Fanny King who lived in Rotherstone. He died in Sheerness on November 11 1914, aged 23 when his ship accidentally exploded whilst in the harbour.

Dearest Mum and Dad,

I sincerely hope you are both well. I am not allowed to say where we are but we have just returned to England after some important exercises.

It is so nice to be back on land and a break from the smell of oil and sweat and noise of the engine room for a while. I even had a refreshing pint of beer with some of the lads from Pompey when we were allowed into town. I don't know where we will be going next but we are all certain that we will give Fritz a bloody nose if he comes near us.

Christmas is not long away and I am really hoping I will be home to spend it with you. Alas, if that is not the case I will write to you before we sail so you can give my love to everyone.

I really am quite jolly so do not worry about me.

All my love

William

Driver Garnett Knee

Garnett was in the 56th Brigade Royal Field Artillery. His wife, Cordelia, lived in Avon Road. He died on 29 September 1917 in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq) at the age of 25.

Dearest Cordelia,

I really miss Devizes. How is father's bakery getting on? I hope he has improved on his cake-making skills!

The trenches are awfully muddy and slippery. Being in the Royal Artillery is tense, when you are surrounded by all of those huge, noisy cannons. I think I might be suffering from trench foot, but I am very lucky compared to some of the lads around me in the trench.

The weather here in Mesopotamia is unbearably hot in the daytime. However, when the sun sets, the temperatures drop so far you can't feel your face, your hands, your toes or anything else! I still feel angry that the government introduced the conscription rule: I don't even understand why this silly war began!

Please forgive me for leaving, my darling. Give my love to our beloved family.

Garnett

Corporal George Ledbury

He served in the 9th Battalion Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers. His parents were Sabina and Daniel Hunt and they lived at St James's Palace. He died in France on June 6 1918, aged 28.

My dearest mother and father,

Hope this letter finds you and the family well.
I miss you terribly.

I am still in good health and hope to remain so. My friend and fellow soldier I wrote to you of before sadly got wounded and died.

The division is sleeping as I write. I have received your parcel containing the book, chocolates and cigarettes. Thank you. It lifts me so to hear news from home. I'm glad everyone is fine and the Bakery managing without me. Sometimes I close my eyes and can smell the fresh bread baking.

The longer I am here the more I think about and miss home. Devizes and St. James's Place stays firmly in my heart and mind and if I see this war out I will never want to leave again.

Your loving son,

George

Private Edward Lewis

Edward was in the 1/4 TF Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. His parents were John and Lydia Lewis with an address at Rotherstone, Devizes. He died on 16 December 1918 in Egypt, aged 25.

Dear Ma

Just a few lines to say your letter arrived safely. It cheered me up no end.

The regiment has been on the move in Palestine and I've got used to being around the horses now. We've just left Jerusalem and who knows where we'll be next? Some say it will be back to Egypt.

Our rations here are miserable but yesterday the Sarge managed to scrounge us some meat. Didn't ask what it was or where it came from we just tucked in. When I get home I'll need fattening up Ma. But I mustn't complain there's lots worse off than me.

I think of you a lot Ma, and the family and I picture you walking along Rotherstone. Give my best to all at Boots. I bet they miss me working behind the counter. God willing I'll be home before too long.

Your ever loving son,

Eddie

Private Nelson Maslen

He served on HMS Bulwark, Royal Marine Light Infantry. His parents were John and Priscilla Maslen who lived at Tylees Court. He died when his ship accidentally blew up in Sheerness Harbour on 26 November 1914 aged 19.

Dear Ma and Pa,

It was great to have news from home, I'm always thinking of you all.

Our Albert's chum Bill from Rowde and the Town F.C. is here on board ship. He's let on that my N is not for Norman so I'm getting a lot of ribbing from the sailors. They're great lads on the mess deck and we are holding onto our top rating with our gun practise in number 3 turret. The band plays for our parade every morning and we try to be as well turned out as possible, all spit and polish and keeping clear of trouble from the sergeant.

Ma I've seen the sba about my toothache, it's a lot better with the oil of cloves he's given me and there's lots of grub. Meat is either white or pink but I couldn't tell you what it is. I do miss your rabbit stew. You and Pa might have been to the Palace, we have heard here about the film of the American race car driver Barney Oldfield and the Keystone Cops.

Please pass on my love and best wishes when you can to Lizzie, Tom and Albert. God Bless You.

Your loving son,

Nelson

Private William Mead

William served with the 7th Bedfordshire Regiment. His parents, James and Emily Mead, lived in Sheep Street, although William lived with his uncle in Bristol. He died on 1 July 1916 in France (The Somme). He was 37.

Dearest Mother and Father,

I hope that you are both well and that the rest of the family are in good health. How is my uncle faring in Bristol without me to make him a cup of tea in the mornings?

Many of the men out here have gone down with the flu but I am keeping nice and warm with the scarf you knitted for me, mother. We are one of the best units here but it's hard work keeping our pecker up when the guns start to boom.

Lots of us sing and tell jokes to take our minds off the things we have seen. I pretend that I'm looking after the young 'uns at home and tell them stories of Devizes and Wiltshire. They seem to like that.

I send my love with this letter,

Will

Private Jesse Miles

Under-age soldier Jesse was in the 6th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. His parents were Jesse and Mary Miles of Royal Oak Yard, New Park Street. He died, at home, on 26 April 1919 after being wounded at The Front aged 19 and is buried in Devizes cemetery.

Dear Mam and Dad,

Today is my 16th birthday, I never thought I would be spending it so far away from you. I'm alright and I hope you are too.

I hope you have forgiven me for leaving as I did. When I heard that soldier by the Cross in the Market Place saying about duty and defending England's shores against the Hun, I just had to sign up, I'm just sorry that I didn't have time to say a proper farewell.

Mam, you'd be very proud of what I've learnt, I can darn my own socks and make a cup of char as well as march and fire a gun.

If you see Tilly from number 9 tell her I remember our walks along the tow paths and that I think of her often.

Your loving son,

Jesse

Private Arthur George Nash

Arthur served onboard HMS Black Prince RMLI. His next of kin was his step-mother, Bessie Carter and his records have an address in Sheep Street. He died at sea, during the Battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916, aged 22.

February 1916

Dear Bessie,

I do hope this letter finds you dealing with less turbulent weather. I have heard that there are thunder storms, gales and snow across the country. Unfortunately, there is rumour of the storms worsening through March, please ensure you stay warm.

I am settled into the routine on HMS Black Prince. Though it can at times be a tight squeeze. When the sea is rough a few of the men turn white and become extremely quiet! So far, I have been fortunate and avoided the dreaded nausea. You will be pleased to know that the food is sustaining, though I do look forward to returning to your home cooked meals.

As always, your loving stepson,

Arthur

2nd Lieutenant Herbert O'Reilly

Herbert served in the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles. His parents were Eliza and Thomas O'Reilly who in High Street, Devizes. He died in Belgium on January 1916, aged 30.

Dear Mother and Father,

I can't believe it's been a whole year now since I left you both in Devizes and came to volunteer for our country.

I'm glad to report I was recently promoted to 2nd Lieutenant of the 2nd Battalion Royal Irish Rifles, and am proud to be leading my troop with a lot more responsibilities.

Please don't worry about me as I've met some great men. We've all become really close and feel like family. Particularly a Captain Kelly; I'm sure you would like him very much.

I hope you are both doing well. I miss you both so much, but the fantastic memories that we have shared together give me strength. In fact, just last week, I regaled the group with many tales of my childhood and they especially enjoyed hearing of our summers by the pond.

We are being deployed to France soon. I will write to you at my earliest opportunity. Just know that I am fine and I believe my purpose has been fulfilled. I wish to achieve more, but I am happy in my situation.

Your son,

Herbert

Written by students from Swindon Academy (Jess, Callum, Ryan, Tom and Caroline).

Driver John Potter is not known to be remembered on any official memorial.

John was in the MT Transport Army Service Corps. He was married to Edith and the address on his records was in Phoenix Place. He died on 7 September 1918 in Bapaume, France aged 23.

Dear my beloved Edith,

I hope this letter finds you in good health and in a position to pass the information to my friends and family about how much I love and miss them dearly. Also, that I am in good health and high spirits.

The boys I am fighting with ensure that in the bleakest of times we always find a way to have a laugh, and the horses help with that too. I do love to muck them out at the end of the day, it's almost relaxing. As the days go on I think of a million things I could say to you, but I shall save it all for the day we meet again.

Tell mum and dad that I am enjoying working with the horses - it gives a nice view when working with the cannons that they bring along with them. I hope that, as promised, you all spend Sunday together for a lunch, I understand that from our correspondence this promise has been kept. I look forward to partaking in this new-found tradition.

Yours truly,

John

Private Samuel Slocombe

Samuel was in the 9th Battalion Somerset Light Infantry. He was the youngest son of Daniel Goss and Emily Slocombe and had an address of Victoria Road, Devizes. He died on 8 March 1916 in Wool Military Hospital, Dorset (having never seen active service) aged 26.

Dear Mum and Dad

Well, this is a bit of a to-do. I sign up to be called when needed, get the call, then instead of doing the parley voo and fighting the Hun here I am in hospital in Dorset! I feel I am cheating and want to do my duty.

Honestly, I would rather be at the front. Only good thing is the nurses here in Wool are a lot prettier than them was at the Asylum. But then we patients here are weak as kittens, and don't need to be held down by big blokes. Wonder how they are doing at the maintenance department without me - can't see girls would have the strength to do the work I did.

Anyway, hope all are well. Dad, have a pint for me. Mum hope the feet are better. Don't worry about me, I can't feel this bad for much longer.

Sam

Lieutenant Charles Sainsbury MC

Charles served in the 1st Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. His parents were Margaret and Herbert Sainsbury who lived in Long Street. He died on 7 June 1917, aged 27 at Arras, France.

Dear Mother and Father,

A quick letter from the front. As I write this to you, there's an aeroplane slowing flying over the lines. I've no idea if he's one of ours or theirs, but he's getting a lot of attention from 'Archie'. Who's he, you ask? Archie is what the flyboys call artillery used to shoot at aeroplanes!

It was a wrench to leave Devizes again. You both looked after me so well but I just had to get back to my men. My wounds only occasionally bother me now and only just before it rains, so when I grumble, the chaps joke that I'm better than a barometer!

Our morale is fantastic. We can't wait to get to grips with the Hun again and get the job finished once and for all!

Your ever-loving son,

Charles

Private William Waite

William was in the 5th Battalion Saskatchewan Regiment. He was the son of Thomas and Mary Waite and was travelling around the US and Canada when war was declared. His parents lived in Giles Court, New Park Street. He died on 18 July 1917 in Loos, France aged 23.

Dear Ma and Pa,

Hope you are well and getting on fine. Sorry I haven't been in touch yet, I've been busy over the past few days, travelling across France. I don't understand the language, but it has a nice ring to it!

I'm doing well here. This afternoon had me laughing really loudly. A lovely grey tabby cat, found its way into the rations, and stole some Maconochie's meat stew right from the pan it was cooling in. Bert, a friend in my division, caught him with stew all over his paws!

The stew is good - one of my favourite meals in the trenches, but not a patch on yours Ma! We named the cat 'Raggins', and he is currently curled up beside me as I write!

I look forward to coming back to Blighty,

With love,

Bill

2nd Lieutenant Walter Weekes

Walter was in the 7th Battalion Lincolnshire Regiment. His parents were listed as the Rev. William Harris and Alice Weekes, and the address on his records was 'The Orchard'. He died on 23 April 1917 in France (Arras), aged 23.

Dear Mother and Father,

I hope this finds you well.

I am writing from a dug-out somewhere in France. I cannot say exactly where, but I share it with a fellow officer. It is small with few trappings. Thank goodness Spring is here.

Tomorrow, we are told, is going to be a busy day, and we are preparing for that. As platoon commander, I have spoken to all my men. They are a fine bunch of chaps, who hail mainly from the Lincolnshire fens, but there are one or two, like me, who have transferred from other regiments.

Tomorrow may be a difficult day, but please do not worry, we are well prepared and will have powerful support from our artillery. Most importantly, we believe in our cause, and know God is on our side. I will close now, and write a quick letter to Harold, before I turn in.

Love to you both, God bless.

Walter

Private Horace Withers

Horace was in the 5th Battalion Wiltshire Regiment. He lived with his Aunt, Ruth Hiscock. The address on his records was in Wharf Street. He died on 25 April 1916 in Mesopotamia (modern day Iraq), aged 17.

Dear Aunt Ruth,

We left the Dardenells, in Turkey, 2 weeks ago and what a mess that was! Since I got there in November no-one seemed to know what they were doing and who was in charge, but those Turkish troops knew how to fight, and I reckon we were lucky to get out unhurt.

And now we 're in Iraq and we're still fighting those Turks! At least it's warmer here, although it freezes every night, but I do miss the green fields around Devizes and cant wait to go rabbiting again down Dyehouse lane—as long as old Mr. Cleverley doesn't see us!

We get dates to eat here—like sticky nuts, but where they grow i can't imagine, as there's no trees anywhere.

Look after yourself, I'll be home soon,

Horace