

## **"LETTERS TO A COUNTRY RECTOR"**

- The Series:** "Letters to a Country Rector" is one of eight booklets in the Longman's series of World War 1 primary resource materials for schools.
- Editor:** Peter Liddle (<http://library.leeds.ac.uk/special-collections-liddle-collection>)
- Publisher:** Longman (now Pearson), London 1977.
- ISBN:** 0 582 22093 9.
- Copyright:** The copyrights of the letters are held by the descendants of the writers. The whereabouts of these people are unknown to me. Please contact WebEd if you are a copyright holder or know of any one of them.
- The Booklet:** A collection of letters written by men from Dyrham & Hinton (two exceptions) in reply to The Rev Henry Wynter Blathwayt, Rector of St Peter's Church, Dyrham. He sent soldiers letters and newspapers to keep them in touch with life at home during WW1. Vera Salmon, of Hinton, helped the editor by collecting the letters.
- This Presentation:** Each letter has been transcribed as exactly as possible from the original letters. The original booklet can still be bought on line from booksellers, borrowed from WebEd (parishioners only) or seen in the Gloucestershire Archive.
- The Letters:** Each letter has exceptionally good handwriting, reasonable grammar, but punctuation not always as good. In general, the standard of letter writing is a credit to the local school in Dyrham.
- Added Content:** In green italics. Thanks to Neil Stacy for extra information about correspondents' family origin. Internet references need to be pasted onto a browser.

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## 1. In Training

### A. Recruitment at Taunton

#### *Somerset Light Infantry*

#### *Taunton.*

5/9/14

Dear Sir.

I received your letter at half past nine this morning. I likes Taunton very much but there is so many down here we dont get nothing to eat hardly This is not our headquarters & we are going to Devonport or else Aldershot to day & a good job too. I am going to try to keep away from gambling, Smoking & cursing & do as I think right, we are having our Khaki suits to morrow.

Dear Sir. We are having dinner now. for Breakfast we have, Bread & jam at dinner we gets potatoes & we goes to the Soldiers home to tea I wrote to Mother

last night I expects she was upset she did not want me to go but I wanted to serve my Country the same as every young chap ought to do. I am sorry I could not write better there is so many hitting your arms for jokes. I could not get a pen because we are not allowed outside the Barracks before night & I think I must close

I am Your Sincerly

Albert Ball

*Albert Ball: bapt 25.11/1895; son of Silas Ball, Hinton labourer; in 1901 living in Poor House, Hinton.*

### **B. Conditions at Taunton**

**C/O Mr W. Knight**

**Hairdresser**

**160 East Reach**

**Taunton**

**Somerset** (<http://goo.gl/maps/6uLKs>)

Dear Sir

Just a few lines to let you know how we are getting on. I am very sorry to have to tell you it is very rough here. in fact it is disgraceful. There are over a thousand in the Barracks and there is only room for 250 so we have lodgings for which we have to pay ourselves of course we can't do that for long as we have not got an income and we've not been paid any money yet, and up to now there is no likelihood of getting any, so we shall have to rough it with the rest if things don't alter soon.

It must be experienced to be believed it is past explaining. When meal times comes around there is a rush and if you are not there first you have to go without(thats all) There is plenty of food here if it was dealt out properly but some get two or three shares and the rest have none, we did not have any on Monday, and Tuesday we had to wait until nine for our breakfast and then it was a bit of bread and cheese about enough cheese to catch a mouse with.

Anyway I suppose we must try to make the best of it. The first night we slept in the Victoria Rooms on the floor with one blanket between two and that was not fit for a dog to lie on. (<http://goo.gl/maps/mR2ng>)

We are all staying together here as long as our money lasts but we cannot spend 2d a day and not get away from the Barracks to go on with There are hundreds of young fellows including ourselves that if the had only known what they have to put up with would never have come here

It is raining here today and we cannot get in out of it so we shall have two get wet and let it dry on us, this is the way they treat volunteers but we are not downhearted if others can stand it I suppose we can do the same for our country's sake we always try to bear that in mind, and we are determined that we will do our duty in spite of all obstacles and prove ourselves worthy of been called soldiers of the King, we are here and we will make the best of it

We started drill yesterday in the Park, formerly we had to lie about in the Barracks all day and do nothing, that made us miserable but the drill breaks the monotony a bit now, so we can say that things are improving a bit

There is some talk of sending some of the men away from here but I expect we shall have to stay here for some time, but we hope not.

Taunton is a very nice place if it was not for the Barracks, the people here are willing to do anything in their power to help us but they are all disgusted with Barrack Life, they all call it Kitcheners' Prison and they are not far wrong either I am sorry to tell you all this but thought you would like to know the truth, you can take it from me that this is no exaggeration if anything what I have written is as light as I can make it, we have not told anyone else how bad it really is, as we do not wish for them to know it would only cause a lot of worry, as women generally see things in a worse light than they really are.

I think I have given you a little insight on what life is here, so I must close now Believe me to be

Yours Very Sincerely

George Crew

PS

Dear Sir

Please would you kindly tell Ellen or someone my address as they dont know and we have such a job to get our letters at Kitcheners Prison

*George Crew: bapt 25.11.1894; son of William Crew, carrier of Hinton; in 1901 living with parents in Grove Cottage, Hinton.*

### **C. Infantry Training**

**Pte G. Shipton**

**2577 H Company.**

**4<sup>th</sup> Btn Gloster Reg**

**Danbry (Danbury). Essex.** (<http://goo.gl/maps/G1tNF>)

Dear sir

Just a few lines to let you know how we are spending our time in Essex. We start in the morning at 6 o'clock, marching and foot drill till 7.30. from then till 9.30 we have our breakfast. clean the rifles. shake our blankets. and put the place square. From 9.30 till 2.30. we march perhaps five or six miles and have a sham fight. four companies on each side. each company. consists of 120 men.

sometimes we are the attacking party. and sometimes. we are the resisting party. we generally get home by 2.30 to dinner. soup every day, it's a mixture is this stew a little bit of everything. from 3.30 till 5.00 rifle and bayonet inspection tea from 5.00 till 6.00. then twice a week out post duty, or night attacks till 10.00. lights out at 10.10. We have just marched back from Great Totham.

(<http://goo.gl/maps/8Ezxe>) after a fortnights night trench digging. for the defence of London in case of invasion; we have to march to trench digging with 60???? besides a pickaxe and shovel, so you can guess sir. we didn't need rocking to sleep at night. We go home for four days leave, and sail for France on either the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 6<sup>th</sup> of Dec. ? close now Sir. hoping you will forgive me taking the liberty of writing to you. I remain sir

Your obedient servant

G. Shipton

Thank you very much sir for the papers.

*Gilbert Shipton: bapt 25.09.1892; son of Robert, gardener not domestic, of Hinton; in 1901 living in Rosary Cottage.*

### **D. Training far from Dyrham**

**No 42259 A Coy**

**Gloster Rgt**

**Seaton Delaval** (<http://goo.gl/maps/zZQHA>)

## ***Northumberland***

Dear Sir

I am writing to thank you for the newspaper which I was very pleased to receive, The weather is nice and fine now, I went down on that sands it is a very pritty place, around the sea they have it all entrenched and dugouts and sentries nowone is allowed there after dark They are sending up a lot of recruits from Bristol now and sending Drafts away nearly every week, Its all coal up here and for the size of the village there is six churches and one or two chapels, I have a hard job to understand the peoples conversations they had a peculiar way of talking, I expect to go to Whitley Bay on Saturday on the rifle range it is with in walking distance from here and by all accounts a very pritty place news is rather scarce at present so I will close

I remain yours Truly

A Andrews

*Probably Arthur E Andrews; son of Robert W, gardener, of Dyrham*

**E. Salisbury Plain**

**Pte A. Andrews 14186**

**C Company 10<sup>th</sup> Devons**

**No6 Sherrington Camp**

**Codford St Mary's (<http://goo.gl/maps/9pZRV>)**

**Wilts**

**October 26**

Dear Sir

I am writing to thank you very much for the papers you so kindly sent me. We can get newspapers, but not local ones. I will let the others have them because we are all together I & (George) Moss and Albert and Arthur Shewring. We have been having lovely weather to lately we have had one or two wet days. Yesterday we had a soaking wet day but today its nice and fine. The wet does not come in the tents much but our blankets get nasty and damp and the ground outside our tents get up top of our boots in mud then we walk in and out our tents with muddy boots our tents boards and everything else gets wet and muddy. In fine weather our tents are nice and comfortable. There are from twelve to seventeen in a tent. when sleeping we haven't much room to turn about but we keep each other warm. The churches around here have three services Sunday evenings, they are packed each time and then some cannot get in. We have Church parade Sunday mornings. I Shewring and three Pucklechurch chaps that enlisted when I did are in a camp just across the road from here. We are getting on very well with our drill. We found it rather hard at first marching about plough grounds but now we are learning firing positions so its not quite so much tramping about. We have not started to shoot yet and I do not think there is a rifle range near hear, so I expect we shall have to go away from here before we learn how to shoot. I have not got my uniform yet but some of the regiment has. We shall have Kitcheners as cloathes, Navy blue. On the whole I like the army better than I thought I should its a bit rough but anyone soon gets used to it. Its a very open country around here we went for a three hours route march the other day and only saw one house. We have a route march every week we go about eight or ten miles. I do not think I have any more to say present so I will now bring my letter to a close hoping you and Mrs Blathwayt are in the best of health as this letter leaves me

From Yours Respectfully

Fred Andrews

P.S. You must please excuse me writing in pencil, but I have no ink.

*Alfred W Andrews: born in Wootton-under-Edge in 1890; son of Robert Andrews, a gardener at Dyrham House; lived in Lilac Cottage, Dyrham*

**F. Making men "fit for the front" in Ireland**

***The Drummers Room***

***Cavalry Barracks***

***Longford*** (<http://goo.gl/maps/q03QF>)

Dear Sir

I am very sorry I have not wrote to you before as I have had most of my time occupied. My experiences in Lord Kitcheners Army will not take long to relate, we have plenty of training & it will not take much longer for to make us fit for the front & I hope if we go which I have little doubt that we will, that our shooting & soldiering will help to smash the German. We were inspected by a man from the War Office last week & he told the Colonel that we were the best of Kitcheners men he had seen, The commander of this battalion is the Earl of Granard ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl\\_of\\_Granard](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Earl_of_Granard)) & a nice gentleman he is, he has a fine castle about 3 miles from here. The country around here is very wild & uncultivated, nothing else but bogs & marshes The people around here use the peat in their grates instead of coal. We went for a route march yesterday about 14 miles, so we were tired when we got back to the barracks, I have joined the band since we came to Ireland & I find it very interesting. I am a side drummer, which you see by the photagraph, I am sending. this as I thought you would like it, it was took when reached the barrack gates yesterday after the route march you may notice how far the troops reach up the main street. its a rather good photagraph considering it was a dull day We are having leave at Christmas, so we shall able to sing our praises once again in Dyrham Church. well I dont think I have any more to say sir. hoping you are in good health.

I Remain

Yours sincerely

Hugh Salmon

*Hugh Salmon: bapt as John Hugh 29.03.1896; son of John Salmon, carpenter of Hinton; in 1901 living in part of the Old Forge with parents; grandfather Alfred, blacksmith, living in other part.*

**G. Training for a future officer**

***No 1 Company***

***4<sup>th</sup> Public Schools Battalion***

***Royal Fusiliers***

***Ashtead***

***Surrey*** (<http://goo.gl/maps/n0Zig>)

***Oct 14 1914***

Dear Sir,

I feel I must let you know how I am getting along in the army. I like the life immensely, although the work is fairly hard.

We get up at 5:45 every morning, we are due on the parade ground at 6:30, from 6:30 until 8:30 we have some ?? drill etc, from 9:30 until 12:30 we have some more drill. In the afternoons we have the long route march & return about 5:30. We have to be in our rooms at 10 pm.

The King inspected our battalion last Monday & was very pleased with our progress.

There is a rumour about that we are going to the South of France shortly to complete our training.

They pay us 7/- a week & out of that we have to pay for our washing & many other incidental expenses.

We are all billeted in private houses & I have been fortunate in having a very kind landlady.

I shall write you again & report the progress we have made

Please accept my most sincere thanks for your great kindness to me.

I am

Yours respectfully

(Private) J L Jones

*Not in in Dyrham or Hinton in the 1901 Census.*

## **2. France**

### **A. Loss of a friend**

***B.E.F. France***

***September 15<sup>th</sup> 1916***

My Dear Sir,

I write to thank you for your very kind & sympathetic letter of the 11<sup>th</sup>. We are back a little way from the front now and I miss poor Chris (*Christopher George Ball*) very much indeed. But as you say ?our sorrow is for ourselves & not for him. His life was such as any might like for an example & I trust I may do as well as he has done. He was always a favourite with everyone. I think there is one great thing to be thankful for in this war, and that is that we have all of us had time to think of & prepare for the future. And although the end often comes so suddenly it is not unexpected. I know Chris thought these things & he told me only the day before he was killed what to do with some of his things if he should not come back. But Oh! It is a sad trial for his dear ones who are left. My heart aches for his dear mother for I know how she must have longed & prayed for his safe return. Friendships out here seem to be so much more binding & sacred somehow than at home. We are altogether & have to leave little discomforts & hardships & often there is the element of danger as well, but when we have our own chums & friends with us we can all help each other & everything seems so much brighter.

It is very hard to think that all the little confidences and jokes which we have shared in the past are over, but I try to remember that there is One watching always over us & He knows what is the best for us.

I trust this will find Mrs Blathwayt & yourself in the best of health, and again thanking you for writing, and also for the newspaper you so kindly sent.

I remain

Yours Respectfully

J. Hedges

*Not in in Dyrham or Hinton in the 1901 Census.*

### **B. After the "Big Push"**

***BEF France***

***Thursday Oct 4<sup>th</sup> 1916***

Dear Sir



Just a few lines to let you know that I am getting on alright and I hope & trust in God that this letter finds you the same. We are going to have some very wet weather out here now for the wet is just beginning to set in and its not very comfortable to sit in trenches when its wet but its got to be done to save our proud Empire. Dear Sir I have been trying to write to you before and have not had much time to write as we have been busy with our big Push and God as spared me to return out of four Big Battles & so now we are having a easy time of it at present for we are holding a part of the line with the greatest of care to a certain extent it is very quiet. On receiving a letter from the Wife Mrs Shewring she told me that you had paid her a visit which Im very pleased to hear.

Dear Sir We have to put our address in the letter like so:-

Pte A E Shewring No 13004 20<sup>th</sup> T M. Bty.

20<sup>th</sup> Infe Bde BEF France.

owing to us putting our address like this is owing to so many spies in the County. I hope all in Dyrham are quite well and I wish to be remembered to all of them in Dyrham. I have not seen Billy Clifford yet. I thought I saw him on a Transport Cart but I was not near enough to speak to him. I dont think I have anymore to say so I shall draw this letter to a close

from yours Truly

Pte A E Shewring

*Albert (E or D) Shewring bapt 31.09.1897; son of Henry Shewring, labourer of Dyrham – moved to the Homestead in Ford Lane, Hinton by 1901; Albert was a carter's boy.*

**C. Passchendaele** (<http://goo.gl/maps/7udb2>)

**BEF France**

**October 20<sup>th</sup> 1917**

My Dear Sir,

I was very pleased to receive your letter a week or so ago and thank you very much too for the papers safely received from time to time

At present we are enjoying a rest in a pretty little Belgian village & appreciate it very much for it is quite a change to what we have had lately. For some time we were on the move & then when we reached this part we had a fortnight in the line, and it is by far the worst experience I have had of the war. The shelling on both sides was terrific. The worst part of it all I think was the difficulty of getting the wounded away. Sometimes they had to lie for hours before the stretcher-parties could attempt to get back. And the poor chaps were so brave too, I never heard a murmur although some of them must have been in agony, and one feels so helpless to be able to do nothing for them beyond putting on the first field dressing. I hardly expected to get back safe and sound like this for at times it seems quite impossible to live through it with shells bursting on every side. I had one or two very narrow escapes & was slightly wounded twice. It seems so good to be back amongst the green fields again. We are very near the place now where Col ?? was buried. I went with some chums to a concert last night in the same village that though we looked for his grave we could not find it. We get a great many German planes over here and they frequently drop bombs. Quite a number fell last night but so far as I know no damage was done. London seems to be suffering badly in that way just to lately. The weather gets colder every day now and winter seems to be coming on very rapidly.



I am pleased to say I am keeping very fit and trusting this will find Mrs Blathwayt and yourself quite well.

I remain

Yours Respectfully

Jim Hedges

*Not in in Dyrham or Hinton in the 1901 Census.*

#### **D. A lull in the fighting**

**France**

**May 29<sup>th</sup> 1918**

Dear Sir

Many thanks for your letter of May 12<sup>th</sup>. I heard George (probably George Edwards – see 4A) had been moved to another hospital but have not heard from him myself for several weeks now, he is going on well I believe & expecting to be home in a few weeks time I would like to get home the same time as him but, leave seems as far off as ever, I shall be glad when it does come it will be a welcome change for a fortnight. I often wondered if Dick Lewis was safe & well, we didn't get much bombings where I am but shells are plentiful in the vicinity things have been rather lively this last few days again. I saw in the papers a few days ago Leslie (?) Yellowship was reported as prisoner of war, I expect Arthur Andrews has grown & filled out a lot since I saw him last, he should make a fine fellow for the ?guards am sorry to hear plums & strawberry flowers suffered with the frost, we had some late frost out here. I was passing through a French village a few days ago & I noticed the currant trees were well laden with fruit, but that seemed to be about all the garden's contained, there were only a few gardens under cultivation as it was not so very far behind the line. we are having some grand weather again now it was very cold & dull for the time of year the latter part of last week. there are quantities of Solomon's Seal & Periwinkle growing wild in the woods here, I have not seen many kinds of flowers growing wild out here. one would probably find a better collection further south. And pleased to hear the Mistress is well & able to get into the garden again. I hope you are well, cannot stop to write more at present as Fritz has started strafing us again. From

Yours Respectfully

Geof Crew

*Geoffrey Crew: born 09.11/1890; son of William Crew, carrier of Hinton; in 1901 living with parents in Grove Cottage, Hinton.*

#### **E. A request from a stranger**

**Pte a. Smith. 15103**

**6<sup>th</sup> Dorset Regt.**

**No 11 Convalescent Depot**

**a.p.o. S.44**

**25.8.17**

**B.E.F.**

Dear Sir

I hope you will pardon me for taking the liberty of writing you as I am a perfect stranger to you although I know you well by repute. I am a Cold Aston lad and my mother is solely dependent on me and all the money. She has is what the Army allows her.

Dear Sir I have been out in this Country one year and ten months having joined the Army on 28-8-14. and I have just been discharged from Hospital having been ill since April and has I have got nothing not even a Cigarette I am writing to ask if you would send me a little cash which I would repay when I come home if God spares me which I hope he will. if you would grant me this favour I would be very grateful. The reason I am writing for Cash is because I can buy Cigarettes and most things cheaper out here than people can in England at the present time. hoping you will give my case consideration.

I remain

Yours Respectfully

A. Smith

PS

one of your Parishioners who I met here told me to write to you.

**F. "Within range of the Boche guns"**

**March 14 -1918**

**194 Labour Coy**

**B.E.F**

**France**

**From**

**421503**

**Pte J H Salmon**

Sir

I have much pleasure in answering your nice letter to days mail brought me. I hope you will forgive me for not writing to thank you for letters & papers I have previously received. My present occupation doesnt give me much time especially for writing. but I hope as the Summer months come on we may have an opportunity of utilising the daylight we are troubled at night by Boche aeroplanes & have to retire to dug outs & subterranean passages for safety but taking things generally we are situated "tres-bon" The ??C.C has built this camp & the Staff admit its as good as anyone in France. & not very far from the line easily within range of Boche Guns. The military are tilling all the occupied territories from last years offensive & we ourselves are planting potatoes so we hope not to be short come on the Summer. The Boche has been very active almost everywhere along the line except right in front of us. so I presume this is where he will try & breakthrough, anyway we hope not. its very hot for him if he attempts I am enclosing the photograph I had taken recently with two chums but its not a good one hoping the next one is a success.

Well Sir I really havent any more to say at present hoping everyone are keeping well at the Rectory.

I Remain

Yours Sincerely

Pte J H Salmon

*John H Salmon: son of John, carpenter and wheelwright, of Hinton*

**3. Egypt**

**Living in the desert**

**Egypt**

**Sunday Nov 12<sup>th</sup>**

Dear Sir

In answer to your letter which I received a few days ago Thanking you for it & also for the (Times & Mirror) which I received previous to the letter. I was very pleased to get it as we dont get a lot of news. I was sorry to hear that Hugh Salmon had been ill with fever. Im pleased to say Ive kept well of course one can soon get affected with the sun as it has been very trying. it is still very hot by day. we get very heavy dews & fog here by night. We are getting a fairly easy time just now. I expect you heard Sir that the Gloucester Yeomanry did very well in August we had it pretty stiff them for a bit I had only landed in Egypt a fortnight before we were in action. but glad to say I came through safe .thank God. We get a service held here when it is convenient but of course being moved about a lot makes it awkward. There are a lovely lot of Date Palms dotted about in different places on the Desert & and there were a lovely lot of dates but of course they are practically all gone now. Im sorry to say I must not write of the work we are doing or where we are etc. But we are at present a long ways from the Suez Canal. I had a letter from Jesse a little while ago. she told me they had shortened the Petrol down a lot. I guess it is fairly quiet in Dyrham & Hinton Sir now with so many gone. But I hope please God the time will soon come when those that are spared will be back safe in the dear old land still at present there seems no sign of it ending. It is wonderful here Sir the way in which the supplies. food. forage etc. are brought to the troops on the desert. Of course it all comes by Camels. of which there are hundreds here. & the natives get 1/3. a day to look after them. There are some of our fellows transferred into the Camel Corps quite recently. We dont get much fresh water at that has to be brought to us on Camel as well. still one must not grumble. The water for the horses in some places is very brackish but they don't look so bad on it. There is a decent supply in some places but of course it has to be found & wells sank. We have only had rain once. Sir since Ive been out here & I landed 15th July. so it seems funny after been use to so much rain in England. Ive heard that some of our letters has been sank. but I dont know ?? when it was somewhere last month I think. rather unfortunate. By the way Sir we have an Officer in our lot. Major Clifford. I wonder if he is related to Bishop Clifford it struck me when I read your letter. I am Valet to two Officers & of course I have my horse to do as well here so have plenty to do. It seems funny here to see nothing much but huge sand dunes & desert & nothing else but sand to walk on after nice green fields etc. I saw some lovely flowers in Alexandria when we landed. but what struck me I think most of all was the bannas huge flowers & foliage & also the camellias were awfully good. I hope Sir this will find you quite well & also Mrs Blathwayt. thanking you once again for your kind letter & also paper hoping to have some news when I write again.

Yours Obediently

A. Hillier

*Albert Hillier: bapt 28.10.1888; son of Alfred, labourer of Hinton; in 1901, lived on site of Laburnum Bungalow.*

#### 4. Casualty

##### **A. A "Blighty ticket"**

**No 12 General Hospital**

**Rouen**

**France** (<http://goo.gl/maps/onMcx>)

**August**

**To the Rev W E Blathwayte**

Dear Sir – I am in wounded in Hospital having had both feet taken off, I wrote to my mother – Could you possibly find out if she has received my letter – I shall be glad to hear from you when you have time – I shall be at this address for a while yet –

Yours Sincerely

Pte G. Edwards

2422

1<sup>st</sup> Glos Regiment

*George Edwards: Not in in Dyrham or Hinton in the 1901 Census. Church Records: Bapt 24.12.1882; son of William, labourer of Hinton*

**B. After an amputation**

(NB: hand writing different from previous letter)

**Pte G. Edwards**

**No2422 1<sup>st</sup> Glos Rgt**

**"A" Ward St John's Hospital**

**Cheltenham**

**Glos** (<http://www.angelfire.com/az/garethknight/redcross/stjohns.html>)

**Tuesday**

**6<sup>th</sup> Feb 1916**

Dear Sir.

I am writing these few lines to you in answer to your letter & paper I received this morning (Tuesday) with thanks. I am very pleased to tell you that I am getting on splendid since the operation it means all the quicker getting to Roehampton, which I shall not be sorry to get & able to walk about again There's one thing to be thankful and that I had my knees, this is the 4<sup>th</sup> amputation & it's the best I came around with very little pain. I should be ready for Roehampton in another month I am glad you heard from Arthur Shewring I asked when I write home but never hear anything.

Cheltenham is a very nice place especially in the Summer. I went to Mr de. ?

Sauvigny for tea about a week or two ago. I was surprised at first when I saw him that he knew anything about Dyrham. I hear we have lost a couple of men in our village since I have been wounded, C Nash & G. Shipton I was sorry to hear of it. I think this all for the time

I Remain

Yours Sincerely

Geo. Edwards

(<http://ezitis.myzen.co.uk/queenmaryroehampton.html>)

**C. "Lucky to get off so light"**

**British Red Cross and Order of St John**

**12/5/?197**

Dear Sir.

I was so pleased to receive your most welcome letter. 27<sup>th</sup> it was my Birthday on 27th April and I was 27 years old that day. and in Hospital for the first time. but I hope I havent to go again wounded. it isnt when you gets wounded you feel the pain its after wards. I am pleased to say my wounds is getting better. I was wounded in both legs and both shoulders but not serious. I am very thankful it wasn't this is plenty bad enough or else it may have caused the loss of one of my legs. it hit me above my boot just missed the shin bone. I gets a lot of pain with it.

I couldnt sleep for four night. I was very lucky to get of so light. I was hit by two shells. I dont want to be in another corner like I was that night. I dont know how Ted Moss got on. My Brother John is alright but I hear Albert had been wounded in the head. I wished I had the chance of getting to France this is no mans land out here its all hills in front and behind its a death trap. its all done by guns. it isnt fighting - I havent heard anything of Fred Andrews thats only what we think he may have been killed. its rather funny his Mother havent heard by now. I seen in the paper a few lines and a Photo of one the boys has was taken prisoner the same night he lives in Bristol in the same platoon has Fred. thats what makes me think that Fred might have been killed. he would sure to have dropped a line Dear Sir must close has paper short we are not in England out here we are forgot. I am thanking you again for letting me know how they all are. with my best wishes.

I remains yours Truly  
Arthur Shewring

*Arthur Shewring: bapt 31.08.1890; brother of Albert – see 2B*

**D. Hospital in Ireland**

**No G36092**

**1/6 Cyclist Corp**

**Royal ?? Regt**

**Wicklow Hospital** (Duke of Connaught's Auxiliary Hospital, Bray, Wicklow)

**Ireland** (<http://goo.gl/maps/1xTjD>)

**Sept 1918**

**To The Rev W E Blathwayt**

Dear Sir,

I have been conveyed by the Red Cross Ambulance to the local Hospital yesterday, suffering from Chronic Rheumatism in my legs, caused from sleeping in wet Blankets & damp ground the rain came through our tent for several nights. I fell sick the end of Lent week previous to coming home, the Doctor saw me this morning & of course am in bed. my Food did consist of Eggs & milk, and the matron & nurses are very kind also some kind Lady brought me a bunch of Grapes & some Cakes. Hospital life seems very strange to me & I have done very little ?drill yet.

Wicklow is situated on the Coast with mountains around & is about 28 Miles south east of Dublin, it is a small town the Population are mostly Sein Feiners & are very bitter towards the British,

I have been unable to attend the Church here as we are a considerable distance away & too wet for Church Parades but I believe the vicar will visit the Hospital this Evening.

Dublin is very interesting & the shops are good especially for Antique articles, also the Ruins in Sackville (?Street – now O'Connell Street)) that are still to be seen from the Irish rebellion in 1916. the Irish are a very dirty lot of people & no limit to Food ?restrictions although things are very dear.

I went to see the Cathedral at Chichester some of the arches are Norman & I should imagine the building very historic

I hope the mistress is still keeping well also your Cold better, I have plenty of time to think of Dyrham & the past now am in bed, but this is a poor account of myself

Yours Faithfully

R B Ellis

(<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/nov/11/first-world-war-easter-rising-ireland>)

*Reginald Bertram Ellis: not in the 1901 Census; a servant (butler or footman) of the Rector. Died at home in 1918.*

### **E. Operation after operation**

**4<sup>th</sup> Scottish**

**General Hospital**

**Ward B1516**

**Stobhill**

**Glasgow** ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stobhill\\_Hospital](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Stobhill_Hospital))

Dear Sir.

As last I have felt well enough to write you these few lines I hope this will find you in the best of health. My leg is still very sore but the doctor told me as there is a great improvement & he told me as I was very lucky that he saved it. I shall be going under another operation in a day or so I have had two already but I think this will be to change the splint & set my leg properly. I don't think I shall ever go to France again I think the Germans have crocked me completely until duration. Well Sir I don't think I have anything else to tell you at present So I will close

I Remain

Yours Sincerely

Pte A Ball

Dear Sir.

Again I am writing you this letter hoping it will find you in the best of health as it leaves me going on well. I have to go and another operation to morrow morning it seems rather unfortunate as I was eating well & getting quite strong & that will pull me back again for a week or two worse luck, When I get stronger & my wounds better I shall try to get a transfer to Bristol or Bath I don't like the idea of being here perhaps 7 or 8 months I want to get a bit nearer home as I have only seen Mother & people at home for 10 days in very near 3 years. I see the offensive have started again but I don't think they will get far this time as we are more prepared for them. Well Sir I will not write any more at present I Remain

Yours Sincerely

Pte A Ball

Dear Sir

I was so pleased to receive your letter & paper this morning & I am pleased to tell you as I am feeling better than I was before I had the operation as I don't go through half so much pain as the doctor has set my bone properly this time. My leg broken halfway between the knee & the foot & I have a wound right on the front part of the leg and one on the under part I have a silver plate in my leg to keep the bone together. I think Sir as I shall be fit to be shifted in about 2 months time at least I hope so as I want to get a bit nearer at home We are having fairly decent weather here at present but I have to be satisfied with lying on my back & looking out of the windows. Well Sir I won't write any more at present So I

Remain

Yours Sincerely

A Ball

**2.9.18**

Dear Sir

I am pleased to tell you as my leg is getting a lot better but I am having a lot of abcess come near the wound and am still in bed and I think I shall be lucky if I am out of it by Xmas. The weather here just now is getting stormy but still we must expect it as it is getting very late in the year. I was sorry to hear about poor Victor Nichols, he had not been gone back to France many days before he was killed. The war is looking much better but we are having a terrible lot of casualties as convoys of wounded are arriving here practically every day. Well Sir I wont write any more at present so will close trusting this will find you in the best of health.

I remain

Yours Sincerely

Albert Ball

*Albert Ball: bapt 25.11/1895; son of Silas Ball, Hinton labourer; in 1901 living in Poor House, Hinton.*

**25 Sandiford Place**

**Charring Cross**

**Glasgow**

**7<sup>th</sup> ?? 1918**

**Pte Ball, Ward 5A, Stobhill, Glasgow**

Dear Sir

In reply to your enquiry about Pte Ball, this young gentleman is getting along nicely but it will be some time yet before his leg will be properly healed up. The bones below the knee (Right) were badly smashed up & I had to take away some large pieces. However he should have a useful leg to go about with.

He keeps very cheery & his general condition is excellent.

Kind regards

Yours faithfully

?? Martin MD

Capt RAMCTF

**5. India**

**Different problems**

**Lte H Gent 118793**

**MGC**

**Machine Gun Centre**

**Mhow**

**Central India** (<http://goo.gl/maps/I7Z0H>)16

**13/5/18**

**Mr Blathwayt**

Dear Sir.

I am writing you a few lines to let you know that I am keeping fit and well, we are having a very easy time here we only do four hours a day parade because it is so hot, but I am glad to say it is getting a little bit cooler now I hear the rainy season's start about this time of the year we have only had about a weeks rain since we left England we have had a lot of thunder here but very little rain with it, I shall be glad when it does rain to make it a bit cooler, we had it as much as



110 in the shade in April. I have been on a draft for Mesopotamia but I only got as far as Bombay, and I was put in Hospital there with dysentery, but unluckily I was only there a week and I was in bed all the time I did not get a chance to see Bombay, and then I was moved to a place called Deolali

(<http://goo.gl/maps/b4FZ0>) I was there a month, and I was glad to get away from there it was a very quiet it is bad enough here but it was ten times worse up there. We had a very good time coming out we were not troubled with the submarines at all, we only stopped at Cape Town one day just to unload some of the cargo, between Cape Town and Durban we met with a very rough sea, I was glad when we got to Durban we had to change boats so we stayed there a week, and we had an excellent time there it is a nice place I should like to stay there for the duration of the war, the English people that is out there gave us a good time every thing was free to us I was sorry to leave them. We spent Christmas on the sea, I attended one of the communion services we had service's at 11 o'clock and another at six, when we were singing the lovely hymns I thought how I wish I was at Dyrham in the choir, I am sorry to say that I can't attend the communion here owing to the time, and the church is about two miles away but I go every Sunday night I am not on duty, I shall be glad when I can get back to Dyrham. I will close now hoping that you are well.

I remain

Yours sincerely

Henry Gent

*Harry Gent: Born in West Littleton in 1897; son of Henry Gent, farmer at Hinton Farm*

## **6. At sea**

**Mess 2 Cabin 35**

**HMS Teutonic** ([http://www.naval-history.net/OWShips-WW1-08-HMS\\_Teutonic.htm](http://www.naval-history.net/OWShips-WW1-08-HMS_Teutonic.htm))

**C/O GPO**

**London**

Dear Sir

a few lines hoping you all are quite well as it leaves me at present. we have been having very rough weather lately. we lost a man overboard coming from the North Sea to Liverpool We got in hear a few Day & the Captain would not give us Leave So I will coming in about 2 Month time if Luck Sorry to hear Mother in hospital & I hope she will soon recover

All I have to say at present from Your truly

P G Frape

*P.G. Frape: Not in 1901 Census; Son of William, labourer of Hinton*

## **7. POW**

**Pte ?M Gorman**

**Gefangenenlager**

**Limburgh** (<http://goo.gl/maps/zQ12V>)

**Germany** ([Limburg an der Lahn](#). A camp holding 12,000 men in which Irish prisoners were concentrated for the purpose of recruiting for the [Irish Brigade](#))

**November 14<sup>th</sup> 1916**

Dear Revern

Blathwayt I received the Parcel which was sent to me from the Munsters fund (Munster Fusiliers Benevolent Fund) through your kindness to me I wish to thank you for the same the parcel was in good condition and safe I remain your sincere friend Pte

M Gorman

*M. Gorman: not in the 1901 Census*

## **8. Gallipoli**

### **A. Trench digging and Ticklers' artillery**

**Sept 21<sup>st</sup>**

Dear Sir.

Just a few lines in answer to yours of yesterday, thanking you for papers which you had been so good as to send us. I can tell you they are worth their weight in gold out here, we do look forward to the post as then we can hear how things are getting on at home in England.

Of course you will have heard by now that G Crew & H Salmon are wounded and are left here for hospital, but where I cannot say as I have not heard from either of them. I am pleased to say myself and brother are in the best of health, although Alfred is attending the doctor here with a bad leg, one of the other fellows accidentally hit him with a pick when trench digging. Our Battalion has not done much fighting, our work being trench digging & road making but we are by no means safe as shells are dropping around us all day long, claiming a few victims most days, but considering the number of shells they send over, the damage is nothing, they seem to be very poor gunners. Progress is very slow, but of course it always is a very hard job to put a man out of his own home, still we intend to get there one of these days. It is not a very safe place to be forced to spend our summer holidays in, but still it might be much worse, on the whole active service is not half as bad as I expected to find it. We get plenty of food such as it is, Bully Beef Biscuits & jam, but the biscuits are hard, I am afraid we shall lose half our teeth. I have just written to someone for a spring-mattress, as the ground we sleep on is nearly as hard as the biscuits. I wonder shall I ever get it (That is only one of our little jokes).

I wonder have you heard of Ticklers Artillery, it is the one thing the Turks cannot stand. I will try to explain. You see we have Ticklers Jams after the tins are empty they are washed out, filled with explosive and used as bombs for hand throwing from trench to trench, and very effective they are too so they are called Ticklers Artillery. We shall all be glad when the war is over the shells fairly get on your nerves, they are got as common as pebbles on the sea shore. It is a terrible war, somebody will get hurt before long if we don't hurry up and finish it.

There is not much to write about here, as we are practically in the same place as when we landed. There is a village just in front of us, but we have not got it yet, but of course hope to before long. Of course you will have heard of the new landing here so you will know in what part of the place we are. It was very warm here while we were landing, shells falling all around as long before we could land, in fact one of our fellows was hit on the boat waiting our turn to go ashore. We shall all be glad to get home again, for active service must be experienced to be understood. We see in the papers cases of fellows who are wounded saying they will be glad to get back to the trenches again, but somehow it is hard to believe that they mean it. I was surprised to hear of Pte Nash being married would you be

so kind as to wish him the Best of Luck from Turkey for me, as I cannot be there to wish him luck myself. I did not know that Arthur was working at the Ring o'Bells, as I have only heard from home once, I expect all of their letters get lost as I have received papers from them alright. So pleased to hear that G Shipton is well, should like to be remembered to him if possible, I hope they had more comforts out there than we have. this is such a wild rough piece of country, there is no going to the base for a rest from here. Please excuse paper and bad writing, as there is letter writing under difficulties, pencil about an inch long, and my knee for a table. I must close hoping this will find you in the best of health, and thanking you for all your kindness,

I remain

Your Sincerely

George Moss

*George Moss: bapt 26/06/1892; son of Isaac Moss, labourer, of Hinton; in 1901, as a cowman, was living in two rooms in Chapel Lane with his wife and four children.*

### **B. A New Zealander's point of view**

***New Zealand General Hospital***

***Cairo***

***15<sup>th</sup> Jany. 1916***

My Dear Cousin

I thank you most sincerely for your letter of Xmas greetings – and especially for the photo of “Dyrham Park” – the old place is dear to the hearts of all. Your letter reached me in the Hospital at Alexandria. I contracted enteric fever at Anzac in Nov and am now on my way back to New Zealand “for further treatment”.

Carried here by hospital train yesterday, and I expect to leave Suez on one of our hospital ships in a day or so.

I should very much like to accept your generous invitation to Dyrham Park to convalesce in your ?paradise, but as I am compelled to go away for six months my responsibilities naturally take me there. Doubtless you know that since my father died it has been my privilege to provide for my mother & three sisters. We have always been a most happy little family, and I have reason to believe if I return to convalesce in NZ I shall only be doing - at least – my duty to my poor mother.

It is most gratifying to hear that the folk in the Homeland appreciate the efforts of the New Zealanders. At last we in NZ have had an opportunity to prove our love & loyalty to England.

I sincerely hope that after I have my second attempt in the field to be able to visit England, and I look forward to availing my self of your kind invitation.

I trust you had had a pleasant Christmas, and I hope 1916 will not be as 1915.

With very best wishes, and again thanking you for the Postcard of Dyrham Park.

Your affectionate Cousin

Murray Blathwayt

My hand is still somewhat shaky and I hope he will forgive the shortcomings

**9. Salonika (<http://goo.gl/maps/Sy0Cu>)**

***13945 C Coy***

***10<sup>th</sup> Devons***

***Salonika Force***

***Jan 5<sup>th</sup>***

Dear Sir

I am writing to thank you for the Xmas card and the newspapers you so kindly sent me, also for your interesting letter. We have been in Greece about seven weeks and have got pretty well used to it out here. We spent a month in camp close to Salonika which was all right because we could see the people going in and out of the town and could see the shipping in the harbor and we could buy any things we wanted. We are now camped further in the interior up in the hills where there are no people so we cannot buy anything. For food we mostly get biscuits and bully. We are busy road making from daylight till dark seven days a week. We spent a very quiet Xmas day just like any other day except that we had a holiday which was lucky considering that some of the troops about here had to work Xmas day. We haven't had our Xmas mails in yet, but are expecting them every day now. Two Aeroplanes came dropping bombs on our camp the other day, but did not do any damage and soon went away when our aeroplanes came along, and the guns on board our battleships and our machine guns started firing. We were away from the camp at the time, but had a good view of it from where we were working I have not seen the Dyrham boys that are in the Royal Irish yet although they are not very far away. They have had a very rough time of it out here. I saw most of their Division when they came back to Salonika from the trenches. We do not get any news here, not even of what is going on around us. We got to wait for a news paper from England to know how things are going on I am living in a bivouac at present, which is a small tent three foot high at its highest point. They are very comfortable to sleep in when its dry but they are not very comfortable to live in, because you cannot even sit upright in them. There are snakes lizards tortoises and centipedes about here. The weather is very changeable here one day it might be bitter cold the next nice and warm but its mostly cold at night. There are lots of yellow crocus in flower about here. Other things growing wild but not in flower present are Cistus Florentinus and others, Brooms Cyclamens and a good many rock plants. I hear some more have enlisted in Dyrham. I do not think I have any more to say at present, so I will bring my letter to a close.

Wishing you all a Happy New Year

From Yours Respectfully

Fred Andrews

*Alfred Andrews: born in Wooton-under-Edge in 1890; son of Robert Andrews, a gardener at Dyrham House; lived in Lilac Cottage, Dyrham*

**13945 C Coy**

**10<sup>th</sup> Devons**

**Salonika Force**

**March 30**

Dear Sir

I am writing a few lines in answer to your letter and to thank you for the news papers you have so kindly sent me. We shifted camp last week, we are amongst the hills here where everything has to be brought on pack saddles by mules because its to steep to steep for wheel transport. I expect the severe weather has put the garden and other work behind. Out here we have it so hot that we have to work early in the morning and late in the afternoon and evening because its to hot to work in the middle of the day. We have to work eight hours a day at road making trench digging or drill. There are a lot of snakes and lizards about here

and numberless toads and frogs which are making a row day and night putting me in mind of a rookery at nesting time. We enjoy looking at the papers because at this camp we can not buy any newspapers and we have plenty of time for reading now in the middle of the day. I must now bring my letter to close hoping you and Mrs Blathwayt are in the best of health as this letter leaves me.

I Remain Yours Respectfully Fred Andrews

*Alfred Andrews: born in Wooton-under-Edge in 1890; son of Robert Andrews, a gardener at Dyrham House; lived in Lilac Cottage, Dyrham*

## **10. Waiting for demobilization**

### **A. Looking forward to civilian life**

*France*

**4.12.18**

Dear Sir

Just a few lines to you once again trusting yourself & the mistress are well as this leaves me. I should have written to you before this but have not had much chance I hear there was exciting times in England over the signing of the armistice we hardly knew any difference out here in fact it was signed some days before we knew it officially, its a blessing the fighting is all over & we must be thankful we have come through safely.

Well Sir as the censorship regulations are slightly relaxed I can tell you where I am, at a village called Briastre, (<http://goo.gl/maps/4BMWt>) close to a town named Caudry & about 12 miles from Cambria (**Cambrai**), on the right of it, the civilians who have been in German hands since 14 are all returning & some of them have some terrible tales to tell of German cruelty to them, the people in England have a lot to be thankful for in the Huns not reaching our country, the land around here is all under cultivation the Germans evidently had no intention of leaving it & our advance was so quick he had no chance to do much destruction, have seen large numbers of our returned prisoners these last two weeks. they look terribly thin & weak & can hardly realise they are out of captivity. I was extremely sorry to hear of Bertram's death, little did I think when on leave he would be in the army & pass away so quickly, the service finds out the weak from the strong. well Sir we are all looking forward now to our returning to civilian life it will not be for a few months I dont suppose, before they start demobilising every soldier will have a form to fill in stating what his occupation in civil life was who is employer was & if his situation is open for him, enquiries will be made to verify each man's statement, any employers wishing to apply for a man should write to the Minister of Labour 8 Richmond Terrace, Whitehall. I have mentioned this Sir as I am hoping to come into your service again when I am released, if you would care to apply for me it would probably mean my being discharged quicker than otherwise, we are getting some cold foggy weather this last week & some rain, we are billeted in houses which is much better than being under canvas & makes things a little more comfortable, well Sir theres not much more news to tell you a present so will close now. From Your's Respectfully

Geof Crew

*Geoffrey Crew: born 09.11/1890; son of William Crew, carrier of Hinton; in 1901 living with parents in Grove Cottage, Hinton.*

### **B. A request for help with employment**

**No 11670**

**Transport**

**27/12/18**

Dear Sir

I am writing you a line in answer your Most well come letter I received and also thanking you for Papers well I must say we have had pretty good Xmass but still hope to have a better one next well Sir I am going to ask you to do me a kindness in trying to get me Employment as I have been ask wether I have or not I am rely on getting a job in the Parish as you know do not want to go out anywhere Mr J.Ford (Ring o' Bells Farm) was my Last Employment and as you know he is gon into Wiltshire and I do care to go there as I am not going away from home well I must say he has promist to keep me wether I was disable or not but I have not heard from him since I have been in France so I do not intend taken the offer Well I hope all is well at home well I must say that the Belgium people are very clean and also very good well I was very pleased to hear that ?? got better well I suppose we shall be home within a few Month wishing you all a happy new year  
Your Truly

Jack

On my Form I am releying on you as I shall get work in the place I am group 1 and I am putting your Name as you will Employ Me or find some one that will

-----

trusting to you as we have done for our country and must say I am in good health at present

I remain

One of the Boys

**C. "England should be a better place"**

**Dec 17<sup>th</sup>**

Dear Sir

A few lines from near Valenciennes (<http://goo.gl/maps/si1Su>) to let you know that we are all quite well. So sorry to hear of the death of Voilet at the house. The Flu seems to be very bad around there. I expect you have heard that Bessie Gyles that used to be at Dyrham died on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October with it. I can hardly believe it as I had such fine times with her when I was at home on leave. So Geoff Crew is near Cambrai. I have not heard from him lately, but I hear from George very often. He is only about 12 miles from Cambrai. I should like to see him very much, as I joined with George, and it is 3 years since I saw him. So you think Rendall will not get in. For myself I should like to see him win, as he stands as the Coalition candidate, and I think Lloyd George is the man we should all support. Most of the fellows here that are in the Thornbury Division have not voted at all. They don't fancy Rendall, and yet will not vote for Pilcher as he is a soldier, and after all they are right, as officers in this war have treated men like dogs. We have put up with it for our Country's sake, but there is no getting away from the fact that the majority of the officers I have come into contact with are a bad a lot. Sorry to hear that Albert Ball is having much trouble with his leg, I had no idea that it was so bad. I take it that he is still in Hospital with it. A chum of mine that joined the army with us in 1914 and had never had a scratch before, had bad luck in losing the use of his leg the day before the armistice. He had a piece of shrapnel through the knee. Downright hard luck I call it to get it so near the end. It is awful when I think of the poor chaps in this Company that were killed the



same morning as the good news came through. We had 16 knocked out at 9 o'clock, 9 of them killed. We are not in a very nice spot, it is called St Waast about 12 miles from Valenciennes (<http://goo.gl/maps/VkzKK>), but of course Xmas this year is bound to be better than last, it could not be worse. This St Waast ([Saint Waast La-Haut](#)) is about 2 miles from the Belgian Frontier. I was rather surprised to hear from you after such a long time, but I must thank you for paper which I have received from time to time. According to the Coalition programme there will be drastic changes in Blighty if they get in, and I think it is a foregone conclusion that they will. England should be a better place for the soldier when he gets home, if they do all they promise for him. I don't think the Labour Candidates will stand much of a chance after the way that Labour Unions have acted in this war, with so many strikes. Well Sir I think this is all just now. From  
Your very

Sincerely

G. Moss

*George Moss: bapt 26/06/1892; son of Isaac Moss, labourer, of Hinton; in 1901, as a cowman, was living in two rooms in Chapel Lane with his wife and four children.*

**THE END**