

1st July 1915

Family news from home and Khartoum; envy for those on leave; heavy weather and “eyewash” from the GOC Indian Corps; Ainsworth is posted to Paradise; Company movements and a hope that the next spell of work is in reserve trenches; Arthur analyses their great losses since arriving in France last January; rumours of the Territorials returning for home service; a vivid account of a gas drill for the officers and NCOs.

Arthur to Dollie

In billets, Thursday even. 5.50pm

... Thanks for your dear letter of Monday – awfully welcome. One of the great joys of billets is the fact that the mail comes early, soon after lunch and one can read one’s letters by daylight! I also had news to-day from the **Mater and Dick**. I was awfully sorry to hear that the poor **Mater** had had a chill. I do hope that she is quite all right again now. **Dick** is very fit but very blood-thirsty.

I hav’n’t said much about leave, dear – though I felt awfully envious when **Wilcox, Tealeaves & Johnnie** went off for a week. The **C.O.** is trying to get leave for another batch, but I’m afraid there is very little hope – for we are due “in” again on Sunday. (Not much rest is there dear?) I am simply longing to get home to be with you ... I’m still hoping, but its a very small glimmer of hope left, still dum spiro, spero! [“While I breath, I hope” attrib Cicero.]

The weather the last two days has been unpleasant – distinctly. Yesterday it rained heavily – to-day it has been very threatening and heavy. This morning various inspection parades, by Platoon Commanders at half-past six, by myself at half-past nine, by the **C.O.** at half-past ten and finally by the GOC Indian Corps at 11. The latter indulged in any amount of what we call “eyewash”, said we were about the finest Territorial battalion out here, referred several times to our Neuve Chapelle show, which he said “was magnificent”, &c, &c then he had up all our new officers and congratulated them on joining so fine a battalion!

This afternoon, dear, **Ainsworth** went off to Paradise to take charge of a Seaforth draft for a few days; **Davis & Morley** arrived out from England. **Davis** is in my Company. We are now running a double Company Mess, myself, **Davis, Lloyd, Rice & Ainsworth, Tealeaves & Wilcox** (when they return).

It’s rather an awful thought. We landed in France 8 Companies 870 strong & about 30 officers. We are now 8 Platoons & trench strength of under 300 though we’ve had a draft of 160. Officers about 15 – a lot of whom are new, of course.

All sorts of wonderful rumours that we are to be withdrawn & employed on base or home duties, but I’m afraid, dear heart, that once more, the wish is the father of the thought. I wish they would take us out and give us a little “peace with honour”.

I told you, dear, didn’t I that yesterday we officers & a percentage of NCOs took an active part in a “gas” experiment. We wore the helmets they have issued to all & walked through a trench full of gas. The gas is terrible stuff: it killed a poor frog

that happened to be in the trench – turned all our buttons &c dull & greenish. But the helmets are wonderful. I sat right under the gas nozzle & couldn't smell it at all. It gives one great confidence to know that should the Germans use gas down here, we have an effective remedy! But let's hope they'll keep their gas to the north.

Next time we go up, I hope I hope to be in reserve trenches for 3 or 4 days as the last time we were up I was in the front line the whole 10 or 11 days.

Well, little darling, I think that's all the news. Rumours abound, but no-one knows – we just have to be patient & do the work of a full battalion with 1/3 of the numbers – which means three times as much work. Still we just worry on & do our bit, though it's awfully monotonous, awfully unpleasant & often awfully “unhealthy”...

2nd July 1915

Arthur has the promise of leave very soon and could be home as early as Thursday next week; meanwhile the Company are to man the reserve trenches; a welcome improvement in the weather.

Arthur to Dollie

Friday 6.15pm

... Thanks awfully for your letter of the 29th. You dear – your very virtuous indignation about leave. You'll be as bucked as I am, sweet heart, to hear that, as far as it lies in their power, both the **C.O. & Algy** have several times promised me leave, as soon as **Wilcox, Reeves & Johnnie** get back.

It seems as though leave is going to remain open, so I have every hope, but until I actually get home, I won't count it on – for disappointments often occur. None the less, darling, you may imagine my excitement and anxiety. I'm just longing to see you with all my heart. If things go as I hope, I shall only be in reserve trenches until Wednesday & DV be home Thursday afternoon. But there's always a possibility of one's hopes being disappointed. That is why I hav'n't said much about leave, dear.

I was awfully disappointed that the photos weren't a success. I was looking forward to them. Not much news to-day, dear. I have had rather a stomach ache! all the morning so have been taking things easily. It's nothing; some little thing that disagreed with me. I shall be all right to-morrow DV.

The weather DV shews signs of getting better. It has been very damp & moist lately. Well, little sweet heart, I think you've all the news. I am very anxious & expectant as to what these next few days may bring forth. I want to see you more than anything else in this world. God bless you & keep you safe and happy...

Remember me to all won't you, please dear. I've started a letter to my **Mater** – hope to get it finished...

NOTHING is to be written on this side except the date and signature of the sender. Sentences not required may be erased. If anything else is added the post card will be destroyed

I am quite well. ✓

I have been admitted into hospital.

{ sick } and am getting on well.

{ wounded } and hope to be discharged soon.

Law being sent down to the base.

I have received your { *letter dated* Wednesday
telegram
parcel

Letter follows at first opportunity.

I have received no letter from you

{ lately.

{ for a long time.

Signature }
only. }

Arthur

Date 8 7-15

[Postage must be prepaid on any letter or post card addressed to the sender of this card.]

4th July 1915

A busy time for Arthur in the heat, as they prepare to move the Company up to the reserve trenches; a chance for Mass, Confession and Communion; home leave is one step further for an ecstatic Arthur.

Arthur to Dollie

... I'm afraid this must be another very short letter – for to-night we move up again and there is an awful lot to do.

I've rather cheery news – for the **C.O.** has sent my name in for leave, and if it goes through, as it is almost sure to do, I shall be home next Thursday! DV. I am fearfully excited! I hope everything will be all right. My Company is only going into Reserve Trenches, as it had the brunt of the last time up.

The weather is awfully hot. I've been as busy as a bee all day, and am absolutely dripping.

This morning I went to Mass, Confession & Communion – ripping. Jove, I thought of the days we two used to go to the Cathedral together; do you remember. Happy days! but we've happier to come DV.

Yesterday I went up to the trenches with the **C.O.** to have a look round. Well, dear, I must go. I'm longing for next Thursday and YOU! ...

Love to **Rosa** [Pulman], please...

5th July 1915

Arthur apologises to Dollie for the shortness of his recent letters; Thursday leave is looking more certain and he is fearfully excited; the reserve trench they are in is commodious and he even has a room in a house for sleeping – with flowers on the table; a shame about the shelling though.

Arthur to Dollie

“Up”, Monday 6.45pm

... I am “up” once more, as you see from my heading, and am very comfortable. But before I give you my news, dear, there are two things I want to do. Ask you to forgive me for only writing a short note yesterday, and to tell you that, as far as one may speak of the future, I hope to be home on Thursday. My leave has gone in to the Brigade with **Sammy & Bobbie Page**. Leave is open to officers & there you are. God willing we shall leave here on Wednesday and catch Thursday morning’s boat from Boulogne. I am fearfully excited.

Meanwhile I am up in reserve trenches and am extraordinarily comfortable. I have half my company about 300 yards away in a line of dugouts – the other half with me in more dug-outs of a commodious pattern. I and two of my officers, **Rice & Ainsworth** are living in a house! I have a room to myself, quite a decent one, with a bed to spread my waterproof sheet on, and an easy chair; flowers on my table! It’s simply ripping – if it wasn’t for the shells.

The weather to-day has been cold & overcast; but this evening it has cleared up wonderfully.

6th July 1915

Just three lines today to catch the post - after a night spent working in the trenches.

Arthur to Dollie

8.30. Tues

I've just 10 minutes to catch the post, dear, so must hurry. We were out working all last night. Weather to-day glorious. I am looking forward to Thurs. God bless you, with all my love dear ...

POST OFFICE



TELEGRAPHS.

Office Stamp.

Numbered to an

Name of Office and Service Institution

Words

Class of Service



3.52A

317 Folkestone Pass Rd 14

THIS FORM MUST ACCOMPANY ANY INQUIRY RESPECTING THIS TELEGRAM.

Received here at

TO

Mrs Noel
115 Compayne Gdns
Hampstead Ldn

Due Victoria five this morning
love Arthur



45 Compayne Gardens



15th July 1915

A heartbreaking note to Dollie from the train – as Arthur is compelled to return to France.

Arthur to Dollie

In the train – Just past BROMLEY, 7.45pm

... How can I begin – it's awfully hard. I feel I've got so much to say. I feel it so difficult to speak at all... I'm wondering what you're doing, where you are. You fill my thoughts. My heart is full...

The train is speeding south dragging me further & further from you, queen of my heart. Duty calls. I must go...

God bless you & keep you, safe & sound now & always...

16th July 1915

Arthur starts his letter from before leaving Boulogne; a shaking train and a reasonable sea crossing; he envies the Tommies waiting at the docks for their leave to start; a patriotic watch mender.

Later Arthur writes from his new billets; they are out of the trenches for now, though the Indian troops are to be rested whilst the remainder soldier on; a change of Division; the unfairness of it all.

Arthur to Dollie

Hotel Folkestone, Boulogne-sur-Mer, Friday 8.30am

Good morning – God bless you. I wonder what you’re doing now, dear heart of mine. I am longing for news of you. You see, we are still in [Hotel] Folkestone. Last night when we landed we made enquiries & found there was a car from Merville. We tried to find the chauffeur but couldn’t, so we turned in here.

We had a fairly good journey, dear. The train shook a lot, so I’m afraid you’ll find my note rather difficult to read. Everyone of course wanted food & apparently there was only one man to serve our coach – so the service little dear, wasn’t perfect. However. I had a chop, peas, potatoes – a rather weird fruit salad & cream – cheese & coffee – to drink, stout. We got on board all right. I sent my note off by the Telegraph boy. I hope he posted it all right.

We left Folkestone at 11 reached Boulogne after 1 hour & three quarters – quite a good voyage, but the boat had rather a list & rolled a lot. No ill effects however DG. We were a great crowd on board as you know – a lot of the Tommies shewed signs of leave and leave-taking.

It was a very dark night last night, darling mine. The stars were wonderful – those stars that were watching over you. There was a great crowd on the quay here waiting to go on leave – lucky beggars! The leave trains were up alongside the ship, but we didn’t go in. We came down & looked for our car & finally as I’ve said turned in here.

We had a very comfortable night, I shared a room with **Sammy. Bobby & Brady** went together. This morning, dear, we were called at 7, had coffee & croissants (sic), then a glorious shave & a bath!

... It is now a quarter to ten, dear. After searching about we’ve found our car & we leave at ten. I’ve just been into the town to have my watch mended. The second hand had fallen off. I was rather touched – I took it in to a watchmakers. It took the man some time to do it & a certain amount of trouble – yet he refused to take any payment.

I’m afraid, dear, I shall not be able to post this here because of the censorship, but I’ll have it sent off either from Merville or from the battalion. An Indian Medical Officer told us on the boat that the Meerut Division is back resting. I hope so. More news too (1) The **C.O.** is going to the War Office to see the Under Secretary of State

for War to try & get the battalion home. (2) **Sammy** is trying to get a separate command. I don't know whether this is for publication, so be careful, darling, won't you, about spreading it around...

S of M-rv-lle, 5.50pm

... How are you, dear. You see I've arrived safe. The Battalion is out (it has been out for a few days). It arrived here last night. We are further back than we have been for some time, further back than Les Lobes & there are hopes of our being here 8 days DV. We had a very good run from Boulogne, bar a puncture just outside Aire. The country is looking fine, but everything seems dull to-day. For I am without the sunshine of your eyes – I miss you so much.

We arrived here about 3. Found everyone very fit. **Johnnie** as Adjutant. More news dearest. They've decided the Indian troops want a rest. They decided at the same time – Heaven knows for what reason? – that the white troops of the Indian Corps could do without. The Indian Corps consists of 2 Divisions – the Meerut & Lahore – each of 3 Brigades. Each Brigade consisting half of white & half of black troops. They have now put all the black troops into the Meerut Division & taken them back for 3 weeks rest & have put all the white troops into the Lahore (temporarily) for the 3 weeks, while the Meerut are back. So for the next 3 weeks we are in the Lahore Division Sirhind Brigade. Extraordinary idea isn't it sweetheart? ...

17th July 1915

Arthur reads Dollie's letters waiting for him in billets [then sends them home for safe keeping]; a weary, windy, wet day and the fly-infested new billets are pretty rotten; it's Sunday tomorrow and Arthur hopes to get to Mass; meanwhile he must catch up with paying the men; Arthur is finding it hard to write to Dollie as he would wish, in the overcrowded Mess room.

Arthur to Dollie

in billets, Saturday afternoon 6pm

... So another day has passed, dragging its weary way along. I feel I miss you more each hour, my darling... I found all your dear letters waiting for me here – my Quartermaster-Serjeant handed them to me. I'm sending them back. Thanks awfully for them, little darling – full of sweetness & comfort. I am longing for a letter from you – please heaven, I'll get one tomorrow. I'm dying to hear how you are & how you've got on since I saw you last.

The weather here has broken – it is very, very windy, cloudy & wet – rarely a burst of sunshine through the clouds. But I rather feel in a mood with the weather, torn from you – my own one, dear queen of my heart.

The billets are pretty rotten. My Company is all in one farm. **Wilcox & Davis** are bivouacking in a field, **Rice & Lloyd** are together, **Tealeaves & Ainsworth**. We all mess in here, where I sleep. I have a bed of sorts on which to spread my flea-bag & blankets. But the place is not up to much; flies are “orrid” & an awful nuisance. The place is called L'EpINETTE.

To-morrow, I've just remembered is Sunday. I wanted to pay the men in the morning, but I also want to go to Mass. Apparently nothing has been fixed up by the **Padre**. I sent my servant into Lestrem to find out about Mass there. He couldn't read French but says that there is one at 10. So I'm going to try my luck.

You'll be glad to hear, darling, that I've now got 2 gas helmets. Last night I turned in early, feeling rather sleepy. This morning up soon after 7: brekker at 8. The men paraded at 9 – 11. I had a lot of work to do re pay which took me on close till 12. This afternoon I had one or two things to do, then tried to sleep for an hour but the flies were an awful nuisance.

I then had tea: afterwards I went through my papers & then began to write. But writing I'm afraid is getting somewhat difficult. The room – a very small one – is getting fuller & fuller. There are now about 8 in it. So you'll understand, won't you, little darling & forgive me...

18th July 1915

Arthur longs to hear from Dollie; the servants oversleep; sung Mass at Lestrem; beating the Machine Gunners at “Cricket”; a picturesque ride to La Gorgue and a view of the local aerodrome; future movements are uncertain as the Indians three weeks rest has been cancelled.

Arthur to Dollie

In billets, Sunday evening 9pm

... Still another day without news, the news that I want so badly. I long for tomorrow for surely by then must arrive the letter I crave for...

This morning we were all rather late – that is why my “good morning” was cut so short. The servants overslept themselves and we had to rouse them instead of they us. So darling I had to rush through things rather to catch the post.

The weather to-day has been ever so much finer & warmer. The wind dropped in a great measure so we enjoyed more sun. This morning we had breakfast about ten past nine. I left here at half-past & walked into Lestrem to Mass. Lestrem is a big village or rather a townlet about twenty minutes East of here. Mass was a sung one & there was Exposition. I got back soon after 12.

... This afternoon our Company played the Machine Gunners at cricket. Such cricket. A very rough field, rough sticks cut from a hedge for bails & stumps! We won but the scores weren't great. They made about 27 & 53; we 51 and about 60. So it was a noble victory!

At 5 I went for a ride. I rode North until I came to our local aerodrome – saw two biplanes go up – it was ripping to watch them, especially as one saw them flying low; one never sees that “up there”.

I then turned & rode to a charming place called La Gorgue. It is awfully quaint for the river runs through it in two or three branches – so that in places the little town looks as if it was built on islands; like a Dutch town. There are several old mills, a fine church & old clock tower – as Baedeker would have said “several points of interest”.

I turned there & rode back through Lestrem getting back just before 7. The country here & to the Northward seems much less remote than that lying south of here. One meets pave in some of the main roads. The villages have grown into townlets & are just a bit further apart. The churches are more pretentious – there is more timber.

We hope to be here for a few more days, sweet heart of mine; though arrangements are apparently still “in the air”. The latest is that we rejoin the Meerut Division on the 24th, the Indians “three week rest” being “off”...

19th July 1915

Arthur is more cheery as Dollie's letters begin to arrive once more; a rushed cricket match and tea party for the men – as an unexpected working party interrupts play; a swarm of flies; a request for more film for his pocket Kodak.

Arthur to Dollie

Mon. 8.5am

Good morning ... No more news since last night. I've just had brekker. The sun is shining but my heart is awfully dull without you...

Monday 3.45pm

Many, many thanks, for your two dear letters of Friday, which came to-day, ever so welcome. I thought you awfully brave at Victoria, dearest. You helped me a lot ...

I am writing early to-day, darling. To tell the truth, it is an interval snatched from duties. This morning we paraded from 9 to 11; then I paid out some men, then lunch.

This afternoon we had planned another cricket match & tea. I sent **Tealeaves** into Merville to buy fruit & pastry for the men. When we had bought it, there was to be a working party – 200 men & 5 Officers under me – to parade at 5.30. So you see, dear heart, it doesn't give us much time, especially as the NCOs were on parade until 3.15. However we are making the best of it & carrying things through, as, if we delay till tomorrow the pastry part will be stale. They are playing now, but I came in, for I want to write to my darling.

It has been warm to-day, the flies are awful, in spite of an abundance of fly papers...

Could you get me 2 more rolls of film please dear. Vest Pocket Kodak No. 0 Brownie Camera 8 Exposures 1 5/8 x 2 1/2 in Autographic Thanks awfully.

20th July 1915

5am and exhausted from being on a night working party, Arthur start a letter to Dollie.

9.30 pm and just in from dinner with their commanding officer, Arthur thanks Dollie for her letters and the photos taken on leave – photographs that don't quite come up to Arthur's high standards!

Arthur to Dollie

5am

...Just in from a working party ... dog tired, but bursting with love for you ... all my love ...

Tuesday evening 9.30

... Thanks awfully for your dear letter – Saturday's – and the photos. I am happy when I hear from you ... Your dear letters help such a lot. At time I feel our separation more unbearable than ever & everything seems awfully hard. Then I just long & wait for your dear letters. And when I get them, a great weight seems to lift off one's chest, and I draw a further supply of strength & courage. God bless you.

I think the photos quite good, but not nearly good enough for you ... But I'm afraid the Autograph part wasn't much of a success, was it dear? I was awfully pleased to get them for they were of YOU. Try & get someone to take some more of you with the bigger camera & send them out.

I am sorry I'm so late writing to-night, dear, but **Sammy** & I have been to dinner with Beri-Beri [**Beresford**]. I'm feeling awfully tired ... good night & happy dreams...

21st July 1915

A description of the previous night's work, back in the trenches of Neuve Chapelle; a lie in and a bath in the local brewery; a recce of the front line via Estaires & Laventie – a long day with only a cup of water mid afternoon. Dollie gets the wrong end of the stick about a book she finds in Arthur's things.

Arthur to Dollie

Wednes. 8am

Good morning ... I turned in last night after saying Good Night to you, dear & slept the sleep of the just. Now about our working party ... We paraded about 5.30 on Monday evening & drove in wagons, 5 Officers & 200 men, to a place about 6 miles from here, behind Neuve Chapelle. There we met a Sapper Officer and went forward about half a mile down the road, then about 1100 yards down a communication trench, through the old line we held before March 10th, through the old German line, till we were about 150 yards short of Neuve Chapelle. There we dug our work; I was awfully sleepy.

We left about half-past one & came back the same way, reaching here in broad daylight about half-past four. We turned in then, dear. I wrote a note to **John**, to ask if **Beresford** would cancel the 9-11 parade. He did, so we slept as much as the flies would let us & had breakfast about 10.30.

I had several Company matters to attend to before lunch. Afterwards the Company went into a little place beyond Lestrem for baths in an old brewery. **Tealeaves, Wilcox** & I, and, later on, **Davis**, did some pistol shooting. It was rather windy & so though pretty fair we weren't as good as last time...

To-morrow, dear, we expect the **C.O.** back. I wonder what news he'll have. This morning I'm going out with **Beresford**. ¼ of the Battalion are up again working. This time under **Morley**. Well, darling, I think that's all the news...

Wednes. 9.15pm

... I am going to ask you to forgive me for only just a short bit tonight. I am awfully tired, dear heart of mine. To-day we went to the front via Estaires & Laventie – a long, long ride and a long, long walk. We left by half-past nine this morning, and weren't back till 5 this afternoon. On the go the whole time, and nothing to eat or drink save a cup of water about 3.

I was pleased to get your dear letter of Sunday... the red book... Of course I understand, my darling. I found it in Richebourg St Vaast in the Curé's house. I walked in one day with **Sammy** when we were at Croix Barbée, I think it was. We were looking at the ruins of the church (it was destroyed in the bombardment of the village, about the time of Neuve Chapelle). Then I suggested we should go on into the remains of the Curé's house. Incidentally we were also looking for strawberries. As we were rummaging about I picked this book up. I thought it was the Curé's & that it was the foundations of his sermons. I'm afraid I never looked inside on the fly-leaf, & really had no idea it was a female's...

22nd July 1915

Another letter of two halves; Dollie is feeling dull and her Mother is unwell; Arthur is busy preparing to move his men into reserve trenches tonight, south of Laventie; he assures Dollie that it will be a quiet spot of the line; the weather is close and threatening – the worst sort for a long march; more white heather for friend Harry Pulman's grave; the C.O. is back and one of the new officers is as old as 49! [Arthur is 22, so that must seem jolly ancient].

Arthur to Dollie

Thurs 7.44 am.

... Good morning ... God bless you. I was sorry **Elsie** put you off last Sunday. It would have done you a lot of good and I know how dull a dark Sunday afternoon must have been for you, poor little darling all alone with or without **Miss Marsh!**

... I am feeling rather stiff after yesterday. We rode about eighteen miles and walked about 6. I expect to be pretty busy today as we are most probably moving up to-night. We are going to be in local reserve & the part of the line we are going – south of Laventie, near a few houses called Fauquissart is a very quiet spot. So don't be anxious...

I hope you will be able to get to **Rosa** [Pulman] before she goes north. I always feel comforted when you are with her, for I know you are happier. By now, dear, DV your **Mother** will be down and about again. I want to write to her but really these few days my time has been awfully short... I think that is about all, dear. I don't [know] if I shall be able to write till to-morrow. At any rate there is no need for worry, my dear little wife-to-be...

Thurs. 5.30 pm

... Two letters came to-day, Monday's & one written on Saturday night. God bless your dear heart. I am so happy when I hear from you. Thanks awfully too, for the white heather: I shall put it with the remainder of the bunch **Harry** gave me – that is now resting over his grave. Good luck to you dear heart; good luck to us both. Please God, we shall have an awfully happy & profitable life, just you & I, never to be separated.

The weather is very close & threatening. It rains every now & then: a rotten evening for a long march – *into* the trenches. However it's all in the day's work. By the way dearest, I think you'd better continue to address your dear letters Meerut Division. At present we are working with troops drawn from both Meerut & Lahore. They say, too, that we are to rejoin the Meerut on the 24th. But whether that's true *quien sabe?* who knows.

The **C.O.** arrived back this morning, looking very fit. I only saw him for a few minutes about to-night, so have no news from him. Also, 2 of the 7 new officers turned up – the sole survivors, the others being sick or weak. I haven't seen them yet,

but I don't think they are up to much – one is about 49! so rumour says. Their names – Gedge & Molesley (not Potash & Perlmutter!) I shall be glad when we get settle down to-night. I have been very busy all day ...

23rd July 1915

A short note to Dollie – the Company is over a mile away from the enemy lines; a nine mile march to reserve trenches in the darkness and pouring rain; the men are now busy digging shelter; Arthur has a long tramp between guard posts.

Arthur to Dollie

in a Redoubt, 8.45 am.

I'm afraid this will only be just a very short note to tell you I'm awfully fit & well DG. and getting settled down very comfortably.

We have had a rotten time last night & this morning. We marched about 9 miles up here in the pouring rain. It rained hard at intervals till this afternoon. The men had little or no shelter. We are busy digging it now.

I've had a lot to do all day. My Company is holding 3 posts in reserve, a long way apart. It means a great deal of tramping. Here we are over a mile from the enemy.

I shall write at length tomorrow DV & give you all my news. So au revoir & Good night. God bless you...

24th July 1915

An account of the previous night's march to the trenches in the pouring rain; Arthur is based in a redoubt dubbed "Lonely Post"; the General makes an appearance at the Front in the fearful wet; a pressing need for stealth during daylight hours as a German war balloon is hovering over nearby Aubers Ridge; a welcome parcel from home and the papers from Alphonse [brother Alfred].

Arthur to Dollie

in my dug-out, 6.15pm

... I've two letters and a card to thank you for – one letter & a card came yesterday, the other this afternoon. God bless you for them, my dear wife-to-be, they're an awful help and comfort, for they come from you ...

Let me give you my news now dear... On Thursday evening we paraded at L'EpINETTE at 7 and marched off at about 7.40. Soon after we started it began to rain, first in little showers, which gradually increased in vehemence till, with the growing darkness, it had set in heavily. It was a miserable march – about 7 miles. We got up safely DG. My Company is divided into 3, and is distributed among 3 posts at various distances from the fire trenches. The one I am in which contains HQ is nearly a mile back.

I have only 3 officers of my 6 up at a time as that is all that is necessary. **Davis, Tealeaves & Wilcox** are up now. **Lloyd, Ainsworth & Rice** back at the 1st Line Transport. (I have just heard that 4 new officer are due to arrive to-night, making 6 all told. **Sammy** already has 2, he is to have 2 more, & I the other 2 – the affair is become a farce!)

To go back: when we arrived I sent **Reeves & Wilcox** off to their posts. **Davis** is here with me. Our redoubt is called Lonely Post, the other two Dreadnought & Erith. Wonderful isn't it dear. That first night was wretched: most of the men were without shelter. It rained awfully hard most of yesterday. The night was fine, this morning a few showers, but this afternoon though cloudy has been fine.

Yesterday I went up to the front with the **C.O. The General** came round. It was fearfully wet. I afterwards visited Erith & Dreadnought. Yesterday evening and last night we were busy building shelters for the men. **Davis** & I moved into a bigger dug-out where we are very comfortable.

To-day we have been very quiet as one needs to be, for we are in view from the Aubers Ridge & there is a German "Sausage" (war balloon) over against us. To-night however we shall be busy again dear.

Yesterday I had a parcel from home & to-day some papers, I think from Alphonse [**Alfred**]. I am looking forward to your parcel, you generous little soul, you spoil me...

July 25th 1915

A sleepless night and a muddy haul around the three guard posts, although the General is pleased with their work; the 1st Line Transport is attacked in the evening, with one man killed and 8 men wounded; Arthur meets his new officers – one from the Foreign Legion.

Arthur to Dollie

In my dug-out, Lonely Post. Sunday 9.7pm

... A thousand thanks for your dear and welcome letter of Thursday. Yet a thousand thanks are not enough – I could never thank you enough. I simply love to get them.

To-day DG has been very fine. Last night I went round to the Posts. It took me about 3 hours & was very muddy. Then I watched over the work **Davis** is doing here, finally turning in about 1. I didn't have a very restful sleep last night. I felt rather wide-awake.

This morning brekker as usual pretty late. The **General** came round, very pleased with our work. I've had a lot of odd things that wanted seeing to that has kept me fairly busy all day. This evening the beauty of the sunset was somewhat marred by the activity of a German aeroplane & German gunners. They put a few shells near our 1st Line Transport, killed one man, wounded 8 others, also **George**, one of the new Subs, also two horses.

The new Subalterns came up this morning & were introduced. I have two, **Lewis**, a fat old buffer, who has served in the Foreign Legion & a fellow called **Bateman**. I think they'll shape all right. They [are] coming up tomorrow, one in to each of the two more advanced posts, just to see how things are run.

Did I tell you, dear heart, that **Davis** is to be Transport Officer. That, sweet heart, is about all the news. I'm awfully fit, getting very fat & fairly lazy! ...I'm sorry your **Mater** isn't altogether fit dear. Remember me to her please...

27th July 1915

Chocolates from Dollie, which soon disappear; Arthur has his hands full commanding his Company; a rumour that more of the 3rd Londons could be diverted to Khartoum [brother Dickie is already there – but leaves for Gallipoli in mid September]; the CO informs the King that reinforcements are hard to get – to the King's great surprise!

Arthur to Dollie

In my dug-out, Tues. morning 8am

... Good morning & God bless you. And thanks awfully for your letter of Friday, dear, & a parcel. So much appreciated indeed that the chocolates are already gone. But it is your letter, dearest, that I long for & welcome. I can never hear enough from you my dear little wife-to-be.

There is nothing I should like better, darling, than for you to go to Kings Lynn with **Rosa** [Pulman]. It would do you a world of good to have a break & especially to get out of town for a bit. Besides I always feel more comforted when you are with **Rosa**: God bless her. Give her my love, darling & tell her everyone out here who knows her is full of her praises. So sweet heart, if you can arrange to go, do.

I was very busy yesterday all day, darling, so I've told the post Corporal to come up here this morning. He makes a late collection for the C.O.'s letters in time to catch the post. There were several odd jobs that wanted seeing to in the morning, then I went up & all round the front line. Back at 1.20. Lunch & after lunch I had to arrange for a working party under **Rice**, also make up the C.O.'s map to date & my one – which isn't quite finished. Then dinner. After that more working parties and another journey up to Erith. I turned in about midnight. So ... I was pretty busy.

There is very little news as to our getting back. **Sammy** has a rumour that 400 of the 3rd are off for Khartoum! But the **C.O.** is sceptical about that. We are all longing to get back, but honestly speaking, dear heart, there is no news of any such luck, no news & not even a hint.

By the way dear, when the **C.O.** was invested the other day – the **King** singled him out as it were & praised the old 3rd. He also asked the **C.O.** about reinforcements & the **C.O.** told him how impossible it was to get them – to the **King's** surprise.

28th July 1915

Family promotions – Edouard Noel and Alfred Agius may be made up to the rank of Major and Arthur become permanent Captain; Arthur explains that they are currently under-manned and so cannot be counted as a fighting unit; meanwhile the 2/3 Londons could be headed to the Dardanelles, with the 400 reinforcements; Dollie has sent Arthur a ham; he promises to visit Harry Pulman’s grave but opportunity is limited; a rumour of leaving the trenches tomorrow; the C.O. voices his opinion of Dollie’s Mater; more cold and unsettled weather.

Arthur to Dollie

In my dug-out, Wednes. 8.20am

Thanks awfully for your dear letter of the 24th. You are a darling to write so much. If you could only guess how much I love to hear from you & how dull everything seems if a day goes without a letter.

Let me answer your news first dear. One, re **Edouard** being a Major. The **C.O.** sent in 3 names, **Harold Moore, Edouard & Alfred**. He has also asked for my temporary rank to be made substantive. Two, re the 400 from Egypt. The **C.O.** thinks that the 400 going out are going to form a depot for the 2/3 so that they can send it to the Dardanelles. If however they mean to bring back 400 to reinforce us they will arrive too late. Our strength is now about 250 & there is a leakage of 10-12 a week. It will take them about 2 months to get fitted out & to join us. The rest is a simple sum. So you see dear that unless they reinforce us at once with 600-700 men, they cannot count us as a fighting unit.

For the rest, darling, I am awfully bucked at the prospect of your parcel and the ham. You are a perfect darling & spoil me. God bless your generous heart. About **Harry**’s cap & his grave, dear, you may be certain that I have not forgotten. But I hav’n’t had a chance. I was busy all the time I was at L’Epinette & since then we have been “up” some little way to the Northward. But rest content, darling, that on the first opportunity I will go. There is a pretty strong rumour that we go “out” to-morrow. I shall be rather sorry, for we’ve settled down very snugly here & this chopping & changing about is a nuisance to put it mildly.

Yesterday yet another two officers joined us – two Captains this time. **Newsom**, I think his name is, & **Bailey**. The latter is now my second in command. I’ve hardly had time to form an opinion of him yet.

Yesterday morning I went up again & round the front. It was very, very muddy. The **C.O.** asked after your **Mater** yesterday – asked after “the old lady” – said how much everyone admired her, himself, **Algy** & all. “She called a spade a spade & a fool a damned fool!” Otherwise sweet heart there is not much news. The **padre** came up yesterday & is coming this morning to hear the men’s confessions...

The weather is very unsettled & rather cold, but there are very fine intervals which almost make up for the greyness & the rain. Well, darling, I think that’s all. The Post Corporal will be up in a minute, so I must come to a close...

29th July 1915

A post card and a letter for Dollie today from Arthur; Dollie's regular parcels are much appreciated; the cold at night prevents a decent sleep; the fame of the 3rd Londons is spreading; windy and cloudy weather, but thankfully no more rain; Confessions for the RCs in Arthur's dugout.

Arthur to Dollie:

In my dug-out, Thurs 10.15pm

I'm afraid I lost the post this morning for all save a Field Service Postcard. I have been writing in the early morning these last few days. This morning as usual I was awake at 7, (to tell the truth, the nights are very cold, and I scarcely do more than doze), but I was very sleepy. I fell asleep again & didn't wake until after 9. The Post Corporal makes his late collection then.

So let me now thank you, my own one, for three letters, of Saturday night, Sunday and Monday and for ... your parcels that are daily & hourly appreciated. Dear generosity that prompts them, God bless you.

My news is not very much. Our quarters are the softest we have yet held of those "up". We work hard on every opportunity, but there, one expects that & takes a natural pride in one's work. **Shackleton, our M.O.**, is just back from leave. He says that in the train there were two Gunner Officers. They asked him what regiment he was going to join. "The 3rd Londons" "Oh, that's the Regiment that always works so hard in the trenches".

Yesterday afternoon I was up in the front, again last night with a working party and twice again to-day. Each journey means about 2 miles of communication trench. The weather, luckily, though cloudy at times, and very windy except at night when there is a wonderful moon, has not been wet.

Yesterday morning, darling, the **Padre** turned up. I got the RCs together and we went to Confession, in my dug-out. It was a great help & comfort ...

30th July 1915

Arthur and Company are to be relieved tonight and go back north of Estaires; changing fronts with the Lahore; a wonderful account of Arthur's dugout – made even more homely by foraged garden flowers, arranged in a shell casing.

Arthur to Dollie:

Friday morning, 8.45

... Good morning ... God bless you. Well, dear to-night we are to be relieved. We go back N. of Estaires & rejoin our Brigade. That is to say, our Brigadier General & his staff who have been miles back for 3 weeks now resume command of us.

Apparently this bit we are in is to be our divisional front. It used to be held by the Lahore, only we are now apparently changing fronts with the Lahore & they are going to take over our bit down South. I am not sorry to be up here. The country is a bit new – the line is fairly peaceful and though there is an awful lot of work to be done, that doesn't frighten us.

My dug-out is quite a comfortable one, lined if you please with green Willesden canvas; outside a little passage & a small verandah [sic] with a grass roof. Furniture of 2 tables, a chair & several wooden boxes as seats, a lot of flowers I picked in a ruined garden in the Rue Tilleloy, arranged in an empty shell.

Well darling, there we are. I am anxious to hear that you have fixed things up with **Rosa**. I like you to be with her – you are happier & I do want you to be happy always...

31st July 1915

A very brief note in the evening - to let Dollie know they are back safe in billets north of Estaires; the ham also arrived safely and has been swiftly demolished; and the men have had a bath!

Arthur to Dollie

9pm, In billets

This is just a scribbled note in case I can't finish my letter – to let you know that I am very fit & well, in receipt of all your letters (God bless you) & safe way back in billets N. of Estaires.

We were relieved yesterday & got in here late last night. To-day we've been bathing the men!

The ham is (or was) priceless!