

**1<sup>st</sup> June 1915**

**A number of welcome letters from Dollie; Company accounts interrupted by a move back to a more comfortable billet – alas for only one night; strengthening of the Indian Army Corps; Arthur relaxes away from shell fire and dreams of home; Alfred sends papers and news from No3; a consignment of new undies from the Mater; a wounded machine gunner wishes to serve again under Arthur.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

in an orchard, 3.5 pm

... Thanks awfully for your dear letters of Tuesday, Friday & Saturday. Strangely enough, Tuesday's & Friday's came together yesterday. Saturday's I have just got. I am awfully glad to get your dear news. I am sorry sweet heart that I did not write yesterday, but we moved back a bit. Not for any length of time though for to-night we move forward again.

It was very fine yesterday, as it is indeed to-day. We had the usual parades in the morning. After parade I went through the men's pay books with the regimental serjeant major. We hadn't quite finished when 1 o'clock came, so I proposed going on. But then we received orders to move at 2.30. So we dashed off & had lunch, then had everything packed up.

We left about 2.30, formed up on the road & marched off at 3. We came via V---lle Ch-p-lle [Vieille Chapelle] (whither we return this evening) & Fosse. Past the old water mill & distillery there & on via Cr—x M-rm-se [Croix Marmuse] to the crossroads where is situated the Estaminet Au Paradis. My Company is billeted here in a large barn, the rest of the Battalion further up the road towards & beyond the little church.

We officers of D Company, are in a little farm – very clean & comfortable. We've just one room for the three of us, but we have straw to lie on & the cleanliness & immunity from shell fire are a treat. I wish we were going to be here longer, dear, or were going further back. I think we could all do with a bit. However we hope to get a quiet week at V---lle Ch-p-lle, as one of the other Brigades is going to be "in" before us.

The Indian (Army) Corps has just had two Divisions attached to it under a new scheme, the 8<sup>th</sup> Division & a T.F. Division, the Highland Division. So I hope we'll have a little less work to do in future.

Last night after we had got in and settled down, we had some food. We turned in early and slept with only one break till 9! Also my dreams were more pleasant than they've been once or twice lately. Last night they were of Home! fearful buck... To-day we just lazed in the sun all day. The **C.O.** came down and gave us a look up (Lord what an awful metaphor) – he was very bright & cheery, though he has a painful heal.

We had brekker at 9.30 & lunch at 1.15. Yesterday afternoon I had a letter from **Alfred** & to-day some papers from him – very much appreciated. Also yesterday a parcel of underclothing. I've scarcely looked at them, as they arrived just before we marched off...

I had a letter to-day dear from one of my machine gunners who was wounded at Neuve Chapelle. I wonder if you remember his name, **C.W. Swaffield**. He was wounded next to me in the captured German trench & was so disappointed at having to go back. He writes "I am absolutely dying to get back to work again under your command again" .... "I was very happy when I was in the section & I would like to go straight back to France to fight once again".

**2<sup>nd</sup> June 1915**

**A dusty evening ride to new billets in reserve at Vieille Chapelle; the C.O. is in a rage about his dirty accommodation; Arthur sorts out the men's pay books; hopes for a quiet week; a letter from Edgar at home; the French troops appear to be pushing south of La Bassee.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Wed. 3.15pm.

Another day passed, little darling. Another move and two sweet letters to acknowledge – Sunday's & Monday's. Thanks so much, dear, I was awfully bucked to get them. Yesterday afternoon we paraded at a quarter past six & marched off about 7. It was a glorious evening, though the roads were very dusty. However, being mounted, I escaped the worst of the dust.

We arrived here at V..... Ch..... [Vieille Chapelle] about half-past 8 & got our men settled down. They are all in one barn again & pretty crowded. We officers of D Company have a room in an estaminet at the Crossroads, not bad. D Company were here before.

We had supper soon after we got in. We went for a stroll first: found the C.O. in an awful rage, for they'd billeted him in a very dirty spot. Still what can one expect – troops have been billeted here for 8 months! We turned in soon after food, dear, & slept pretty well. Breakfast this morning at 9 or thereabouts.

I've spent most of the morning overhauling the paybooks of the draft. The 3 / 3<sup>rd</sup> must be an awful scratch lot. One hears all sorts of rotten stories about them – all the unfortunate men's paybooks are wrong. Some are in debt to the tune of one or two pounds. In one case, it is a question of five pounds in debt, all because they were not paid properly at home.

This evening, little sweetheart, **Wilcox, Rice** & I are going for a ride; it should be rather pleasant. I wonder if I shall ever teach you to ride, little girl. You'd look priceless on a horse but then you always do.

We are Brigade in Reserve here at 1 hours notice. But I'm hoping we'll have a quiet week. I had a cheery letter from **Edgar** to-day. He seems pretty fit. I myself am very well DG. Life would be just ripping if I could only be with you. I'm longing to see you again, my beloved. I feel a wonderful thrill just thinking of you. Do you remember our rapturous meeting at Victoria when I came home for leave. Jove darling, you were a sight to gladden weary eyes ...

News as you see dear is rather scarce. The French appear to be pushing south of La Bassee. One can see the little ridge of hills on which lies Notre Dame de Lorette quite well from here on a fine day...

**3<sup>rd</sup> June 1915**

**No letter from Dollie today so Arthur is dull; the local brewery is converted into a much needed bath house for the men; an issue of clean clothing after 4 months in the same clothes; a wonderful walk by the canal and through the woods.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

in billets, Thursday 8 pm

... To-day alas no letter, but then two came yesterday, so yesterday's extra joy must tide me over to-day. How I love to get your news, little sweetheart, how happy the moments when I receive your dear letters. How dull the days when none come.

To-day has been rather a full one for us here. Parades began again for the battalion. This morning my company was excused for baths. There is a brewery here that they fitted up as a bathing place. Its use has been discontinued for some time but with a little pushing we got it going. So this morning all my men had a hot bath – what luxury. Yesterday they had a fresh issue of clothing and underclothing. I wouldn't let them put it on until after their real wash to-day. So now they have a fresh start, clean clothes & a wash. They needed it poor fellows. And it has done them a lot of good, as you imagine darling, for they've been wearing their other clothes for at least 4 months, since February in fact.

I had some more promotions to make & several odd things to do. That took up some time. I also wrote to **Harold**. This afternoon parade, after that tea. Then **Wilcox** & I went for a walk down by the canal bank & through a priceless wood. The grass & wild flowers were waist-deep. What struck one most were forget-me-nots & a kind of orchid. There was a lot of water – and yellow iris...

**4<sup>th</sup> June 1915** [Continuation of letter begun on Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 1915]  
**A very short note added to yesterday's letter – there is a rumour abroad that the Company might be moved right back for a rest on 9<sup>th</sup> June.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

... Please forgive me dear if I leave you now. It's Friday morning & just on time for parade, so I must rush. Rumours of a rest on the 9<sup>th</sup>. Jove, I hope so.

So au revoir, queen of my heart. God be with you. With all my love ...

**5<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Arthur is yet again overwhelmed by Dollie's generosity in sending parcels to him; hot weather; rumours of home leave after another brief spell in the trenches; picking wild flowers for a fallen comrade's grave; "Corp. Fleming" is very much alive!**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Saturday 5.15 pm

... You really mustn't, you generous little soul: another great parcel came from you to-day. God bless you, dear, and thanks a thousand times. Truly your generosity is unappeasable... Two dear letters came to-day as well – Wednesday's & Thursday's. Thanks awfully for them, dear, they are very, very welcome. If you could see my impatience until the post arrives, and vexation if it is at all late. Of course, darling, I received your dear parcel with the "Gentleman's Relish" in it – some little time ago. I cannot believe, darling, that I haven't thanked you for it. I should never cease to reproach myself.

I'm very fit DG. The weather continues glorious, but it is very hot. The thin things the Mater sent out have proved very acceptable.

There is no news yet – definitely – of rest. But there is a pretty persistent idea that, in the next fortnight, we shall do a week in the trenches & that after that we are going back to Aire [Aire-sur-la-Lys] to reorganise. That should mean a chance of leave again. We all hope so. I could do with some months of it, with you; couldn't we dear?

Yesterday, darling, we did our usual parades – save that the half-past four parade was excused, as most of the battalion had to go out on a working party – about 80-90 from each Company & one officer per company. **Wilcox** was in charge of D. They were out from 7 – 2, poor fellows & were pretty tired in the morning. So we only had a short parade this morning from 9 till about half past ten. I stayed behind as I had a lot to do.

Later on in the morning, dear, I went out with **Algy** to get some flowers for the grave of **Miss Crozier's brother**. He is buried close to here. I took **Algy** up to the wood where **Wilcox** & I went the other night: where I picked those forget-me-nots. It is a wonderfully beautiful spot - cool & shady – an abundance of forget-me-nots, a little yellow & mauve orchid & a ripping little white flower that I didn't know the name of. We wandered through & picked a bunch of the wild flowers each. Then turned back. This afternoon, little sweet heart, we've been slacking more or less. Last night **Rice** & I had dinner with **Algy**; both the **C.O.** & **Sammy** were out. He gave us a very excellent meal & we talked. It was a bit of a change.

I want to thank you awfully darling, for going over to see **House's** wife, and am very proud of you. For the greatest of all charities is personal service ...

I had a letter to-day from the landlady of **Corp. Fleming**, who hears rumours of his death & I suspect, rather wants to sell his clothes. (The Corp is very much alive)...

**6<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Letters and magazines from home to ease the boredom; Arthur regrets that he and Dollie cannot share the wonderful weather together; happy thoughts of a previous Palm Sunday; personification of the Bosche menace; Arthur formulates a status code as they prepare to leave billets for the reserve trenches.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Sunday even. 6.5 pm

Still more to thank you for to-day, a letter and two magazines. Thanks awfully: you are a dear – and I love to hear from you. The magazines are very welcome & very much appreciated. Thanks awfully, little girl.

I'm afraid I hav'n't very much news to give you today, dear. Last night there was to have been a cinema show at 8.30, but when we went along after dinner, we found it had been cancelled. So we walked for a bit, **Wilcox, Rice** and I and came back at half past nine.

To-day being Sunday we had an extra hour's sleep and had breakfast at nine. The others went to Church Parade; I went to Mass at the Cure's house. Last time I heard Mass here it was Palm Sunday: **Alfred** and I were together, **Edgar** hadn't joined us. The following Wednesday I was with you – Jove, what happy memories! This time alas no such luck. What wouldn't I give for the chance of being with you again dear little wife-to-be. After Mass I came back here & did some work. It has been very hot to-day, dear.

This afternoon the mail came. That filled us all with excitement... So until tea time we read. After tea I went round to watch some experiments being made and was out there about an hour. I then came straight back to write to you, dear comrade.

It is a wonderful evening: if we could only spend it together, what happiness. Everything seems to breath of peace and happiness. Yet not far away those beastly Bosches are sprawling over this fair country like a great poisonous spider, and there's death and blood and agony. Forgive the outburst - dear. It doesn't often break out like that.

Well, darling, to-morrow's programme is a COs parade at 9. In the afternoon we move forward into bivouac (reserve) trenches, so I don't know what the post will be like. However, I'll do my best to get news off, at any rate a Field Service Postcard. I think, darling, that, in future, if I underline on the postcards the words "I am quite well", you'll know I'm in a "show", but if on the other hand I leave them as they stand, you'll know we are on the march either back or forward and so won't worry. Do you understand dear?

**7<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A wonderful surprise visit from Arthur Samut (brother of Maggie Agius) – now in the 7<sup>th</sup> Division; a hot cycle ride to view the reserve trenches and an even hotter march later in the day to occupy them.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Monday even: 7pm

I am sorry darling, I couldn't get this letter off last night. Just as I was thinking of winding up – **Smut** – **Maggie's** brother rode up. He is in the 7<sup>th</sup> Division, now just south of Locon. They have just come from Robecq where they've been resting since May 20<sup>th</sup>. Lucky dogs. They had leave open ever since then and from what **Smut** says they don't seem to have had such a bad time of it these last two months as we've had.

He was looking very fit, we talked over lots of things together. It is four years since I've seen him. He stayed to dinner with us & finally left about a quarter to ten. I was awfully pleased to see him.

This morning we had a COs parade at 9. It was very hot, to-day has been intensely hot dear. We dismissed just before 10. At 11 we i.e. the OCs Coys – went with **Algy** to see the bivouac trenches where we are now, most of us bicycling.

We got back just before 12, Lunch at 12.30. We then cleared up and paraded at 3. We marched up here at 3.30. It was hot, little girl, with all our kit on. Luckily we had only about a mile and a half to go. We are still a long way – a very long way – from the front line; under shell fire of course, still.

We are pretty comfortable, have a very large dug-out, which we share with the officers of C Company. The men are in trenches & are quite fairly well settled. They say we are to be here for a week.

Well, little wife-to-be. I think there you have all my news. I wonder what you're doing at 7.25pm – just ready for dinner, I suppose. I'm dying to see you again...

**8<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A short note from a hungry Arthur, busy reconnoitring for tonight's working party in the trenches; oppressively hot weather and severe thunderstorms; more news from brother Edgar.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

6.20pm Tues.

... I am afraid this will only be a short note. I have been on the go for a good part of to-day and am to be out all night in charge of the battalion on a working party.

The weather is still oppressive though we have had some severe thunderstorms to-day. It was simply blazing this morning. We had breakfast about 9 then I went over to Brigade HQ to find out about to-night. I was there about an hour and a half. Then I went on to the HQ of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Leicesters who are "up". I waited there for a bit while a storm passed by – then went on towards the front to see where they want me to work. I was there till about half-past three. Then made my way back & reported to HQ (ours). The **C.O.** very decent – gave me cake & tea. I was fairly hungry for I'd only had some cake and a drink (at the Leicesters) since breakfast.

I waited up with the **C.O.** for a bit & then came back here, dear. I'm off again to-night about 8.

Well, little lover, and how are things going. I missed your letter to-day, sweet heart. Had one from **Edgar**, but I wanted one so badly from you. I hunger for your dear letters more & more every day. I'm looking forward to at least one to-morrow.

**9<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A long, wet night digging a new communication trench - fortunately the enemy were quiet; more of the same work to look forward to tonight; bedroom slippers in a dugout; Arthur has already forgotten the code he arranged with Dollie!**

*Arthur to Dollie*

in a dug-out, Wednesday about 6pm

... Hurrah for two letters, Saturday's & Sunday's. Thanks awfully dear. I was so bucked to have your news. Last night I was out working until daylight this morning. I left here at 8 and got in again about twenty to three, feeling very tired. It is a very weary business, doing a working party & often dangerous. Fortunately, last night they left us very quiet & we only had one casualty – a man grazed in the chest by a distant bullet.

We were out digging a new communication trench and improving an old one (which was ankle deep in water). To-night we are all out again on the same place – brrrrr. We are having dinner at 7, parade at 8.

To-day the weather has not been very pleasant & it is now raining – all of which promises a cheery time to-night dear. Still, it's all in the days work.

We slept late this morning & didn't have breakfast until 11.30 so we dispensed with lunch altogether. Tea we had at half-past four. I've had two or three odd jobs to do during the day. I'm now going to get boots & putties on for to-night, dear. I've spent the day in shirt-sleeves & bedroom slippers...

Rather brightly I've forgotten the arrangements I suggested about the Field Service Post Cards and cannot for the life of me remember whether the underline meant I was moving or fighting. So let it mean that when I underline, I'm on the move, NOT in a fight. I think that was the original idea, wasn't it dear heart, but I'm not sure.

I'm going to write to answer your dear letters to-morrow, for I must get my things on now, darling. How I'm longing to see the big "pink hat" – you darling.

**10<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A long letter from brother Dickie in Egypt and parcels galore from home; no respite from digging in the dark – a very unpleasant task; a tribute to the womenfolk at home; another stint at the front is on the cards.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

outside my dug-out, Thurs. 6.10pm

... Thanks for your dear letter of Monday, which came this afternoon with a long letter from **Dick** & three parcels (one for the men) and a roll of papers from home. Quite a big & exciting mail, but the best of it and the most welcome was your letter, little sweetheart, short & sweet.

Last night, dear, we were out all night, digging. We paraded at 8.15. It wasn't my turn to go. Lately, when the whole battalion has been called out, either **Rochford** or I, as the only two Captains, have been in charge. Last night it was **Rochford's** turn. However a memo arrived from the GOC requiring all officers to attend working parties. Just my luck, dear. So I was out again until after two this morning working on the same job as the night before. It was very unpleasant in parts, owing to the large number of dead & bits of dead lying about. Some of the details are absolutely revolting.

We don't know yet about to-night. So far no news, so I hope they'll let us off. The weather is still very unsettled & it is very damp & misty to-day.

You write & ask me to tell you all about the **Lodwick** affair. I scarcely know what to tell you dear, in addition to what I have said before. All that I know was that L's nerves had been getting in a worse state ever since he was married & the last few weeks we had just about over-strained them. Then one day the **C.O.** said that L. had asked for **Johnnie** in my place – alleging I don't know what cause of complaint. That the **C.O.** went into the Brigade & made a row about it, sticking up for me: that they said the position wasn't a possible one. So it would be better if I & L. did not have to work together. The **C.O.** refused to let **Johnnie** go & told me he had and always had had "every confidence in me"... However, dear heart, as I've said before, my conscience is clear. I'm awfully proud of my company.

... By the way, **Johnnie, Bobbie, Edwards & Moreing** have just been gazetted Captains. There is yet no news, darling, of our going back. We shall probably be here until Sunday & then go up for a week. To-day we've had another pretty slack day – breakfast at 11.30, no lunch, tea at 4 & dinner in 10 minutes at 7. The glass of my wristwatch, which was cracked was lost for good a night or two ago. Luckily a cover for it came in one of to-day's parcels.

Well, sweet wife-to-be, be of good heart. How we fellows out here appreciate & love the quiet longsuffering & pluck of you our dear womenfolk at home. God bless you...

11<sup>th</sup> June 1915

**News from the Pater that the Dardanelles have been forced; a quiet night's work; a trip to recce the battalion's new trenches; finally – a new Padre so the RC's can have a chance of going to Confession; brother Joe's birthday today.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

in a dug-out  
Friday evening 5.30pm

... Thanks awfully for your letter of the 8<sup>th</sup> - that's last Tuesday. I was up at the other dug-out (where A & B Company officers are) when the post came, but I sprinted back here for my letter. I also had one from the **Pater**, quite a cheery one. Incidentally he says that the Dardanelles have been forced; is there any news of this. **Brady**, one of the Subs. of C Company – had a letter to the same effect, but this is the first that we have heard of it.

Last night they left us in peace. To-night the battalion is again going out to work. **Rochford** & I were going with it; we were also due to go to see the trenches with the **C.O., Sammy & Algy** at 3.30am to-morrow – for the battalion is probably going “in” on Sunday night. So we had a pleasant night to look forward to. However, as we had to go out to-morrow, the **C.O.** has said that we needn't go out tonight DG.

To-day has passed very much as usual. The weather has been very cold & damp & overcast. This morning, dear, we had breakfast at half-past ten. There were two or three odd jobs that required doing afterwards & we had lunch at 1.30. This afternoon we went down our line, **Wilcox, Rice & I**. I turned into A Coy's dug-out; **Wilcox & Rice** walked round & back via Lacouture – then the post arrived so I dashed back.

Just as I had got your dear letter, **Sammy** turned up with our new **padre**. He has just been appointed to the division. We have arranged for Confessions to-morrow, if we can get permission from the Brigade. I am awfully pleased we have a Padre now at last. It is two months since we've had a chance of getting to Confession.

There is very little news else, sweet heart. I'm longing to see you in your new frock. Get **Daisy** or someone to take photos of you – lots of them – use my camera.

... Remember me to all. To-day is **Joe's** birthday: would you feel too shy to ring him up & wish him good luck from us both?

**12<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A long, muddy, early morning walk to view the trenches – with water half way up their legs in places; the new RC Padre is a decent fellow; parcels of food and Edgar comes up trumps with a new lamp; the mosquito menace; Arthur looks forward to receiving the sacraments tomorrow - with a fervent hope that nothing happens to stop him going to church.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

outside my dug-out  
Satur. 6pm

... Thank you, dear, for your letter – Wednesdays - that came this afternoon to gladden my heart. Also the “Tatler”, for which very many thanks. You are a dear, ar’n’t you little sweetheart...

Last night there was a working party again, but as I’ve told you, **Rochford** & I were excused. This morning we were up at 3 & at Battalion HQ at half past. The **C.O., Sammy, Algy, Rochford** and I then went along up to have a look at the trenches. It was muddy – we had about 2000 yards of communication trench to go through, mud & water half way up one’s legs, ugh.

We got back about 7.30 & had breakfast at HQ. Then I came back and changed. Afterwards I went up to the Brigade to get permission for our RCs to go into Vieille Chapelle to Confession. Our new **Padre** is billeted there – he is an awfully decent fellow. **Rochford** & I and about 8 of our fellows went in to Confession this afternoon. It was priceless – the first time for two months. I am so much happier for the Sacraments help awfully, especially out here.

I had two parcels of foodstuffs from the boys to-day and my new lamp from **Edgar** – tophole. The weather DG shews a marked improvement to-day, hurray. It means a lot to us out here living in the open and on a clay soil! as you may well imagine, dear.

Mosquitoes are an awful pest. They promise to be worse. As yet DG they hav’n’t been very assiduous on me.

I’m looking forward to Mass & Holy Communion to-morrow. I do hope little girl, that nothing will turn up to stop it. You will have a large part in my prayers, to-morrow as always. God bless you, my beloved, my dear wife-to-be: how I long for “the” day...

**13<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Sunday and a chance for Mass and Communion; some map work for Arthur as they wait to move up; meanwhile more night work - that Arthur hopes to escape; Battalion news from brother Alfred, currently based in England.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

outside my dug-out, 6.45pm Sunday

... To-day the weather has gradually grown cooler. It is now quite cool & dampish with a breeze from the North. This morning **Rochford** & I went with the R.C.s into V..... Ch.p.... [Vieille Chapelle] for Mass at 8.30. We were able to get Communion too thank God, for our **padre** said the Mass. I was awfully happy to be able to receive communion. You were so much in my thoughts, sweet heart ...

We were back here in time for breakfast at 10. I've been drawing maps & reading most of the day dear. There is still very little news. We don't know when we shall be going up. There is another working party on to-night. I do not yet know whether I am to go in charge of it. I hope not, sincerely!

My thoughts are full of you. I wonder where you are & what you're doing always. I love to picture you in my mind and long each day for the mail to come and your letters... I had a letter from **Alfred** today with a lot of battalion news...

**14<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A long night reconnoitring in the dark and an early start to repeat the exercise with the CO; admiration for a piece of French artillery; strenuous reassurances to Dollie that they are in minimal danger in the reserve trenches. By this date both Dollie's and Arthur's brothers are all back in England; only Arthur is serving on the Western front.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Monday evening 6.45

Thanks very much indeed for your letter of Friday. I was more than ever pleased to get it, though I am sorry that **Edouard** [Noel] should be raking up what he conceives to be injustices. I really do think that at times like this and I am out here, necessarily apart from you, he should seek to cause trouble, even if, as is not the case, he is reasonably aggrieved.

... I'm feeling a wee bit weary this evening dear. Last night **Wilcox, Rice & I** spent 2 hours reconnoitring across country between here & the Rue du Bois. It was a pitch dark night & we got very hot. This morning we were up at five doing the same job with the **C.O., Sammy & Algy**. Then back to breakfast & up again at 10.30 with one's platoon commanders.

To-day the weather has been much colder. There is quite a fresh breeze from the north. I've been pretty busy all day, here and at HQ. This morning we were shewn over a French gun – a “75” – it is a marvellous weapon, wonderfully simple, wonderfully accurate. It was quite a treat to be told all about it.

To-night dear, we are due for another working party. You are not to worry, little girl; I can't say truthfully that there isn't any danger, because there is a certain amount, but it certainly does not involve one in any extraordinary or great danger. Our reserve trenches dear – or rather “bivouac” trenches are about 3500 yards from our front line – the ones **Gilbert** had in mind are only about 500! So you see, darling mine, there is absolutely no need to worry extra because I'm here.

So be of good cheer, my beloved, and keep a stout heart. I am with you always at your call, longing to do all to make you happy & to comfort you...

**15<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A busy time of it for Arthur – working on a communication trench by night and meetings for the officers by day; rumours of a push by the British in the south; the French are shelling ceaselessly below Bethune.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Tuesday evening, 6.20pm

... To-day, because of the Sunday mail, I am without your welcome letter; and though I know almost for certain, that both will arrive to-morrow, I do miss them today. I am very well indeed DG. The weather is glorious, though the sun is very hot, yet it is tempered by a cool wind from the north.

Last night I was out on a working party. We were working on communication trenches gain but in a different subsection of the line. It was a very dark night & rather cold. We paraded just after 8 & were back about 2. **Rochford** didn't come so I was in charge. This morning I was up at 9 & at HQ at 10. **Algy** wanted to see us (OC Coys) about a few points. I stayed up at HQ dearest, until close on 12. **Col. Morris**, who commanded the 2/8<sup>th</sup>, came in for a talk – he's quite a cheery old fellow.

It is now twenty past seven. I'm awfully sorry I was interrupted, darling, but some work came along that wanted doing. It has been a ripping afternoon but there has been an awful lot of shelling away down south.

7.50: Another interruption, dear! but this time rather more mundane, in fact it was dinner. We are just at the coffee stage.

I believe they (the British) are making a bit of a push way south; we can also hear the French below Bethune – their shell fire has been ceaseless since last night.

It is now getting quite cold. We live out in the open all day, meals and all. **Wilcox** is looking at a magazine, **Rice** trying – very unsuccessfully – to play a mouth organ. The Corporal has just come for my letter, so I must end...

**16<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Dollie's heart is not in socialising whilst Arthur is away; the 7<sup>th</sup> Division make a successful push down at Givenchy and Arthur's Company is on standby in case of a counter push – so they sleep in their clothes; pistol practise with Wilcox; Arthur touches on the subject of Dollie's conversion to Catholicism before they marry.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Wednes. 6.50pm

... I had my two letters to-day, as I hoped & longed for. Thank you, darling, awfully. I was on a parade when the post came. I was awfully impatient to read your dear news. I am so glad Friday night you enjoyed yourself. I had a letter from the **Mater** to-day and am to "preach to you" for she says you didn't eat anything... I do envy Alfonse [brother **Alfred**] – lucky beggar to have had you by his side.

News here, darling is very scanty. One day passes much like another: we'd be quite fairly comfortable, if it wasn't for the thought that we may be pushed up at a moments notice. There is a lot of unrest in the air, for last night or rather yesterday afternoon, the Canadians and the 7<sup>th</sup> Division made a successful push on our right, down at Givenchy. Good luck to them. However we had to be ready at a moments notice in case the enemy made a counter-push on our piece of front & "they" needed help. So last night we slept in our clothes.

The weather continues glorious – not too hot, but brilliantly sunny. This morning breakfast 9:30: after breakfast we had a rumour that the Divisional & Corps Commanders were coming round – nothing however materialised.

This afternoon we had a parade from 2.30 until about a quarter to four. Tea 4.30 & after tea **Wilcox** and I went firing with my pistol & revolver. Rather good work.

There is just one thing, little sweet heart, that comes up in my mind often ... and wonder whether I should speak. Do you remember ... how I asked **Daisy** to help you in everything, but in one thing especially – the question of your being a Catholic, dear ... Have you had an opportunity yet of talking things over with **Daisy**? ... So if you're in any doubt or difficulty you will ask my help, won't you, dear, *please*. I do want to help you in everything and to make you happy...

**18<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Another recce of the trenches, this time with the 2/8 Ghurhas, as reinforcements; avoiding being shelled while a German observation balloon is up; Arthur's Company are to relieve the Leicesters tonight; Arthur has had no opportunity to re-visit Harry Pulman's grave; mail from brother Dickie (in Egypt), the "Tatler" from Dollie and a bounty of food from Daisy; brother Alfred's company (B) is now commanded by "Tea Leaves" [Reeves].**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Friday evening 6pm

... You must forgive me for not having written yesterday: we were called up to HQ rather unexpectedly at 4 o'clock to go and have a look at the trenches again – and we weren't back until just on eight – rather weary and too late for the post. I'm awfully sorry, dear.

Many, many thanks for your dear letters (two), Mondays & Tuesdays – both awfully welcome. I long to get them, and am awfully impatient when (as to-day) the post is late.

Last night, as I've told you dearest, we went up to the front trenches again, OC Companies, **Bobbie Page** as Signalling officer and the **Doctor** – also the fellows of the 2/8<sup>th</sup> Ghurkas, who are being lent to us with their companies as we are so weak, numerically.

It was a wonderful evening, but as the sun set, rather a cold wind sprang up and is still blowing. This morning the usual routine – breakfast at half-past eight. We had a rifle inspection about eleven, which we abandoned, as the Germans had their observation balloon ("Sausage") up and began to shell where some French people were working, 300 or 400 yards to our left. We were afraid they might spot us, so we dismissed & got under cover.

Just before lunch we had orders that we were to relieve the Leicesters to-night up in the trenches – so I've been fairly busy this afternoon. We are going to have something to eat at 7: parade at 8.

No signs yet of **Beresford**, darling: I have always poor **Harry's** cross before my eyes. I hoped to get up on Tuesday night – but in view of our attack on the right, we were called up to be ready "at a moment's notice". So, of course, it was impossible to get leave to be absent...

I had a long letter & two post cards from **Dick** to-day & yesterday addressed variously to Alfonse [**Alfred**] & myself. I am going to send them on home. He seems very fit and cheery. I want to thank you too, darling, very much for the "Tatler" that came safely – you darling, thanks awfully. **Daisy** sent a parcel of groceries yesterday for the men & one to-day for yours truly "and very nice too" and sure to be appreciated in the very near future.

**Tea-leaves** has command now of “B” Company – **Alfred**’s company. Well sweet heart, I think that that is all the news. I hope to be able to write to-morrow for certain. We should be settled down all right by to-morrow morning.

It’s a wonderful evening: if only we two could be together to enjoy it. It’s just a dim reflection of our love – ripping and awfully wonderful. God bless you, my darling, and keep you safe and happy...

**19<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Arthur's Company relieves the Leicesters; the new trench doesn't smell quite so bad as the older ones around them; lack of sleep and a desultory shelling; Arthur remembers, despite the cold, it is almost Midsummer.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

in a trench, 6.7pm

... So you see we are "up" again – D, C & A Companies in front, B & 2 Companies of Ghurkas in support. We paraded last night at 8 & marched off at half-past, D Company leading. As we passed HQ we picked up the **C.O. and Sammy** & came straight on. The **C.O. & Sammy** stopped at their new place; we came straight on and in to relieve the Leicesters. I am on the left, **Rochford** in the centre and **Johnnie Sutcliffe** on the right. By a great piece of luck, dear, I have the best piece, quite a good trench and the least shelled!

Just where we are, is where our fellows finally made a successful push last month: and the bit we hold is a bit that they dug after capturing two lines of German trenches. So it's all very interesting. The old German lines are torn to piece with our shell & the smell of dead is pretty bad. Luckily the front bit where we are being fairly new made is quite liveable in.

I have had very little sleep since the night before last. Up here I don't sleep at all at nights. This morning I dozed a bit, but the **C.O.** came round about 4.30. I had reports to send in about 6 and the Germans started a desultory shelling about 6.10 . Later on in the morning they shelled **Rochford's** bit with heavy shell; yet though they put a great number all about it, they did absolutely no damage. Awful luck.

This evening, indeed all to-night we shall be very busy. There is a great deal to do up here. The weather is very fine, but cold! & the day after to-morrow Midsummer.

I am very fit DG & looking forward to a letter from you to-night with the ration party. I do long to hear from you. God bless you & keep you safe & happy.

**20<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A busy night's work, on both sides - the enemy can be clearly heard going about their business; an accidental death; Arthur thinks Dollie's analysis of when the war will end is a little optimistic!**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Sunday 7.45pm, in my dug-out

... Hurrah for your letter of Wednes. last that reached us here about midnight last night by the ration party. No news yet dear heart of the war ending. It is impossible to tell, I'm afraid, it depends upon such a lot – Dardanelles, Ks Armies, AND the enemy. I think August rather optimistic. About the result there will be no doubt – provided those behind (& in authority) back us up.

The weather is still glorious & warm by day – though by equal token it's very cold & damp at night. Last night was quite quiet. I wandered about a lot. Both the enemy & we are working hard every night. You can hear them as plainly as if they were only a few yards off – no-one fires because of the working parties & it is awfully exhilarating to be out in the open & hear our mortal enemies, hammering & grunting & talking!

Last night I unfortunately had a fellow shot accidentally. We got him clear but I heard he died later – a thousand pities – he was a good chap. This morning they shelled us a bit but with nothing very big. However they blew two or three holes in the parapet. Only one casualty, very slightly wounded.

I had various odd things to do for the rest of the day dear, reports to be made &c. To-night the men will all be very busy again.

I've been so happy with my memories of you to-day, dear. Sunday afternoon – I wonder what you've been doing. I envy all and everything about you for they rejoice in the light of your presence.

**21<sup>st</sup> June 1915**

**A night of sniping and shrapnel overhead as they work in the trenches; a quieter day, with a luxurious wash and shave for Arthur; the Officers dress as Tommys in the trenches; a surfeit of swarming blue bottles and disguising the stench of the dead with eau de Cologne – Dollie suggests smelling salts.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Monday even: 6.50pm

... Thanks a thousand times for your dear letter of Thursday. God bless you dear heart. I simply love to get your news. It reaches me just before midnight as a rule. You should see the eagerness with which I pounce upon it & rush off to my dug-out to read it.

Last night as usual we were very busy working & fetching rations &c. We have to send back about a mile for them via communication trenches across country. The enemy were pretty busy last night, sniping. They also fired about 14 shrapnel over us. Luckily they burst behind us ...

They have been extraordinarily quiet to-day little dear, these amiable foes of ours, occasional sniping & two aeroplanes over – but very little shelling for which thank God. To-day I revelled in the luxury of a shave and a wash – my “boy” went into the 1<sup>st</sup> Line Transport yesterday & brought out my washing things. The luxury of it – to be able to stroke one’s chin & feel it smooth & clean, instead of it being covered with a long hairy growth! I’m sure I’d frighten you dear if you could see me after a week or more of it as I have been sometimes dressed as a Tommy, except for some of his equipment & with a great revolver on my belt.

The smells up here ar’n’t bad – but in some of the old German trenches, where there are a lot of dead – ugh! Luckily I had my little bottle of frozen eau de Cologne which helps some. The smelling salts sound a great idea. The flies are the greatest nuisance. The place swarms with enormous & absolutely horrible blue bottles, which we endeavour to kill off, but rather in vain.

The weather DV is still glorious. The hours of sunrise & sunset are marvellous. An interlude, dearest, for dinner! It’s 7.30.

8pm: Still very quiet, sweet heart. A wonderful evening. I’m going to “stand to” soon, so I know you’ll forgive me if I break off...

**22<sup>nd</sup> June 1915**

**A very short note as Arthur has been called to HQ.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

9 am - Tuesday

... Forgive me – in a great haste. I've been down at HQ and so couldn't write.  
Am awfully fit & well. And hope you are the same, God bless you...

**23<sup>rd</sup> June 1915**

**Another very short note – as Arthur's men are called out of the front line at 30 minutes notice.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

9pm

... Forgive me again. I'm in a rear trench waiting to move. We were brought out of the front line on 30mins notice & are to go away to the left, to the "Orchard". Nothing like old friends.

We were horribly shelled again to-day. None of my men hit DG. I am very fit but just a wee bit tired. God bless you dear & keep you happy...

**24<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Arthur is hard pressed to write even a few lines to Dollie, as the CO intervenes with more work; Arthur however remains fit and well.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

9pm Thurs.

... It is late again. I feel desolate, for I'm longing to talk to you ... God bless you. But these last three days work has intervened – so I have to cut myself short & write as best I may in a few minutes snatched here or there. I hoped to write you a long letter this afternoon. This morning we were settling down, but the **C.O.** wanted to talk to us – so perforce I had to go.

I am awfully well & fit, dear girl & so happy to receive your news which comes in so welcome day by day. I've been thinking a lot of you, sweet heart. I always do & pray for you...

Remember me to all please. I am so sorry about **Biel**. God rest his soul.

**25<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**Rain, thunder and more on the way; the condition of the trench is now beastly; visits by the C.O. and the General; Arthur dearly wants to write to Dollie in depth about becoming a Catholic – in preparation for their marriage.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

8pm Friday

... Thanks awfully for your dear letter of Monday last. I got it last night with the ration party. God bless you, sweet heart, your letters are more welcome than ever up here.

To-day has been a most unpleasant day, for we have had rain, rain and rain - very heavily with a certain amount of thunder. Unfortunately, the air is no clearer. I'm afraid we are all in for more. The trench is in a beastly condition – mud everywhere, thick, sloshy and clinging – water everywhere to a depth varying from two inches to almost as many feet. But one gets to take it all in good part.

Last night we were busy working. This morning I had a shave. The **C.O.** came round & this afternoon the **General**. This evening we have been up to HQ again, so that dear is why I'm so late.

I have been thinking hard about us both, dear heart, about the question of religion – you darling. What a wonderful personage you are. I am going to talk to you about it, darling mine, as soon as I can get an opportunity of writing without fear of continual interruptions. God bless you dear. So I must beg your patience a little further, dear. One of the greatest trials of this trench life is the impossibility of writing a decent letter. For one has countless interruptions from one's own side, even providing the enemy are quiet & they are not.

Well, sweet soul, the Corporal is waiting so I must bid you Goodnight ...

**26<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A welcome parcel from Dollie; hopes of being relieved in a few days time; the weather has greatly improved; limited leave is now open for the Officers but Arthur is quite annoyed by his Superior's choices – however he does see the logic in not losing good men from their Battalion.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Saturday even., 5.20pm

... Still more to thank you for, sweet generosity – a letter, a parcel & the “Tatler”. Thanks a thousand times. I do appreciate it, especially your letter, your news is very breath of life to me. The post arrives late at night. You should see how I rush to my dug-out to read it.

We are still up, dear, but hope to be relieved on Tuesday. I'm afraid not for long, though I feel I'd give anything to be at home (so do we all, only it's not a bit of use talking about it). Yesterday it simply poured – we were very uncomfortable. Fortunately it has cleared today and this afternoon is perfect.

Last night we were busy working. It is pretty quiet here, though the “Bosches” snipe a lot at night and send up lots of flares. This morning I turned in for a bit after “stand to” & slept from 3 to 7 & again till 9. After breakfast busy clearing up &c. This afternoon **Johnnie Sutcliffe** and I went into HQ to stretch our legs. It was very pleasant there in the sun. We stayed there until 5 and had tea there.

To-night we shall be working again as usual. So the round goes dear, day by day. I shall be glad to get out for a bit. At present I am feeling very bored. Leave is open but my name is not among the 3 sent forward. Whether there is any hope of a 2<sup>nd</sup> lot – I don't know but I don't think so. **Algy** has sent in **Wilcox, Johnny Sutcliffe & Tealeaves**. So those in authority have decreed – they are having the latter two names sent in because neither of the two have been fit lately & they think that they need a rest. Personally I think it's a fraud, either they are well & fit, in which case they should take their turn – or they are not fit & should go “sick” & get “sick” leave. This latter the C.O. won't let them do, as he might lose them if he did. So I suppose we've got to consider the battalion & stick it, but I don't think it is quite the game. However let's hope for better luck next time.

I am longing to get back on Monday night for I feel I want to write you a long letter, little queen & to talk to you in my heart, my dear wife-to-be...

**27th June 1915**

**Heavy shelling in the trenches, with one Sergeant killed; the promised relief looks more likely as the new officers come to view their section of the line; Arthur is more than ready for a break; an abortive attempt to erect a cross on friend Harry Pulman's grave.**

Arthur to Dollie

Sunday even. 7.20pm

... So another day has passed by or rather another 24 hours, for our days are no longer days & nights, but just continual living, a long period of work & continuous watchfulness, with just a break for sleep after dawn.

Last night dear we were busy working as usual. This morning I slept from half-past three until about twenty past eight. Then the enemy began to shell just beyond our left with heavy shell. Unluckily the first shell fell just behind **Johnnie's** left. One of his Serjeants was killed and two men injured. The other shells DG fell clear of us...

The rest of the day has been quiet comparatively. The weather hasn't been altogether favourable. It has rained a bit & the atmosphere is very heavy; we just missed a storm at lunch time.

This morning the **C.O.** and the Col. & Officers of the battalion that is to relieve us came along to view the line. We are due to be relieved to-morrow night but I hear to-night that the relief may be cancelled. **Johnnie, Tea-leaves & Wilcox** have been granted a week's leave from Tuesday. How I envy them. Of course, if the relief is off, their leave may be off too. I hope the relief is going to be on. It is fixed that each Brigade has 20 days "in" – that is 10 days for each Regiment. With Regiments at normal strength (as the Leicesters are) that means each Company gets five days in the front line & five in reserve lines. With us, it means that nearly all are up for the whole time. At any rate, I've been up the whole time with D Company. Forgive the grouching, dear, it helps an awful lot to have a real "pal" to whom one can talk ...

This afternoon, dear, I tried to sleep, but not very successfully. After tea, **Johnnie** and I went to HQ. I wanted to go & put **Harry's** grave in order & to put his cross up, but couldn't get permission – as they don't want me to leave my area. However, they are going to see that it is put up. I am vexed for I'd waited & schemed so long in order to put it up myself. But one has to do what one's told. I don't want to delay it any longer in case we do go back. Jove, how I long to get out of shell fire. I want to see you so badly, my darling. I'm fearfully envious of these people's leave – for I'm afraid that they'll be the only ones to get any this time ...

To-night we shall be busy working again. I am hoping for news from you...

**28<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A fairly quiet 24 hours with night work and an almost leisurely visit to HQ to arrange tonight's relief.**

Arthur to Dollie

Monday even. 6.7pm

... Alas no letter from you last night. I cannot grumble for I had two the night before but I love to get your news so much. It's awfully dull when the 24 hours pass without a letter!

This last 24 hours has been quite fairly quiet. Last night, as usual, we were busy working. This morning I slept until 9 – six hours very pleasant – then brekker.

Just before lunch I had a message through from HQ to go to there to see about to-night's relief. I stayed up there to lunch – **Johnnie** with me & “very nice too”. We stayed up there part of the afternoon then came along back.

**29<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**A safe return to billets at Les Lobes and (almost) out of enemy shelling range; “Rose Villa” – just 80 yards from the German trenches; a welcome parcel and the papers from brother Alfred; Arthur longs to be home with Dollie, as his fellow Officers prepare for leave; he expects to be put in charge of a newly formed Company of 150 men – as the whole battalion is very under strength.**

Arthur to Dollie

Tues 6.15pm

... Well, we’re back in billets again DG at Les Lobes. Last night we were relieved in due course about half-past nine & marched back here. We got in about half-past twelve, had something to eat & so to bed – not quite a bed. Still!

Did I tell you that when I had my dug-out shoved together in the Orchard Trench, one of the men found some roses, which he put in an Indian drinking cup outside & then labelled the spot “ROSE VILLA”! 80 yards from the Germans. Just picture 80 yards down Compayne [Gardens] and realise the bit of strain which one has when one is living at that distance for 10 days, with an extremely active and dangerous enemy, whose greatest joy would be to wipe out you & the men under your charge, for whom you’re absolutely responsible.

We got out safely DG & back here, though the road was a bit tricky. It’s an awful relief to be out, darling, and moderately removed from shell fire. It seems so strange. This morning we didn’t have breakfast until half-past eleven. Then I had to go down to HQ about a Court of Inquiry on a fellow who shot himself accidentally.

Then lunch: this afternoon, joy of joys, two dear letters from you. Thanks awfully darling, you are a dear to write – for I long to hear about you always. **Alfred** sent some papers & a very well-chosen parcel. I am going to write to him...

I am feeling very restless and dissatisfied, little darling. Awfully wrong of me isn’t it? But I want to be with you so badly & these fellows going off on leave to-day have made me feel restless. I want to be with you more than anything else in the world.

I wish K’s Army would put in an appearance & let us get back. Our fighting strength is about 300. There is talk of making the Battalion into a battalion of two Companies i.e. joining up A & C, and B & D and calling them No1 & 2. **Sammy** will then have No1 & I No2. Even so it will only give us Companies of 150 instead of 250. Still it will make everything much easier. It will probably come into force on July 1<sup>st</sup>.

So, sweet heart of mine, I think you have all my news for to-day. We’ve been fairly busy settling down &c.

**30<sup>th</sup> June 1915**

**The proposed Company re-organisation has happened and Arthur is now in charge of half the battalion; a “gas” demonstration; pay day for the men; a busy time ahead with an inspection by Sir James Willcocks scheduled for tomorrow – followed by a change of billets; Arthur apologises in advance for the lack of letters in the near future.**

*Arthur to Dollie*

In billets, 7.30pm, Wednes.

... More work! We are being organised into two Companies instead of 4; we are going to be inspected by **Sir James Willcocks** to-morrow (10.30am) & we are also going to change billets to-morrow afternoon.

I am only just back from the CO as I am going to have one of the Companies, No 2 (a combination of B & D). **Sammy** is having No1 (A & C). Your fiancé, little dear, is now in command of half the battalion! & awfully busy.

Thanks awfully for your letter of Sunday, little darling. I got it this afternoon with a letter from **Harold Moore**. You are a dear. I simply love to get your letters.

To-day we've been pretty busy. This morning we had to ride over to a place for a “gas” demonstration. We all wore our helmets – you would have laughed – but they are wonderfully good. I sat under the gas cylinder & didn't feel any ill effects. The gas is of the same type that the Germans use but very much stronger!

Then **Sammy** & I rode into Fosse dear to draw money for our Companies. I've spent the afternoon paying them. Then off to the **C.O.**, so you see, sweet heart, I've had precious little time to myself. You must forgive a rotten letter. I simply hate not being able to write properly but time & the war are apt to interfere a bit. You will forgive me, won't you dear. The trouble is, I may be awfully rushed to-morrow & find it difficult to write a long letter – it's beastly! ...