

**1<sup>st</sup> - 2<sup>nd</sup> September 1914:**

**Arthur is on home leave for a few days in London, before sailing for Malta on Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September.**

His next letter to Dollie will be posted on **3<sup>rd</sup> September**, as he writes to her from his temporary billet in the YMCA on London's Tottenham Court Road.

**3<sup>rd</sup> September 1914**

**Home leave is almost over; heartbreaking reassurances from Arthur to Dollie that the Territorials are only going to the relative safety of Malta; he has every hope of her joining him there; trust in God and all will be well:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Young Men's Christian Association  
Tottenham Court Road, W.C.  
Reading Room  
Thursday evening 10pm

... I got back safely here ... things assuredly dearest are not so bad as they might be though they are awfully hard to bear. I am only going to Malta ... and there's every chance and more if possible of your joining me out there soon ... God bless you dearest little fiancée of mine. He can do everything and we must pray to him that in his Infinite Goodness and Infinite love, which passes all understanding, he may see fit to bring us together in the very near future. Rest assured beloved that he will not send us anything too hard for us to bear, or anything that in it's ultimate end is not for our own good. It is hard to bear, dear heart, too hard for us to bear without turning to him from whom comes all strength...

God bless you dear little girl ... and may he keep you and the **dear Mater** and shield you from all harm. Courage beloved and show a brave front though your dear heart be sore within...

**Friday 4<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur sends a telegram from Southampton to Dollie in Hampstead:**

“Leaving by Nevasa  
All well  
Cheer up love”

**5<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**A good send off from the family; details of the Company travel arrangements and a long cold night journey to Southampton docks. Arthur is on board the Nevasa:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

British India Steam Navn. Co. Ltd.  
T.T.S. "Nevasa"  
Saturday 12.10pm

I'm awfully sorry that I was unable to get a letter written yesterday. I sent you a wire. After I had seen you home, dear girl I went back to the YMCA and wrote to you, darling, then **Daisy** and **Nella** turned up and soon after **Edgar, Joe, Maggie**, Jenks and his wife. I went off finally to the Depot with **Edgar**.

We found **Moreing** afterwards there and after he had loaded most of the luggage we went off on one of the vans in a long cavalcade – about 30 horses, two machine guns and two vans. We finally reached Waterloo just in time to catch the first train which left at 3am. It was bitterly cold coming down dear – I was in a carriage with **Sammy** and **Algy** and we got what sleep we could, which was about nil. We reached Southampton at 5.45. The other two trains arrived about 6.35 and 7.30. We detrained and waited until 10.30 before we could get on our ships.

The Battalion was split into three. Nos 1 and 2 Coys boarded the Nevasa with the Brigade staff, Field and Ambulance and 2nd Battalion; No3 Coy (**Guy**) with the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion on the S.S. Galeka; No4 Coy (**Harold Moore**) and No 4 Battalion on S.S. Galician; **Moreing** and the horses on a boat called the Kelvingrove. The Galeka and Galician are Union Castle boats...

**6<sup>th</sup> – 8<sup>th</sup> September 1914:**

**Arthur is on board the Nevasa on his way to Malta with the Territorials. On 5<sup>th</sup> September he began a letter to Dollie, which will not be completed until 9<sup>th</sup>, as he is ill - suffering from the side effects of an inoculation.**

Arthur's next letter to Dollie will be posted on **9<sup>th</sup> September**, as he writes to her on board ship, with the hope of sending the letter from Gibraltar.

**9<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**A long, welcome letter for Dollie – with details of Arthur's continuing journey to Malta**

*Arthur to Dollie*

British India Steam Navn. Co. Ltd.  
T.T.S. "Nevasa"  
Wednes. morning 10.50am

... Well darling little girl here we are again. I'm afraid it's a long gap since Saturday, But when you hear the story, dear, I'm sure you'll forgive me. We were pretty busy the first day or two getting the men settled down. We left Southampton on Friday [4<sup>th</sup>] afternoon about 4.30. It was quite fine to start with but the wind got up later and it was quite fresh. We were five ships when we left, the Nevasa that's our ship, dear, the Galeka, Galician and Gloucester Castle – all Union Castle boats and the Kelvingrove – a slow tramp that can only do 9 ½ knots. You can imagine how she is delaying us as we have to suit our pace to hers – she has the horses.

We passed out from Southampton and came out round the east side of the Isle of Wight and down past Sandown etc out to the Eddystone Lighthouse, where we arrived Saturday morning [5<sup>th</sup>], which was our rendezvous. We passed several torpedo boats and one submarine as we came along on Friday night.

On Saturday morning at the Eddystone – which looked very graceful against a background of grey sea and sky – we met our escort – an old cruiser the "Amphitrite". After waiting a bit for the Kelvingrove to catch us up we set sail the cruiser leading. Our speed is very slow – our mileage for the last days has only been 240, 239, 204, 209 miles the 24 hrs!

On Saturday morning some of our fellows were inoculated with typhoid germs as a preventative. I was done with **Pulman** on Sunday morning [6<sup>th</sup>] and the result is that I've been in bed since and only got up this morning [9<sup>th</sup>]. As a rule it only means a sore arm – they inject the germs through a syringe in one's right upper arm – and a touch of fever for the most 36 hours. But it caught **Harry Pulman** and myself rather worse though our arms healed quicker than the others and we've only just shaken it off. However I'm perfectly fit and well again D.G.

The weather has treated us very well on the whole and today is perfect, the sea very calm. It was quite calm coming through the bay; there was a slight swell off Cape Finisterre, but now it is beautifully calm. We have already passed Cape St Vincent and are due at Gibraltar at 4am tomorrow [10<sup>th</sup>], when this letter will get posted...

**10<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Continuation of the letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> ... details of shipboard life on the Nevasa as they steam slowly towards Malta; there will be no stopping at Gibraltar – a disappointment in store for sister Connie King and family:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

... The voyage has been quite devoid of any excitement. Two or three times our escort has dashed off after suspicious vessels only to find her suspicions ill-founded. Once she met another British cruiser and took a Rear Admiral on board from her.

As for our daily routine, reveille is at 6, physical drill for officers at 6.30 then a bath – hot and cold sea and ordinary water galore. Inspection of men's brekkers at 7.15, Promenade and our own brekker at 8. Next is parade of all on board – COs parade at 10.30, followed by physical drill for the men. Men's dinners at 12. Our lunch at 1. Then nothing until tea at 4, men's teas about 6 and they get out and sling hammocks at 6.30. We change into blue for our mess at 7 and turn in about 10.

The last two or three days they have been getting up ship's cricket etc in spare time but every day is very, very much like the day before. Tomorrow [10<sup>th</sup>] we get in to Gib – but don't stop – except to drop letters. The Gloucester Castle which has some troops for Gib – stops and also the Kelvingrove to discharge some of her horses but I don't know whether we'll wait for her or not. I believe too that at Gib we lose the Amphitrite and get a new escort.

The weather has already begun to get quite hot! ...

**Friday 11<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Continuation of the letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> ... Arthur longs for news from Dollie and hopes to find letters from her at his sister Marie's home, when he finally reaches Malta:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

... So much, dear, I think for actual news. I'm glad to be fit and about again. Your chocolate has proved very, very welcome in bed. I did appreciate it. And now little wife-to-be, my pen begins to falter.

There is so much I want to hear about you. I grudge every moment I spend away from you and so I'd like to have news of you dear heart every minute to know ... what you said, what you did, what you thought and felt. And yet perhaps, dear soul, I can guess the latter best. God bless you dear – I love you so and pray for you always that as I am too far from you darling, to comfort you, so may God in his Infinite Love, and Mary, His Mother and our Mother, may take you in Their charge and watch over and protect you and strengthen your courage in this time of our separation.

Meanwhile ... I pine for your dear news, which I hope to find awaiting me at **Marie's**. My heart is sure within me... I am praying that before very long I may welcome you in Malta...

[to be continued...]



**12<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Continuation of the letter dated 9<sup>th</sup> ... Arthur longs to hear the news that Dollie can make the journey to Malta:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

... The C.O has spoken to me once or twice very kindly about you, dear, “your girl” as he calls you. I am so happy that you are truly “my girl” as I am “your boy” for ever and ever. He is very pleased that you are doing work for the old Third. (By the way, **Major Beresford** is going to be sent home to manage the Depot and new Battalion).

Please remember me most kindly and affectionately to your **dear Mother** ... What a great big good heart she has!

Well dearest, oh how difficult it is to break off – its Au revoir – I long for the day when we shall meet again in Malta...

PS: The cabins are very palatial and comfortable. I managed to lay hands on a very good one with **Alfred** and **Johnny Sutcliffe** in with me. The stewards are Lascars and excellent servants, but the food is not very wonderful. Your leather tobacco thing awfully useful and admired by all.

**13<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Malta at long last! Arthur and Alfred have shore leave and meet up with their Grandmamma, Aunts and sisters Inez, Laura, Mabel and families. They hope to see Marie & Frank very soon:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

S.S. Nevasa  
French Creek  
Malta  
Sunday evening 8.56pm

So we have at last arrived. I had almost despaired of getting a note off to you to-day but I managed to get notepaper from **Laura**. There has been none on board for the past few days. However, lets go back to Thursday. We arrived at Gib at 2.30am. I was in my bunk but I got up at 3.30 as I was on duty from 4-8am. It was a glorious day and the scenery magnificent. I only wish, darling, that you had been there to share it with me, as later on, please God, you will share all things with me. The Galeka and Galician came straight on. The Gloucester Castle went right in to discharge troops, the Kelvingrove remained with us. We left Gib rather unexpectedly about 7.30am and so of course had no opportunity of seeing **Connie and Harry**. The Kelvingrove and our escort the Amphitrite remained behind. So we steamed for Malta independently as fast as each individual ship could. The Galician and Galeka had had several hours start of us but we caught them up at 11.30pm Thursday and 12 noon Friday respectively.

The weather has been glorious but rather hot dear, however there is a fresh breeze and it is quite cool D.G. We sailed along the African coast the whole time – for the first few hundred miles - including the hinterland of Algiers which we passed at noon Thurs – is magnificently rugged and very wild. Later on by Bizerte and the Gulf of Tunis it grows lower and sandier but still very wild. The sea is a glorious blue. Past the Gulf we passed Cape Bon and later Pantellaria – a little island owned by Italy – very high but not broken land and then sail ho for Malta.

We arrived off Valletta at 4am today and had to wait till 6 or 7 before we could come in. The searchlights are wonderful – like the eyes of some great animal peering into the darkness and literally “searching out” what it may contain. We got into our berth about 7.30 and made every preparation for coming ashore. Then we heard that we were to remain another 24 hours on board to allow the Galeka and Galician to catch us up. Our baggage however was all taken ashore in readiness – so we are to sleep rather in the rough tonight.

Tomorrow (as this morning) reveille is at 3.30am. We are to be taken to the customs house in lighters and thence march to Spencer’s Monument where we pick up our other contingents ex Galeka and Galician and so on to Imtarfa Barracks which are supposed to be the best. The 1<sup>st</sup> are to go to St Andrews, 2<sup>nd</sup> partly in Fort Manoel and partly in Floriana, 4<sup>th</sup> at Ghain Tuffieha. The **dear Mater** will be able to tell you where all these are... Some of the Regulars leave tomorrow night, destination ...

This afternoon **Alfred** and I got our share of shore leave 3-9pm. We went into Valletta to **Mabel**, found her out. She is at Zeitun to be near **Tony** who is out that

way. So on to **Inez**, found **Laura** there, they are all looking fine, especially Laura's children. We had tea there then went en masse to Sliema, visited **Grandmamma** [*possibly Saveria Agius, not Josephine Muscat*] and one of my Aunts – ices at the former and crowds of relations at the latter, inter alia. **Mabel and Tony**.

All have congratulated me most heartily (as well they might, seeing that I am engaged to you, you darling little treasure) and all of them were most keen on your coming out. I hope and pray daily! ... So we pushed on to dinner at **Laura's**. Very good. **Marie** returns to Sliema tomorrow. I hope to get letters from you at hers as soon as she returns. I am longing for your news dear ... I wanted to wire you today dear, I'll try and get one off tomorrow.

By the way **Frank** is at Musta [*Mosta*] so we hope to see a certain amount of him as it is fairly close to us. It is so strange to be back in Malta...

**14<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur has arrived at Imtarfa Barracks; just a brief note today after the long letter yesterday; the mail home may have to be censored:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Imtarfa Barracks  
Malta  
Monday evening 7.25pm

... I have not yet posted yesterday's letter, partly because I was not sure of the mails and partly because I didn't know whether the letters would be censored and what regulations were necessary. Apparently to escape censorship letters must be franked by the **C.O.** I do not yet know whether letters need be stamped. No-one seems to know, but I hope to have definite information to-night.

16<sup>th</sup> September 1914

**It's hot in Malta! Arthur is very busy organising the defence of the island and still worried about the mail arrangements; he hopes to pick up letters from home at sister Marie's in Sliema:**

Imtarfa Barracks  
Malta  
Wednes am 10.20

I'm afraid, dear heart, that this is an awful patchwork letter. I have been awfully busy. Let me start at the beginning. On Monday morning we had reveille at 3.30 brekker at 4 parade at 5. We were then ferried over to the Custom House in lighters. We paraded again and then marched off up here, picking up **Harold Moore's** company en route. It was a very dusty and windy march 7 ½ miles and a great deal of it up hill.

We arrived here about 9.20. The barracks are beautiful, big airy, and very cool. The men are very comfortable. The Officers Quarters are a big block built in the shape of a square round a central courtyard. My room, about 18 feet square and 14 high, faces south. I have a beautiful view of Citta Vecchia, the old walled capital. There is a colonnade running along both outside my window and outside my door, so the room keeps very cool. I have your dear photo over my mantelpiece. I am longing to have it signed! as you promised.

Yesterday I was very busy. Our routine is Reveille at 5.30, Parade 6.30, Breakfast 7.45, Parade 9, Attendance at Orderly Room at 10.15, Men's dinners 12.30, Teas 4, Parade 5.30, Mess 7.30. Yesterday I had to go round part of the island, getting information as we are relieving part of the Militia of the job of watching a section of coast, sending down one double Coy at a time. **Harold Moore** was the first. He went off this morning. Today I am Orderly Officer and so am in for a busy time.

It is awfully hot here, dear, we've ordered thin kharki and I believe it is due today. I hope so. As we are supposed to be on active service we don't wear blue or mess kit at mess, but remain in kharki.

Darling, I am longing to get news of you. We hav'n't had any letters up yet. No-one seems to know anything about postal arrangements and it will be a matter of luck if this letter gets off all right. **Hawes** is expecting to have some definite instructions. Meanwhile one can only wait and hope for the best. I am writing to **Marie's** at Sliema. She has only just got back there. In future dear I think it will be better if you address your letters to Imtarfa Barracks, i.e. Lieut A.J. Agius, 3<sup>rd</sup> Bn The London Regt Royal Fusiliers, Imtarfa Barracks, Malta. I think of you all day long dear heart and long to see you again... All here want to see you, but none so fervently as I sweetheart, who love you from the bottom of my heart. I hope you are perfectly well, God bless you, dear.

How is your dear **Mater**. The boys [*Dollie's brothers Edouard and Evie*] here are very well and fat. Oh you darling, pray for me. I ... sit and dream of you at home and then I think of how happy we are going to be. I wish you were here...

**16<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur sends a wire from Malta to Belsize Grove - addressed to both Tancred Agius and Dollie Noel:**

Arrived safe love Arthur Agius

**17th September 1914**

**Mabel personally berates the local postal service on Arthur's behalf; news of the family and the safe arrival of baby Arthur E.R.H. Denaro; meanwhile the Denaro twins are going back to school (Downside) in England:**

*Arthur to Dollie:*

Imtarfa Barracks  
Friday evening 10.15 pm

... I am rather anxious as I have had no news from you dear. **Mabel** said she posted a letter to me which arrived at Sliema 3 or 4 days ago, but it hasn't turned up yet. Still I am hoping to get it any time, especially as **Mabel** has been stirring up the postal authorities and I am more than confident that it is from you darling. I am longing for your news and get awfully homesick for you, my own dear little girl. Please God the **Mater** will come out and bring you with her. I long to hear that you are coming for certain, for I want you more and more and more.

There is not very much real news. **Laura** and **Mabel** came out here on Wednesday afternoon for an hour or two with three of the children. Yesterday afternoon I went into Valletta with **Edouard** and **Evie**. I had a haircut at the Club, then over to **Marie** – saw the new babe [**Arthur**] – but missed the twins and **Laura** who came up here. **Marie** was very fit D.G. I also saw **Mabel, Inez and Grandmamma**. They were all very well and speak awfully kindly of you. They said they had written to you but I don't know when you will get their letters. There is no officially announced mail. One has to post one's letters and take their chance. I am hoping that this will catch a mail on a P&O boat that leaves next Sunday and on which the twins [**George and Wilfrid**] are coming to school, if it doesn't arrive sooner.

Today I have been very busy. Reveille 5.30, parade 6.30 – 7.45, Breakfast 8, Parade 9 – 10, 10 attend Orderly Room for orders, 11 arrange about paying the men. I tried on my kharki drill kit 12.45, Lunch at 1, Paid the Company this afternoon. Tea 5. Change and Parade 5.30 – 6.30. Change into blue (a privilege, for it being time of active service, dear, we're not supposed to change out of kharki). Mess at 7.30. I bought a couple of mats for my room today. Tomorrow afternoon and Sunday I hope to get into Valletta.

Yesterday or the day before, the **C.O.** happened to come into my room, saw your darling photo and thought it a very good likeness of you. I was proud little sweetheart, as I am always proud of you... God bless you... This separation is bitterly hard. But it's no use kicking against the goal and I long for and look forward eagerly to seeing you again out here soon... Remember me most kindly to your **Mother** ...

**20<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**More visits to the family in Sliema; hot and windy weather; back home, Dollie helps the Regiment; adjustments to the new engagement ring:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Imtarfa

Sunday morning 9.45am

Joy of joys. Yesterday afternoon I got two envelopes from you with letters of the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup>. I was so glad and happy to get your dear news. Your first letter has not turned up yet and so I was anxious to hear all about you. But first let me give you my news.

Yesterday morning we had a very strenuous time – lots to do. After lunch however, **Alfred** and I drove down to the others at Sliema. We took **Gilbert** with us. Went to **Laura** first, then **Mabel**, then **Marie**; they were nearly all asleep or at any rate somnolent and in various stages of undress, so we went on into town. The Militia have made us honorary members of their Mess so we went in there first, signed our names at the Palace and did various odd commissions. Then back to **Mabel's** for tea at 5.30. **The twins** wanted us to bathe but it was rather late so we didn't. We went round to see an Aunt of mine – found a large crowd in a small room – so didn't stay long there. We had supper with **Laura** at 8 and left about 10 getting back here about 11...

This morning I got up at 6.45. We had a Roman Catholic Parade at 7.30, marched off to the church of St Peter and Paul at Rabat, heard a Missa Cantata there. Then we marched back and got our brekker at 9. **Rochford** came with me. **Alfred** stayed in bed and is going to church later. After I have finished this dearest, I'm going down to the others again ... The weather the last two days has been very unpleasant. Very windy and exceedingly dusty with a fine stony dust that is most unpleasant, especially on the barrack square. Today the wind has dropped but it is exceedingly hot.

And now dear heart to answer you. I am awfully proud to hear that you are doing such work for the wives of our fellows. God bless you dear ... I only hope dear that you won't overdo things. Do take care won't you darling. I should be wild with anxiety if anything happened to you.

I am glad dear heart that the ring is all right now. I love to think of you wearing a ring from me and all that it means. Darling I do love you so. I am longing to see our engagement in the Times. Send me a cutting, dearest. I am so happy that you and I are never to be really separated. Within quite a measurable time D.V. you'll be out here ... As for the rest, the censorship at any rate of incoming letters seems to be carried out on sensible lines – for neither of your two dear letters were opened. They were just stamped "Passed by Censor" and initialled.

... Well precious heart, I hope you're really keeping fit. I am very well, D.G. and so are the boys [*Dollie's brothers Edouard and Evie*] but I'm very miserable without you, dearest. Still what cannot be cured must be endured so here's to a stout heart. God bless you dear...



**21<sup>st</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur is delighted to see their engagement announced in “The Times”; a glorious bathe and a sumptuous feast at sister Marie’s; the war work mounts up; Arthur longs to hear Dollie will be coming out to Malta:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Imtarfa, Monday 2.5 pm

I hoped yesterday to get my letter off by a P&O that was due in. However she didn’t arrive so I’ve kept the letter and am enclosing this in it.

This morning I saw the announcement of our engagement in the Times. Darling, I am proud and happy. It seemed too good to be true. I count myself the luckiest fellow alive. You dear little girl. I long for the time when we shall be together for ever.

Yesterday darling I drove down in to Sliema to **Marie [Denaro]**. The **twins [George & Wilfrid]** were due to leave but as the P&O boat never came in I expect they’ll be delayed until Tuesday or Wednesday.

I had a bathe, glorious, baking hot rocks off which one tumbles or dives into a brilliant blue sea. No wading, shivering through cold grey water that laps round ones ankles for yards as at home. But here all bright colours, rocks yellow, sea blue and deep in pools surging under the rocks. I had dinner at **Marie’s** dear – a great meal of turkey and plum pudding, which the twins devoured in amazing quantities. Then I slept till tea. After I slacked until 7.45 when I went round to cold supper at **Mabel’s**, 3 houses up. All are very well except that **Frank [Denaro]** has had a touch of fever. I left at 9 and drove up here.

This morning we began again with our customary routine, but from tomorrow and onwards we have a lot of fresh work added on. This afternoon I am hoping to get one hour’s tennis – my first here.

Well darling of my heart, I wonder what you are doing now, nearly 2.30 Monday afternoon. It seems months since we saw each other last. I wonder how soon it will be before we see each other again. Please God it will not be long...

Well sweetheart, I am going to leave this letter open till to-night so that it will catch the first post tomorrow and I hope a mail by the afternoon. It is very annoying never to know when the mails go...

**22<sup>nd</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur is kept busy with duties – but the brothers find time to play tennis; the game is hard going - not quite the grass courts they are used to at home in Hampstead:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Tues am 8.25

... Just 20 minutes or so before parade. I have had to prepare some notes for a lecture on musketry and so am rather rushed. There is not much news since yesterday dear. I got in a couple of sets of tennis. **Gilbert** and I v. **Guy** and **Alfred**. They beat us first 6-3, then we beat them 6-12. It is a hard court and wants getting used to. Then we changed back hurriedly in time for parade at 5.30. I came to bed fairly soon after mess. I sat outside first with the **C.O.** He asked about you darling and the men's wives and was very pleased at the way you've worked. You darling, I am proud of you.

This morning dear we had a shower or two and there is probability of more. It is cooler D.G. I am longing to see you darling of my heart. I get awfully homesick for you, sweet heart. But the thought of you cheers me up and fills me with perfect happiness...

**24<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur is working hard, with no time to write; poor Alfred is savaged by the sand flies; inspections and reorganisations; early thoughts of Christmas presents for the men:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Imtarfa, Thurs. 8.7 am

We've had an awfully busy two days these last two and so I've scarcely had an opportunity to write down all of my news.

On Tues. we were going hard from the time we got up just before 6am until I got to bed at 9.30 or 10, with just a break for meals. Yesterday we were almost as rushed. However....

As for health, little darling, thank God I am awfully well. **Alfred** is not so fit. He has been badly bitten by sand flies at night on his neck, hands and feet, so is temporarily hors de combat.

The weather has favoured us. Yesterday morning we had a shower at our early 6.30am parade, but it cleared up after. Today however it is raining steadily so this morning we did  $\frac{3}{4}$  hour physical drill in the gym. There is quite a fine gym here, darling, between the Officers Mess and the barracks.

On Saturday the **General** is going to inspect the barracks. On Monday much to our regret we are going to revert to the 8 Company organisation in the Battalion, so there'll be a general shuffle all round. That I think is about all there is of Battalion news dear.

The men are smartening up wonderfully and it is a pleasure to see them grow as it were under one's hand. I have not begun on any work with the Machine Gun Section yet. We are doing the very elementary work with the whole Battalion. We are going to get into our light khaki drill clothing on Sunday. The men have theirs and ours is complete save for buttons and badges, which were ordered in England and are due out now.

And now, my own sweet soul, how are you... You are never absent from my thoughts ... I do love you, my own darling. God bless you. I am hoping to hear that you are coming out here this winter. I am longing to see you again...

By the way sweet soul, the **C.O.** is very keen on the ladies getting grey flannel shirts as a Christmas present for the men. I daresay you'll hear all about it at one of your Committee meetings. **Mrs Howell** has full particulars I believe...

**25<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Arthur hopes for news from Dollie; he is rushed off his feet; the Army Pay system is causing them some grief; another inoculation looms:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Imtarfa, Friday 2.25pm

I've just heard that there is another mail in – I am looking forward eagerly to news of you. Darling, I think it is best that you address letters to me as Lieut. A.J. Agius 3<sup>rd</sup> Battalion The London Regiment, R.F. Malta and they will come to me wherever I am in the island direct.

As things were sweetheart I hoped to have more leisure and opportunity of going into Sliema to fetch the news I long to hear but we are very busily worked. I have been going hard every minute of the day from the time I get up at 5.50am until 10 at night. The last three days especially have been crammed full. I've had 20 minutes for brekker but twice I've been an hour late for dinner.

In addition to our parades etc we have to fit in times for inspection of rifles and barrack rooms, to prepare the men's pay and allotment forms for the Ladies Association, to prepare lectures, etc etc. The pay especially and the various allotments have given us a lot of trouble, dear. Under Army Regulations a man must allot at least 6d a day for his wife and 1d a day per child. We then stopped these amounts weekly from the man's pay. As however some of the men's wives were receiving their husbands full ordinary wage, we decided to pay the men in full here. Now the Command Paymaster announces that the allotment has been stopped out of the men's pay before the money ever reaches our hands. So everything, including the allotment forms, has to be revised. All this extra to our ordinary work. So you see darling we hav'n't much time to ourselves.

Tomorrow the **General** is going to inspect us. In the afternoon I am to be inoculated (second dose) so the odds are on my spending Saturday, Sunday and probably Monday in bed...

**29<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Part one of a long letter that Arthur writes to Dollie on 29<sup>th</sup> September; in this section Arthur is delighted to finally receive Dollie's letters from England - he is not so pleased with the Kaiser however:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

Tuesday 2.53pm

Well darling little girl, here's a long gap. Thank heaven and you, dear heart, a great deal of what I penned last Friday needs revision in that your missing letter – the first – has turned up safe and sound and in addition, two more letters one on Saturday and one on Sunday, bringing me news, oh welcome news, up to the 17<sup>th</sup>...

So now darling, let me answer your dear letters, but first let me thank you over and over again for your welcome news. If only you knew how I long to receive it. I love to read your darling fist and try and picture to myself your life, day in and day out...

First of all I am awfully proud of the work you and **Daisy** are doing for the men's wives... I think it is wonderful and admire and love you for it beyond words. The **Colonel** spoke to me about it today too. He says **Mrs Howell** has written to him about the good work that you, dear, and **Daisy** have been putting in. God bless you for it, darling. I feel awfully proud and sometimes dear, when I feel very fed up, for the times do come sometimes, when one wonders what the good of it all is and one is filled with a loathing hatred for the Kaiser, who has been responsible for our separation – then darling, and at such times as these, I think of you, sore of heart as I am sore, doing your round of charity, come wet or fine through the squalor and dirt that colours the neighbourhood of King's Cross...

Now darling to answer your news. First let me assure you, dear, that at present at any rate, I shall have no need to ask you to send anything out. Everything practically that reasonable provision could foresee the need of, and everything that I want at present was packed and so neatly packed by your clever foresight and skilful fingers – thank you dear.

I want you darling, please, if you have not done so already, but I expect you have, to thank all those who have sent me their congratulations and good wishes. I am most grateful.... It seems so strange and yet so gloriously strange to find people, as you say, touting for wedding orders not from anyone else, a friend, a relation, but from US...

**30<sup>th</sup> September 1914**

**Part two of a long letter that Arthur writes to Dollie on 29<sup>th</sup> September; in this section Dollie gets a wisdom tooth; grumbling amongst the Officers - work, work, and more work; Dollie's brother, Edouard, is under the weather – meaning even more work for Arthur:**

*Arthur to Dollie*

...There is one thing dearest that I don't like to hear and that is your teeth have begun to trouble you again. I do hope darling that by now they have altogether ceased to give you pain. What hurts you dear, hurts me. I hope you are all right again. At the same time, you darling old thing, the idea of you blossoming forth with a wisdom tooth! God bless you, you darling, I do love you.

Now for my news sweet heart. Last week there was a certain amount of grumbling at the amount of work we were called on to do. I think everyone grumbled a bit from the Senior Captain – that's **Harry Pulman** – downwards. Apparently it was overheard, for the **CO** instigated by **Algy** saw fit to deliver a memorandum addressed to all Officers which was practically a telling off. However we've survived it as you see, dear and now have lost all hope of having a free moment to ourselves.

This week we begin a new timetable. Reveille 5.30, Gymnasium 6.30-7.30, Bath change and brekker – Parade 9-9.45 (we have to be on parade at 8.50) Company Orders i.e. we see defaulters etc Inspection of Barrack Rooms and Rifles at 9.45-10.15; at 10.15 we go for orders to the CO till 10.30. 10.30 – 11 Company lecture, 11-11.45 Musketry Instruction. Then nominally we are free save for lunch till 4. But these last few days I have been busy. 4-4.30 Musketry Instruction, 5-6 Parade, 6-7 Gym, 7.30 Mess and after Mess we are supposed to go to our rooms to read military books.

Since Sunday we have reverted to the 8 Company organisation. I have been posted to H Coy as Senior Sub. **Edouard [Noel]** has been laid up with overeating so I've had to organise the company and get it into new barrack rooms etc, beside the usual routine. So really darling I hardly know where to turn to find a free minute to write to you. I have to snatch odd periods here and there, till I'm afraid this letter must be a very patchwork. So please forgive me darling. I hope after these few days to get ahead of my work. As it is, it is ahead of me...