

“The world is going crazy, I tell you
The ladies are dancing alone
The site men all want to be front men
The front men all want to go home! ”

Letters Home

By

Charles Herman Asphar

The Great War

1914 – 1918

4th November 1916 – 8th September 1919

12 Machine Gun Coy – England, Belgium, France
Hospitals - France, England
Machine Gun School British Army of the Rhine

**48 Shrubland Avenue
Berkhampsted**

4th November 1916

My dear Father

Received your letter and the pound for my birthday. Many many thanks for them. It is a great pleasure when I receive news from good old Malta, I therefore need not tell you how pleased I was when on Saturday last at Man's I found a whole pile of letters waiting for me. There was one from you (1 Pound), one from Helen, Aunty Mary, George BC, and the one Lennie [Samut] had sent to me in Malta and which was sent back here. There were also a few copies of the Malta Herald. How tame it is near the English papers, but I enjoyed reading them as they reminded me of days gone by.

On Saturday I went up to London and met Mabs who took me to the Colosseum. It was quite a treat. Daisy [Agius], Franky and Oscar [Parnis] had to come, but something went wrong and they could not turn up. However I enjoyed it tremendously. After the show we had some tea and then separated. I went back to Man's.

Next morning after hearing 11 o'clock High Mass at the Oratory and lunch, Agnes took me to see Mother Allan(?) at the Convent of the Sacred Heart. She got all the news of Malta I could give and at 5 I was at the Agius's. There I saw Dick [Agius] and Arthur Samut. They both are splendid. The latter goes back to France tomorrow. The Agius's kindly kept me for supper. And some supper it was. I had not had the like since I left Malta. I then caught the 9.15 train from Euston and arrived here at 10.30. If can get off next weekend I am to meet Dick and we intend enjoying ourselves a bit. Daisy, Mabs and Oscar are sure to come along too. So sorry I did not write for three days as I have been so busy drilling and getting ready for the holiday. Tell Helen I left the nougat at the Agius's for Oscar to take to Ives as I have not seen him yet. Ugo Nuford [Misfud?] and Adams are in London about Joe Gasnnis [Gasan's?] case it seems. Time is flying by. I will have been here three weeks next Thursday. Vaccinations and inoculations are a thing of the past and for a year at least we will not have a taste of them again.

Have written to Aunty Terry and Mrs Condell, I enclose the latter's letter. I stand the cold beautifully well. I don't feel it any more than I did in Malta. As to the fogs in London I was there one day before there was some fog but luckily I was at Man's and therefore quite safe, because there were some accidents e.g. a motor bus wanted to go into the W.O. and similar things. People took hours to find the way and they were Londoners, so what would the man from Malta have done? He would have had to sleep at the first hotel he came across, most likely. Well now I think I must wind up as I have lots to do yet. Clean my muddy boots and brass, shave have, wash etc. Sorry I am writing with a pencil but the ink in my fountain pen is over and I have none here in my billet.

Well "Goodbye and Blessing."
says no 9929 Pte C. H. Asphar "G "Coy. I.C. O.T.C
to his father in Malta and love to all his people,
mostly to his Mother

**Y.M.C.A.
O.T.C. Club
Berkhamsted,
Herts.**

1st January 1917

My Dear Pater,

I am sorry I have to give you more trouble, but I can't have it done myself out here in England. You will have to go to St Aloysius College to have 2 filled up. There is a drawback in getting the Jesuits to sign it as the English have a very bad opinion. Feel and am splendid. Have not seen P.A. yet. No news to talk of here. Hope you are all well. Send the blue paper as soon as possible.

I am your affectionate son

Charlie

Berkhamsted

16th January 1917

My dear Mater

Have 1/2 hour break We are very busy going through a Lewis M. Gun course. All our spare time is spent in copying notes and study. All the other fellows envy us 12, sitting down all day close to a fire listening to lectures. The country is grand all covered in snow. It's not so cold when it snows. Shall write a 'lungo' when I have time.

Your affect. son

Charlie

**Berkhamsted
Herts.**

17th January 1917

My dear Mater

Just a few lines to tell you I am simply splendid, only my *scusi patata* is very sore. I have been sitting on hard benches since Monday last (this is Wednesday night) cramming my mind with names of springs, screws, pawls, and other parts of the Lewis gun. We actually fire it with live rounds tomorrow. This is not the gun with which some day I may be able to mow down the Huns, it is of inferior quality to the Vickers. It is however very good to know. It will help me on a great deal when I start with the real thing. I am sorry I can't write long, but I have heaps of notes to copy, clean my equipment, wash, shave etc etc and sleep. I only got two letters from Malta by last mail, (1 Pater, 1 Tom). P.A. got nothing and is anxious about his Mater and Agnes of course. I suppose the Bosch must have sunk some other mail boat. Hope the blue form was not on it.

(Wire date when sent.)

Love all round Goodbye
Old Soldiers never die
They only fade away

Chas.

**Berkhamsted
Herts.**

16th February 1917

My dear Mater

20 minutes to spare before lecture so I am writing. Life same as usual, out all day marching or doing physical jerks and bayonet fighting. Lectures nearly every evening. Have just returned from a map reading stunt. We had night ops yesterday. They were quite ok. I enclose 4 more of my photos, am printing some more. Mails are simply rotten. Not a letter since last Sunday. (Friday today). I suppose it's the same with you, but don't worry I am top hole. Still no news about my M.G. but by the time you get this I hope I shall either have been accepted or waiting here to try and get into the infantry regiment. I enclose a programme of one of the concerts we had. It was quite OK. 2 days ago Mr ... and Mrs ... came and lectured to us on the War Loan and tried persuading us to invest our fortunes in it. Least 5 pounds. We can easily afford it with 1/2 a day. (One and two pence halfpenny?) I have 2 devils buttons that I want to send, they have been waiting for days. Hope to send them on Sunday. Robert is in France. Splendid Malta! Still another doing more than his bit to cancel the stain some of the fellow have put on it.

Cheerio. Must run for lecture.

Charles

On Y.M.C.A. Letterhead

21st February 1917

Dear Pater,

I received your letter with 10/- enclosed. Went to town yesterday for an interview with Major Cameron with regards the M.G. Corps. The first thing he asked was "What qualifications have you got?" "Passed through the Lewis Gun course at Berkhamsted and 6 months at Malta University as an architect." "That's not much. But still it's something."

I showed him the Certs from Malta . He read the Judges and Edgar's.

"Here is not much about you, they all speak very highly of your family but not of you. Ah here is something. The Bishop's one. Why do you want to join the M.G.?"

"I am very keen on it and I like the work very much, Sir."

He looked at the blue form. I don't quite remember if I told you, but the Medical Board is a farce, they never examine you, but put down your weight, chest measurement etc ad lib. Well they had put down 1" expansion for chest. I have over 2". Major Cameron remarked this. I did not want to tell him what the case really was, so I kept silent. (Speech is silver. Silence is Gold).

"How do you get on with cross country runs?" Saved.

"I came in fourth for the Company the last time I ran, Sir. The course was just over 7 miles."

"How is your word of command?"

"Quite O.K. Sir!"

"Did you ever have the chance of commanding the men?"

"Very often, Sir."

"Did you yell at them?"

"Rather!"

"I suppose you are alright, but you will have to wait till April at Berkhamsted when I will send for you and you will go to Grantham. You shall be kept there for two to three weeks on approbation. If you are found efficient you'll go into the Cadets."

"Very good Sir."

I brought my left foot to the right with a click and saluted smartly, turned about and hopped it!

I'd seen Man at the bank and the Agius's before the interview, so I went to find Mabs. I wanted to see P.A. but I had not his address. I knew he was at a new hotel called the Bonnington but the few people I asked did not know where it was. So I "carcart" Mabs with me to tea at one of Lyons' places, then to the pictures. After that to dinner at the Goblins in Regent street. We parted at Piccadilly. I got to Berk. at 10.30 and to bed at 11.30.

Next morning (this) I reported on orders. Capt Geare was a bit surprised at my having been accepted, and tried not to show it.

I went on C.O.'s orders. He was unwell so the adjutant Major Cockburn (Coburn) was there. He was sitting at a table in the corner of the room. There were six of us lined up before him. When our name was called out we took a step forward, saluted and looked straight ahead to our front. I was the penultimate.

Diagram of C.O.'s room with adjutant sitting at table in corner and I one step forward looking at my front. Very exciting moments!!!!

X Adjutant
+ Asphar
+ + + + +

He, very majestically and in deep voice.
"Was it Major Cameron you saw?"
"Yes Sir!"
"How long are you to remain here?"
"He said he would send for me in April, Sir!"
"Alright. Fall in."
I now again wait and see.

The temperature is 45 [degrees] F. It's grand. We actually perspired today and had to pull off our coats and roll up our sleeves for physical jerks. The canal here is still partly frozen but a way has been broken for the barges to get through. Thank goodness the cold is over. Don't suppose we will get anymore 31 [degrees] below freezing.

What about the French Man of War that blew up? It must have been a grand sight! This news has leaked out but not the name of the ship. Hope it is not one of the big ones. No more special news here. Daisy [Agius] gave me two pair of socks she knitted, grand things they are. We have a "Sing Song" at the Rec. Room tonight.

So long. Love all round.
Your soldier Son

Charlie

**Berkhamsted
Herts.**

13th March 1917

Dear Mater,

It all came very suddenly. A pal of mine overheard a few words the C.S.M. was saying to the O. Sergeant. They were these:-

“Don’t forget to tell Asphar to report here at once as he is going to the Cadet School tomorrow” (today). I did not have lunch at the mess so I did not know anything about it until this pal of mine told me, (Townley). However I reported at the Orderly Room. The C.S.M. was very nice to me and told me to go and give in my equipment and rifle. That was 2.30. He then told me go and pack your personal belongings for tomorrow and report at 9. I did and at that hour went to the M.O. There were over 50 fellows there all waiting to be seen by him. (This interview was to see if any of us had the measles.) After that I said goodbye to some of my friends here and to my billet people. I have got quite used to B. and the people here so am sorry to leave but glad to get on. I did all my packing last night. This morning, however, I was told that I had to start tomorrow. One of the fellows (Marrs) is sharing my sitting room, that is top hole. We are the only two from C. Coy for the M.G. One fellow told me that a bosom friend of his, a certain Captain Gibbon was there, if he is still there I am to write to him and he will “*iadili melrna*” with him. Another fellow said the C.O. there, a certain Col. Carr is a friend of his and he will do the same. I also knew Col. Carr’s nephew or brother here. He is in G. Another Pal (Saunders) gave me the address of a friend of his there and I am to call at his place. All quite OK.

This morning the C.S.M. asked me:- “Have you packed up all your personal belongings?”

“Yes Sir!”

“Ahem, well, er go and see that everything is right and report here at 12.”

All the morning free. So I am writing letters as all my packing was ready yesterday night. I am excited and can hardly write. Very sorry to leave Saunders, we have chummed up lately. The two left of the original Sergeant Tully's squad that came down here on the 15th November 1916. Our instructor himself is now a Cadet. So poor old Saunders will be the last of the Squad, through no fault of his as he was ill when the Cadet draft left here.

Willie [Parnis] wrote yesterday. He says they are pushing on famously on the part of the line he is.

Received letters from Maude and at the height of my excitement yesterday received Pater's from the Bank. I could hardly read it, just glanced through it to see if there was anything important and put it away.

Had to buy a suitcase yesterday (18). My old Gladstone had burst on my way to England. Had borrowed Man's suitcase in coming here. Returned that and intended buying a leather 2nd hand one from London. (P.A. did so) I did not go to town. This event came sooner than I expected. Ergo I had to buy this one. It seems strong but is not A1. My rugs, books, pair boots, and 1 towel and alarm clock did not get into the case and kit bag so I am leaving them here till I know my proper address in G. My billet girl will send them on. (Whisky and magnesia still intact).

It's nearly 12 so I have to hop it.

Cheerio, shall write from G. Your affect. Son

Charlie

**Cadet C.H.A.
No 1 Cadet Battalion
No 2 Coy
Bisley Camp
Brookwood**

Hut 33

10th April 1917

My dear Mater,

Have made another move. Am at the above address and a real cadet with a white band round my hat. The food is splendid. We are treated as gentlemen and not as 'pratas'. Today was my first over here, we arrived yesterday at 4 PM. When the usual questions were asked we were free for the afternoon, so we went around the place to have a look at it. The Rec. Room is splendid. The only disadvantage is we can't get a sitting room where we can go and write our notes as we have got to be in at 9.30 PM. and lights out at 10.30 PM punctually. But we get good food and a lot of it too so it does not matter.

Last night I had a small adventure:- as I and 14 others came from Grantham a week after the course had begun (goodness knows why) we, of course, had all the 'scant' in everything. There were no bedsteads so we had to sleep on boards. That did not matter as we had been doing that for the last three weeks in Grantham and we were as comfortable as Princes. We had no bolsters so I used my kitbag as one. It had my large reg. boots in it. They were a bit hard. But there is an awful draft I felt very cold as two of my blankets were like 'carta'. Of course I had my rug and greatcoat. About 12 o'clock I felt a gentle pressure on my neck. I did not mind it. It went on to my shoulders. I started awakening. It proceeded onto my 'scusi' belly. It crept onto my legs and lingered on my feet. There was an awful stinky, cheesy smell. A rat! I kicked as hard as I could. He, she or it flew up and fell with a thud. I heard it crawling away and then silence. Two minutes after I was sound asleep in spite of the cheesy smell. Next morning when folding up my blankets the smell increased (the cheesy one) I saw a huge stain on one of them. It all came to me. The man who had the blanket before me had felt 'scusi' sea sick on it. I now go to change it. The course here is 4 months. Then
chn losa??

Charlie

**Bisley Camp
Surrey.**

24th April 1917

My dear Mater,

Received yours from the Convent some time ago. Also the Pater's in which he tells me all about the sad end of Uncle Henry [*g-uncle Henry Caruana, father of Bish and Man, died 7th April*]. I feel very sorry for the Bish and Man. They both have done for me what Papa could not do and I shall be ever grateful to them.

Getting on quite well here. One month is nearly over, and if all goes well, in three months time

Today A Coy went away, all subs, without pips as they have not yet been gazetted. They were a sight these last two days, standing about with leggings, spurs and without hatbands. They were all very cheerful and merry at night, especially yesterday. They did not get to bed until after midnight What's more they kept us awake with their shouts and expectations of a raid. This never came, luckily for them as we had buckets of water, mops, brooms, barricaded doors and boots quite close to us. All ready for the defence. We however envied them and looked forward to our end here.

Tomorrow we have a small exam on the work done during this month, i.e. work already gone through at Grantham except a little trench digging. So there is no reason why I should get the wind up. I, however, feel a bit awkward. I am quite 'oarse', not because I have the mumps, or anything similar, but on account of the Communication drill. Don't you hear me croaking?

We are again isolated on account of mumps, but we attend all parades and lectures, the only difference is that we have our meals in the hut. Tell Alfred to tell Vincent Bujia that there is a certain Wardale here, who used to be his pupil in maths. He is an R.C. and has a lovely voice. If you can buy a song called "At St Barbara on the Prato" do so, he sings it and he is V.G. There are no shops around where I can manage it.

Here is a certain Strickland from Canada too, but he is no relation to the Malta S's. He is a real gent. Good and well educated. At table he sits close to a fellow who does not know what manners are. They are quite extremes and I often watch them eat when I am not hungry (very rarely).

I am sending my old J.C.O.T.C. badge and two safety pins to Joseph G. My joy rags are not ready yet.

I spent £4.14.6 on a 'T.C.' [trench coat?]
 £ 1. 5.0 on a pair britches
 £ 5.0 on a shirt
 10.6 pyjamas
 2.6 tie.

I had to do it.

The Women's Legion do our washing and our mending too. A1.

Cheerio.

Got a letter from Auntie Terry

Cadet etc
No 1 Cadet Bn
No 2 Coy
Surrey

Have just heard the results of our exam. I got 69%. Not very good but quite “passable”. This first month here has rolled by. One more month and we get 4 days leave. Something to look forward to, as I have not had a days leave since Xmas. Weather fine, am discarded my underwear and drinking more, (not alcohol) but tea and dry ginger or at most 1/2 pint of beer after an afternoon on the quadrupeds. I can off saddle and bridal and put them on again quite easily, can also ride bare backed. This is off course trotting, cantering and galloping and jumping. The horses are a bit lean so their backbones protrude ... and makes us quite sore. But we soon “[rablis a scus callie](#)” and all is OK.

Today we had wrestling on horses (bare backed). It’s grand fun, our squad (13 men) had to tackle another squad of 9 men. But 4 of ours could ride before and 8 of the opponents were Australians. The scuffle was grand. We galloped at each other something like a tournament on the arena and clutched at each other. I had a huge Australian against me, so I hung on to the horses neck and avoided him as best I could till one of our side came to my help. We sandwiched him. I caught hold of his leg, lifted it while the other fellow gripped his neck and down he went. He was still descending when another Australian came galloping up to his rescue. I had just time to turn my horse away but he caught hold of me and lost his horse. A scuffle, both on my gigi [horse] then I found myself on the ground. However we won so it was alright. We then jumped a few ditches and watched the masetts [?] falling off. “Touch your heads” I have not fallen off yet.

Since Xmas we have not been allowed to travel by rail, so we used to get in about 6 in a taxi and go to Woking. However last Saturday an order came out saying that we could travel by rail in the Aldershot Southern Command. Some Good News. Bye the bye, Frank Zammit [Frank Samut at Sandhurst?] is about 6 or 7 miles away and he is coming to see me next Saturday. On account of this heat we are getting heath fires very often. I saw the first on a Saturday evening and we ran to the scene thinking it was a house on fire but were disappointed. On Sunday coming back to camp from Pirbright we saw a huge fire near our camp. It was another heath fire on the ranges and the Pirbright fire alarm was sounded. Knowing what it was we did not trouble about it. In going into camp we heard our own fire alarm go off so we (R.C.s) turned about and went on top of the hill close by from where we could see the fun. Lo and behold there they were, 2 squads from Pirbright, and all our men in fatigue dress and spades trying to put the fire out. All the targets were burnt and at about Midday the fire was extinguished or in other words it burnt itself out and all the poor fellows returned in an awful mess. They did not bless us when they heard our tale and called us shirkers etc etc.

Got a grand pair of boots, only 33/6 but eternal (K. Service boots.)

Must wind up. Have heaps of notes to copy.

Cheerio Yours affect.

Ch

P.S. Did Topolin receive my match box? Received all news about Sant Ghirrgor from Maudie.

**No 1 Cad. Bn
1V 2 Coy
Bisley Camp
Hut 33**

5.5.[19]17

My dear Mater.

Received yours of 18th April, Pater's of 26th April. One from Johnny and dozens from Maudy. Last but by no means least reg. one from Pater + £2.10.0. [Tante Grazia](#).

But don't worry about my grub. I am not such a fool as to starve. I sometimes have to go for a few hours but I take in a good supply before and after.

[Ergo "tinquirax ruhec icna taiep hafna"](#) Q.E.D . Have not talked Maltese since Xmas. Received a P.C. from Willie [Parnis], also one from Oscar [Parnis]. They are both OK. Papa is I see very busy with Bank, Bish, Boy Scouts and Mikado. As you say it will do him good.

So pleased to hear good news about Simeon, also more pleased to hear that Auntie Lisa's operation has been successful. Hope she'll be quite OK again. Tell her to go to the "Reugium" of the sick, the over worked, the holiday place and the honeymoon place, [Dar.it.hena](#). Why don't you take Papa, Auntie Liza, the Bish, Auntie (The), and Paula there for a few days? It will do you all a lot of good.

One month is over, three more to go and I get my Commission (Please God). At the end of next month we sit for an exam. If we get through well and good. If not it's R.T.U. (Return to Unit). But very few get plucked [?] so there is no need that I should get the wind up. If we get through that and fail at the end we go to an Infantry Cadet School, because the first 2 months work is Info. work and last two Machine Gun W. So that will mean you are a wash out as a machine gunner and O.K. for infantry. If you just fail in the last two months they put you back a month.

I can imagine Mamma wishing me to fail so that I may remain here longer. I don't blame her, its only natural that she should think so. When I do get my Com, there is no saying what will happen. We might be sent to Grantham for further training, to the M.G. Guards. (They have men but not many officers that's all we know about them) or straight to France. We however get a fortnight's leave before.

Was fitted yesterday and by next week hope to get my No. Ones. Had to order a pair of slacks (32/6). All the rest have them. Ten days ago No 4 Coy went away all commissioned. We are all looking forward to Our Day. Three days ago the new No 4 Coy came over from Grantham. So that afternoon one of our fellows put on spurs, a T.C. took off his white band, gloves & stick and went with a duty cadet to the newcomers hut. He went in. They all stood to attention. He said. .

“Sorry you have to start work so soon but you have to do some fatigue work. Fall in outside.” They did so by no means blessing him. The duty cadet then numbered them off, swore at them etc etc etc and marched them off. We were all looking at them from our huts. The temporary officer disappeared and when passing a hut the duty officer also disappeared. The new fellows marched on in silence till they came to a turning and not receiving a “right wheel” turning around and only saw a crowd of us holding their sides and laughing. They swore they would revenge us but up to the present nothing has happened.

I am at present writing this sitting on a deck chair on the verandah of our anteroom. There are fellows playing cards, others singing around a piano. The ‘*vicluta*’ is lovely, everything looks fresh and green. In summer I can't describe it, its lovely and a treat to be sitting and chatting with gentlemen instead of dirty conscripts. But this latter won't help one to get to know the ways and ideas of the British Tommy. Very useful in the future.

That's all I have got to say. Hope you have enjoyed ‘San Ghirgor’. Also am very interested in the tennis tournament. Wish it was taking place here.

Addio, with love and multiplication signs, yours Charlie.

as above.

10/05/[19]17

My dear Mater

This can't be a long letter as I have a lot of notes to copy. Frank [Samut?] and Dick [Agius?] were coming to see me next Saturday but I have just been told that I am on guard tomorrow (Friday) at 5.30 PM. to the next day at the same hour. Ergo it won't be worth their while coming for a few hours only. There is however one consolation. This guard will most probably be the last one for me, because our Company's months at guards is nearly over and by the time it comes again I'll be away from here "Hmistax ohra" and I'll get 4 days leave. Time is flying and I don't object to its going so fast. Spent a great day in the country today doing outposts, attacks etc etc. We started at 7 A.M. from here and got back at 4.45 P.M. We were on the go all the time. It also rained when we were attacking an imaginary enemy, so you ought to have seen the state we were in when we completely annihilated the thousands of Germans with only a sprained ankle on our side. (Not my ankle!!!) "MUX KILNA" at teatime and dinner time!

I must stop now

Vale Yours Affect.

Charlie

**No 1 Cadet Bn
No 2 Coy
Bisley Camp
Hut 33**

14/05/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

[Solamento duparole, because andi hafna xname](#). Next Thursday week we sit for our exam, and on Friday P.M. we go to return on Tuesday 11.30 P.M. This exam is only on infantry work. If we get through it means that if we fail at the end of 4 months they send us to an Infantry Cadet School. As you see therefore we are both infantry and M.G. Officers. Brian Blab has transferred to the M.G.C. and France intends joining the Corps too. The latter came to see me yesterday, Sunday afternoon. We talked about nothing but Maltese.

With regards my kit. They provide us with a jacket, a pair of breeches, 1 pair putties, a hat, 2 shirts & a tie. The other things I bought are not absolutely necessary but the majority of the other fellows have them, so that it won't do my not having them. Besides I will want them all when I get my Commission so I don't think it is a waste. One feels so clean and smart with a comparatively well fitting uniform. I say comparatively because the tailors have lots to do and no men to do it. I suppose Pater was quite pleased to hear that the age limit for volunteers has been raised to 50, but don't worry he won't do it, although he feels like it, I'm sure and that's what every man ought to feel. Would they were all like him.

We start getting up at 5.30 A.M. tomorrow, but we don't mind it as we lights out at 10.30 and the weather is very very warm. Sunshine, pale blue skies and everything new fresh green. The country is topping.

Yesterday at 9.30 P.M. there was a heath fire quite close to the camp, but by the time they sounded the alarm, got off our No. Ones and out in our No. 3's the Pirbright fellows had put it out.

[Buon Sera tui dhinsm isimo isimo????](#)

No 1 Cadet Bn.

No 2 Coy

Hut 33

Bisley Camp

Surrey

Dear All

Have returned from 4 days leave. Had a simply ripping time. Played any amount of tennis at the Agius's at my boarding house No 9. Went to the swimming baths with Mr Agius. Took Males [Mabs?] to see Chu Chin Chow (Ali Baba and the 40 thieves). I also saw Maid of the Mountains. The former at His Majesty's the latter at Daly's Theatre. Both shows were very good. I also went to see the Royal Academy with Daisy [Agius] and saw some very good oil paintings at Gribbles and had a few meals with Oscar [Parnis] too. The only thing about them was that they were too short. They rushed by in a tumbling of the eye.

Did not write for some time. I only sent a P.C. Received Mater's of 7th May, Maudy's of the 13th & Pater's of 9th. Very interrupted. I quite understand what it is. They often call us up when we least expect it and we leave everything "a muzza". Had to leave and go off to go and try and listen to a lecture on Military Law. In case you did not get some of my previous letters, I acknowledge receipt of two registered letters the last being the one mentioned above. Man had a cousin from Ireland staying with him. I went to see them twice but she was always out.

We start the M.G. on the first. We have not heard any news of our exams, but in this case no news is good news. All our company looks gloomy, fed up, homesick and very silent. Some tried cheering a bit yesterday at about 11.30 P.M. when we were all in our huts, but it did not take on. We were too tired to do anything.

This morning we had an hours P.T. (physical training) but I am afraid we all made a very poor showing of it and got sworn at more than ever.

I'll write and ask Willie [Parnis] about sending money to France but I think it is through Cox. I don't suppose I will need anything from Malta before leaving. If so I will write. Got 2 pound from Man to buy a watch from Aunty, but on second thoughts I did not get it because May's is still O.K. for here and there is some case of a new watch in my box being pinched. I'll get it later.

Must wind up for present

Charles

**Connaught Hospital
Hut E 9**

Aldershot

01/06/[19] 17

Dearest Mater,

Don't worry it's only a slight touch of fever and I am eating solids again after two long days of liquids. The first day was yesterday and the second day is today until tea time when I was given three slices (big ones) of bread with butter and jam. I have been unlucky in one way because this hospital is a Tommy's one. Some other cadets are admitted into Cambridge Hospital, an officers one. I was sent there but for some reason or another was sent here. I think because the case was not too serious. The nurses are all very nice, especially so to me because I am a Cadet. The Tommies in my hut are also very nice and quiet. There are only 7 of us in bed and the rest are convalescents.

All the Docs and V.A.D.'s are very much surprised when they hear I have lived all my life in Malta and never got Malaria, Medit. or Malta Fever. The fools! I think this fever was brought on by the inoculation [are?] five months ago. Because I have not had a touch of fever for 7 or 8 years. Moral. Don't do what the doctors tell you to do. 7 of them examined me before the present doctor took me in hand. All my joy rags have been taken away and I have been given blues. What would the Maltese say if they saw me going about like that as I mean to do when I am convalescent. *i.e. Pit Ada isjust pitada*. With regards how my fever came on. On the eve of the exam I felt bad. Quinine pills kept it down.

**Connaught Hospital
Hut E 9
Aldershot**

01/06/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

I am a convalescent (out of bed), get plenty of food and sleep and because I am a Cadet I don't help to clean up the hut and wash up plates etc after meals. Have been here 5 days and am longing to get back to my machine gun work. This is the most cushey month, little work and very interesting. Have made friends with the doctor, a Yankee and I hope to be sent back tomorrow or the day after. I met a fellow here a Tommy, who was some time in Malta. He used to go to the Bugeyas & Madame Chloran. He is a Welshman from Nottingham and his name is Hickman. Had a long talk with him all about Blighty & the Maltese language. He knows Arabic, German etc, etc.

You ought to see how I have got used to milk. I drink gallons of it with boiled rice floating about. That's our pudding. The "nessyet" one [nurses are ?] all very nice to me as I am a Cadet and there is one who brings me a cup of tea every night at about 10 or 11 P.M. A corporal in my hut also gets one She gives one to all her friends.

Charles

No 9 Belsize Grove
3 Days after last letter

[boarding house near No3]
[04/06/1917]

My Dear Pater.

Received yours of 28th, May's 29th, Johnny's 30th and I don't know if I acknowledged receipt of Mater's 7th and yours 9th.

I am here 'taparsi' on sick leave. Our M.O. is a very decent fellow and when I reported to him after returning from Hospital he said: "Well Asphar, how do you feel?"

"Quite alright Sir."

"What had you?"

"A slight touch of fever, doctor said it was 'gorriga' [?] Something like flu."

He: "Do you feel fit to resume your work?"

"Yes Sir."

He: "Would you like a weekend?"

"I'd love to."

"Alright. You need it. You are still a bit run down" (Smiling).

He wrote out a chit. I got a pass written out and took it to the C.O. and had it signed by him and two hours after seeing the M.O. I was on my way to London. Isn't that top hole? That was Friday and I am to return on Monday morning. With regards money affairs. I can't open an account with Cox until I get my Commission, then they shall take my pay and I'll be able to draw money from there both here and in France. You will also be able to send them money, (naturally) but lets hope you will never need to.

I don't know how much money I'll want for my kit when I'll get my Com in 6 weeks time about, but I am writing to Willie [Parnis] asking him what he spent and I'll let you know his answer 'fil ictar feese'. With regards telegrams you can send them to Man at his house or the bank or else to me: "Asphar (Cadet) Bisley Camp, Surrey. This address ought to get me. Of course all have drawbacks. Man will be having a weeks leave, he is also juror and so there is no saying when the leave will come. They are shutting up house to go to Brighton for some time. I think Bisley is best.

Forgot to say. I have quite recovered from my dangerous and serious malady. I had Gladys Coopers (film star) sister Violet nursing me. She is very hideous but very nice to talk to. They made a lot of me as I was a cadet amongst a lot of Tommies; one nurse used even to give me tea at night.

Have not had my photo taken yet but will do to as soon as I get back to Bisley.

I'd have loved to see 'The Sublime Porte' but I think that the Maid of the Mountain and Chu Chin Chow are a bit better so I think you are to envy me and not I envy you. However Oscar [Parnis] will be coming to Malta soon I suppose. Spent the day with him, Joe Muscat and two of the "Carreras".

So sorry I can't answer May's and Johnny's letters, this will have to do for all. They (letters) were very interesting telling me all about tournaments, plays etc. Let's hope they (May & Sally?) will continue writing and giving me news. It seems a mail boat went down somewhere in the Medit. There may have been letters for me. I have acknowledged all I received so if there was anything important please write again.

Has Tapolin received the I.P.O.T.E badge and two safety pins (bomb) I sent him?

So pleased to hear Auntie Liza has quite recovered and same with Johnny Simeon; its strange that such good people should suffer so much but God's will be done. He knows what's best for us.

How is it that the 'Sublime Porte' was under nobody's patronage? Queer isn't it? We are now learning how to drive mules drawing limbus [limbers?]. I missed the first lesson, but we will get a lot more, so it's alright. The Gun is very interesting, there is a lot about 'Fire Directions' etc and I have missed a week's work and a weeks lectures too, but here the little experience I had of the gun in Berkhamsted is coming in.

How are they all in Malta? I'd like to write to [a] lot of people, Auntie, Tom, Victor, Vella, etc. But I have absolutely no time so please apologise for me. I also owe Vic Bona one. I got a letter from him two months ago and have not answered it yet, it's in my pocket, [incallata](#) But "[xitreet tamel](#)".

Must wind up now. Must write to Willie [Parnis]. [Im habba glira min ant ittiffel tiec](#)

Charlie

Bisley Camp

20/06/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Have not written for about 4 days, but Fire Direction has kept: me going all day. Besides that I am the Duty Cadet (Orderly Officer arrangement) and so still more work to do.

Here a certain Arnold who was an M.G. sergeant instructor at Berkhamsted, he taught me the Lewis gun and is now in the Coy ahead of us waiting to be commissioned. Every day after dinner he talks [to] me and coaches me in Fire Direction. It's very kind of him as I had no foundation to the subjects on account of my late serious and dangerous illness of the flu. He is building the foundations for me and I am now grasping the subject.

Fire Direction is the means of direction and elevation for our guns under all circumstances, so angles, tables, formulae etc. etc, come in. Last Sunday I had my photo taken here and I went to see the rough copies today. One was with me with too much expression and with a shiny face on account of perspiration, it was not touched. The other was of someone else who resembled me and who had the usually shaped face with two black marks for the eyes, two dots for the nose, and a line for the mouth. Nothing else on it.

So now as you have put me into the “pica” with regards photographic. May saying Vella was a good man after all and he should thus by the second photo sent me of her and Gina, I am doing my best to show you that a photographer out here in the country is better than any man in Malta. So I straffed the man and he is remedying my photo. I go again “Pit Ada”.

So sorry I am running down the Maltese but it is also quite true.

Important: Don't say I am 'hisah' when you see my pose, he did everything. I don't know anything about the art of posing like Cali. The other good man of Dun Ursos' portrait, Pater and Agnes etc. etc.

I feel like writing a lot today and at the same time saying nothing as you have already seen,

I received yours of 3rd June, Pater's of 6th & Agnes's of 3rd. So pleased to hear the Mikado had been such a success. You asked if I wanted anything particular from Malta. My answer is yes. Please send over the Mikado. I want to see it. It must be really good if Zio Fonsu went and sat down right through it and liked it. Still more pleased to hear that Auntie Liza also went and enjoyed it. Straffe Agnes for not praying for me to get through the exams, tell her that if I don't there are chances of going to France as a Tommy with a lot of conscripts. What would she think of her brother then? With regards the Battle of the Somme and the pictures, fellows here saw it being taken miles behind the firing line, [a] lot of it was acted and it is nothing like the real thing. Who was the young Militia Officer watching the terrible sights? Who gave me the 'lakam' of the Tatler? Not bad! Tell Vi if she wants any teeth for Jamnu she is only to write and tell me. I can send her heaps of all sizes, qualities, and colours after boxing here. We pick them up in piles, squash them and put them in our tea instead of sugar.

Sorrow to hear that Marras had a narrow escape and that Pater has to paint the number on our boat and sail. Congratulate Edgar Bonavia from me. I wrote to Vic a week ago.

We have had very warm weather of late, it (temp) actually went up to 84 [degrees] F in the shade. But at night it is always a bit chilly. I still sleep with three blankets. Besides that we very often get summer showers. It rains, thunders etc etc for about 1/2 hour and the bright sunshine again.

We did some more firing yesterday and when we were on the range it came onto rain. Everyone and everything got wet, but a whole day has passed and I am still wearing the same underclothes and feeling as fit as ever. All the clothes dried on us. Have not heard from Willie [Parnis] telling me what I will need when I get my Commission so I can't say how much tin I'll want.

Must shut up and do some work. Love all round, yours as usual

Charlie.

(Written back to front)

P.S. I spent 8/6 on the photographs.

24/06[19]17

Bisley Camp

Dear Tom,

Have not written to you for years as I know you don't stand on ceremonies. I would have done so if I had the time but we are kept on the go all day so my little spare time is taken up with writing home or sitting in our recreation room chatting with the other fellows.

We are doing Gun and Fire Direction this month, the latter being the '[Pons Asimorium](#).' Many a poor fellow had to return to his unit on account of it. I suppose you know its all about the bullets trajectory, angles etc, etc. Besides its being a bit '[antipatica](#)' I am sorry to say our lecturer is not quite up to the mark in it. He is a Capt. (regular) and an old soldier with experience with the gun, but there is a great difference between the theoretical and the practical work on this subject. Many a time some intelligent asked him to make clear some difficulty and you ought to have seen the way in which the Capt. wriggled out of it, and finally the poor cadet had to say he quite understood it when it was apparent it was quite the opposite. However, I don't see why I should not get through. Tomorrow the Coy senior to us goes away and in four weeks time we hope to follow their example, so some of the fellows in my hut are getting their own brownes catalogue for their kit, etc etc.

On account of the hot weather we had about a week ago a lot of the foodstuff went bad and we are feeling the consequence of it now. Last night there was a "[continua passiggiate](#)" from the huts to the latrines. This happened about four days ago too, but luckily I never got it. The first time the food had absolutely no effect on me and yesterday (Saturday) was not here for dinner for I had gone out with three other fellows for a walk and in coming back in the country we saw a label 'Strawberries and Teas'. We naturally dropped in and devoured strawberries, cream, cakes, bread & butter & tea. My mouth waters at the mere thought of it. They are lovely "[frauli inglisa](#)" full of flavour.

The weather has changed again, its waxing cold. We often get showers of rain and today there is a strong wind blowing. Our hut is quivering and creaking, and papers fling about in spite of it being hermetically closed. I remember two years ago my Mater used to grumble on account of my room in Rocklands being too damp and droughty. She used to put up a blanket over the window to keep out the wind. How different it is here. Instead of that revelly goes off at 5.30 A.M. and if you are not out of your bed quick enough the orderly sergeant comes in slanging us, pulls off our blankets, lifts up one end of the telescopic beds and down you go amidst shrieks of laughter from the other fellows. Still that very often does not wake one. I've often seen some of them go off to sleep again as soon as the sergeant has done his worst, in spite of the uncomfortable position they found themselves in. But I feel none the worse of for it.

Our moves when we will pass our exams here will most probably be the following:

About a fortnight leave, we then go to Clipston near Grantham for another 3 weeks (circ) course. (Don't know what on.) After that we either go out with a draft or join our Corps for some time until its quite ready and trained and you go out to France with them. That means 5 months longer here after I get my Commission. Good news for my Mater. Show the above to my Pater. As I won't write home today please also tell him that I received his cheque (£2 .10/-) and got it cashed here by our Captain. Went to Mass as usual this morning at Pirbright (10.30 Mass) but as it is so late I don't often go to Communion. However on the first Sunday of every month our Chaplains give Holy Communion and says Mass as usual at 10.30 and a lot of us go there every first Sunday.

We have all kinds of opinions on religions here and its awful sometimes to hear the heresies they say but they don't know any better. They sometimes talk on the sermon they heard, they bow and tell me how the preacher contradicted himself and made a mess of things and the consequence is they don't believe anything. They do just as they please. I never say anything ... not a word. They sometimes ask questions that I answer civilly and the matter drops there.

Has Joseph received the Inns of Court badge I had sent him? I am afraid it might have been lost. Must wind up as I want to write to Harry as I have some time to spare. Have not heard from him since his Pater died.

Cheerio yours etc

Charlie

Bisley Camp

29/06[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Received yours 17th and May's same date from Dar it hena. I would very much have liked being there with you eating strawberries, but I could not miss the strawberries and cream here. I think they beat the Malta ones. They are simply lovely. At tea time we buy a bucket full and devour its contents in no time. I never knew the Bish was getting a motor. Was it a present from the Maltese or else one given by Father Maurios to the Bishop of Malta?

Weather very bad today. S. W. with rain coming down several intervals. We were out all the morning doing indirect overhead fire etc. My trench coat came in very helpful but my feet were soaked. This is 5 o'clock and I am still wearing my wet boots and putties. 'Com see poss nient?' I am quite warm. We have had two exams on the gun lately. First was on the mechanism of the gun. Second was on I. A. (Immediate Action in case of stopping). I got through both of them with an average of 69%. We had to have one on T. O. E. T. (Tests on Elementary Training consists of mounting the gun in every possible manner under all circumstances in an established period of time) today, but the weather was too bad. Two days ago we were out driving mules with timber. Like the Commiserate people, riding on one and driving the other on your side. They are awful things to manage. We had to harness and un-harness them again and again Very often the mules run away and we have heaps of fun chasing them. On the 12th of next month we sit for our Fire & Direction Exams

My photos are ready but I have not had time to pick them up and send them today as I was on the incline right today and so must clean up. Love to all

Charlie

Bisley Camp

04/07/[19]17

Dear Pater,

Received note from Willie [Parnis], he expects coming for some leave this month. He also sent a list of kit required.

- 1) Washing & shaving tackle
- 2) 3 complete sets of underclothing.
(2 will be enough but better have three.)
- 3) Socks, handkerchiefs and collars (As many as you can stuff)
- 4) 2 Tunics (£6) one good one, (£4) & a cheap one (£2 or 3)
2 pr brooches (£3)
1 pr slacks (useful in billets) (18/-)
1 raincoat (fleece lining not reqd?) The Govt gives you a fur coat in winter.
1 Br[itish] Warm (Buy this in France from Ordinance £3)
- 5) 1 pr trench boots (from Ordinance 30/-)
2 pr ankle boots 1 pr leggings 18/-
1 pr slippers 2 pr putties 15/-
- 6) 1 pr pyjamas
1 flea bag (sleeping) 30/-
2 blanket (issued by govt when you join your unit.)
- 7) & 8) [canbe?] canteen[?] got in France

We are given £50 kit allowance - £8 for present kit.

I am afraid that I'll have got my Comm. by the time I get an answer to this, so I might have to draw from Man's. But I only got this letter from Willie [Parnis] this morning

Am getting on splendidly in Fire Direction. We sit for the exam on the 12th. Sent 4 of my photos yesterday. Give one to Bish, one to Zio Fonsu, one for you and the other is a 'buckshee' one. I'll be sending some P.C.s soon. We are having a group of Coy taken today.

I had received cheque.

Time is up now. Cheerio. Love all of you in haste

Charlie

Bisley Camp

08/07/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Received Pater's of the 22nd & 28th. Mails from Malta are a bit scarce lately too. But it can't be helped. I write on an average of twice a week so if you don't receive at least two you will know that the mails failed to reach you. There was another raid on London yesterday, but there were not many casualties and many of the raiders were brought down by the R.N.A.S. I wonder if they will agree to reprisals now after this. I think they ought to. It's too bad now. There's a limit to a man's patience. Just fancy being hit under the belt in a boxing match by your opponent & you stick there like a stuffed owl without replying. I would use my leg too.

This last week here is a rotten one. Four final exams and the rest of the time out in the country in tactical schemes with our M.G.s. We go out on our own, we drive the mules. Some of us do the work of the section officers & sergeants. Last Thursday I was a sergeant. Of course our real section officers go about criticizing us and where need be swearing at us too. But they don't mean it. This no 2 Coy is the best company going and with the best officers too.

Every 3 days a man from each squad goes to dine in the officers mess. My turn has not yet come, but I am looking forward to a good feed.

Must stop now to write to Man, Agius's & Mabs to see if they are alright and to do some swotting on Fire Directions, Gen M.G.'s works, Setting up stoppages & I.A. (Immediate Action.)

Goodbye. By the way we were asked if any of us had Malaria or had been to the tropics and had fever. I answered "No" (I only had a moderately high temperature). It might mean their sending me to the East. Which will mean a visit to dear old Blighty.
Salutations Your Affect.

Charlie.

Bisley Camp

09/07/[19] 17

Dearest Mater,

Veramente duo parole. My P.C. are ready. I am sending one at a time because I have not envelopes large enough to contain more. I think Vella has beaten the photographer here. Hope you received the 2? cabinets I sent.

Fire Direction Exam the day after tomorrow. Arthur [Samut] sent home on leave.

Very rainy weather. Goodbye yours

Charlie

Bisley Camp

13/07/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Received yours and Maude's in the one envelope and Johnny's with his photo today. His smile is very unnatural. He shows his teeth too much, otherwise very good. Sat for Fire Direction Exam yesterday. Another on General MG. work tomorrow. All very anxious about results.

General Hunter inspected us yesterday and decorated 12 of the cadets with medals they had earned but not received. Today while riding some of the Red Hatted Brg came down and watched us. Of course we all rode our best. By the time you get this I'll either be in London with a pip on my shoulder or at some infantry Cadet School.

Must say goodbye and do some more swatting. I enclose two photos.

Yours Charlie

Bisley Camp

14/07/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Have started work again “[cha lungo tempo](#)”. We fired our famous guns three days ago, the sensation was simply topping. Just imagine pressing a lever and bullets flying out of a muzzle at the rate of 600 shots a minute. We are doing some interesting work now, no more fooling around on the parade ground, turning to R & L., hopping on one foot, playing about with a rifle, throwing it on our shoulders then down again etc etc. but we are learning the Vickers’s M.G. Some weapon. We have a ‘bus illis’ here too, it's called “[Fire Direction](#)” a “[pons asinorum](#)” many have “hit there differ” & fallen out. I missed a couple of lectures on it but am now getting on splendidly. The subject is very interesting all the same.

The heat here is as bad as the Malta heat, only at night we still use two or three blankets. During the day we lie around the gun on the grass and in a shady spot. There we learn how to manage it, what to do in case it stops etc etc. In other words we are having a very cushy time. “[Ugh, xi shana!](#)” I would not mind having a dip in “[Font Ashr](#)”: We have a dirty Canal here but the water is too dirty to swim in so we go and have a shower instead.

No news here lately. There was a raid in London yesterday but I did not see any of the pirates worse luck. Why did they not come when I was in London? I'd love to see one. Morachini wrote to me some days ago in English. He thought I had forgotten him, but my photo told him that I had not. He also told me to “[selli al](#)” Lenny [Samut]. He does not know that he is in India. Must dry up now. Good byeeeeee with fondest love.

Charlie.

Sellu al Ishof

**No 1 Cadet Bn
No 2 Coy**

Hut 33

17/08/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Received a letter from Willie [Parnis]. He is in London but goes back next Monday. (Tuesday today) and I go to London on tomorrow week (Wednesday). However I am applying for a weekend pass. I don't see why I shouldn't get it.

We have had Fire Directory results. I just managed to scrape through, mine but made up for it in the gen. Machine Gun work so I am practically certain of having got through. You shall have received a wire from me giving you the good news by the time you receive this letter. We all did fairly badly in the F.D. paper. Some poor fellows got 7/120, four out of about 200 got over 80/120. Great commotion in the huts, Sam Browns being cleaned, spurs being polished etc etc. All is happy as ever in spite of the 13 miles tramp today on tactical scheme with only a bully beef sandwich, a small bit of cheese & 3 small dry biscuits. I feel as fit as ever an am ready to start again. Received a letter from Auntie Terry, she and Mary are very well and the former says that the latter will soon be getting her "commission". I can't help thinking about next Wednesday. I feel as happy as a seven year old child with a new box of soldiers and want to take it to bed with me.

Am too excited to write any more. Thank God the exams are over.
Goodbye. Fondest Love

Charlie

**No 16 Mess M.G.C.
Clipstone Camp
Mansfield
Notts**

22/08/[19]17

My dear All including Galeas

Received Pater's from St. G. his reg. & £2.10.0 enclosed. Cross, thanks & May's of 11th & also Pater's from Sliema of 7th.

Holt & Co of 3 Whitehall Place 3W know me as 2nd Lt. C.H.A. M.G.C.

Pater's advice, Cross & Badges have come just at the right time. Shall be leaving anytime now for anywhere. Most likely France.

Sorry Maudy fell off the bike, but that won't harm her. At least I have remembered who old Ellis is. [Sellu aleh](#).

So sorry I was the cause of the male casta being broken, but it was an old one & had to break some day.

I envy the good warm weather you are having. At present the rain is coming down in buckets. It has been a very windy day and we were out doing tactical schemes on the bikes. When we returned at about 4 our tents were swaying like ships in a storm and everything was buried in sand, so we set them right "[ingazzaina issaris](#)" very tight and dug our beds, clothing, etc from under the sand. While I was writing wind fell & as I said it started to rain so we had to so out and slackened the [sarsi\[?\]](#) for fear of the tent collapsing. They call this summer here! But we are always cheerful and happy.

Am looking forward to see Willie [Parnis]. Shall apply for a transfer for India after I've been out some time. Guards stunts is wasted out for me. Those who volunteered went to London for an interview this evening.

With regards to hamper, have written to Mabs to see if she will do it. She said she was willing before but I have written again. Did not ask Daisy [Agius] because they have done a lot for me and I have not the 'face' to ask for more. My photos are not yet ready, but shall leave instructions for them to be sent on to you. Naturally give one to Bish, Cousins, relations, friends [insomnia?]. Do just as you please. (Don't forget the Galeas).

Beastly sorry mails are so irregular. These three weeks is a long time. Received quite a file from Malta and some from here. Daisy, Mabs and P.A. & some from pals at Bisley. Also one from Lina Samut.

Can never get up in time in the morning. Had to go out and wash this morning. Shaved in dirty water, had breakfast & changed after physical jerks in 20 minutes. Never knew the ground was so comfortable. I advise all of you ... Try It! Must wind up Salute Fondest love to all...
Your affect.

Charlie

Pleased to hear Johnny is having some good times as a scout. He enjoys it doing everything on a small scale. I more than enjoy things as we do things on a larger scale here. Had lunch at an Inn in a village here today. It consisted of lot of bread, heaps of cheese, many pickled onions & diverse bottles of dry ginger.

**Officers Mess
Alg Base Dept
A.P.O. S 18**

26:8:17

B.E.F.

Dearest Mater,

Received yours of 12th, Pater's of the 7th. One from Aunty 14th, Tom's of the 12th. One from Lennie [Samut] & one from Lina also one from Mabs and 1 from Daisy [Agius]. All the same day I left Clipstone. Only had 2 hours notice. We were on bicycles doing tactical schemes. On that day we were defending Clipstone Village and had thousands of men under our charge, (imaginary). We were getting on beautifully, the enemy's advance had been checked and we were preparing to receive a counter attack when a messenger (real one) came from the Company to give a message to the Major in Charge. He read out a list of names. I was included:

“The following report to the Orderly Room to go overseas AT ONCE”.

The unlucky, or lucky ones, went of and reported. It was then 12.45 and we were told to leave Mansfield by the 2.20. So we all ran to our tents, threw everything into our valises any how. Left a lot of things but pinched a lot of clothes of the fellow who was sleeping with me, with the result that he had no soap or towels & I had no shaving brush or stick. Batmen were running all over the place bringing to washing and taxis. We were all over the place paying bills but only signing for money due to us & in the hurry we forgot all about lunch. We went to the station in twos and threes, buried under valises, raincoats, suit covers etc. One couldn't see dirty old Ford motor cars as I said full of anything and the heads of two or three subs poking out from somewhere with a cigarette in their mouth and a huge grin on their faces. At Nottingham we changed into an overcrowded train & tried to sit somewhere in the corridors, until we tipped a porter and we were soon comfortably seated. But the pangs of hunger were universally being felt. We could only get a few chocolates at the station but these melted in ones mouth and became saliva before they had time to wend their weary way down one's throat into his digestive organs to nourish the body. However we smoked a lot and tried to sleep. At 6.15 we got into St Pancras station. Then a rush for our valises, a porter for a taxi and then “home” at last. I disembarked at the quay at no 9 Belsize Grove Hampstead and we dropped anchor for the night.

After a much needed wash I went to the Agius's at 7.15 knowing that I could get a more substantial dinner there. They had not yet come in so I rang up Man at the bank. He was not there and they did not know where he was living (his boarding house) so I could not get him or any money either. So I rang up Mabs instead and booked her up for after dinner.

This was Al. All kinds of good things & champagne & claret to keep everything down, and I did eat. We had fish & eggs. The two used to disagree with me in the good old days but they had absolutely no effect on me. I bid them goodbye, very dry, but by no means a pleasant thing. Took Mabs to the Regent Palace Hotel and while we quaffed some coffee we talked and decided that she was to send me a monthly hamper including the bill. I was to send her a cheque in return. Nowadays one gets practically anything he likes from home from the Expeditionary Force Canteen. Everything is very good and very cheap. Cigarettes and tobacco half price.

Pater ought to come specially to get his tobacco cheaper. (I don't think!) Well I left from the 7.30 am from Victoria. At Folkestone we had some rotten chicken and ham to eat, (again no effect) and went on board. In crossing it's absolutely impossible to get drowned after being torpedoed or mined. Destroyers escort as (two transports) and then there is an empty ship coming along in case of need. We, of course, all had to wear lifebelts.

We stayed the night at Boulogne and left this morning at 6.30 am for the base home where I am at the present moment. Far far away from the front lines. However, at night time, they say that if you go to a certain hill close by you can see the flash and hear the guns. I go tonight to see then for the first time. Am expecting to see Willie [Parnis] any day.

Splendid cushey time. We play tennis, eat and sleep all day ... it's a sort of place for fattening pigs. It was lovely to see the sea again. Had not seen it for 10 solid months. The crossing was very calm, just a bit choppy like a "neh foc" in Malta. A brisk breeze was blowing and while I stood on the bridge with a trench coat and life belt & spray going all otter the place I thought of the good time I had in St G. sailing.

The photos I had taken at La Fayette's came out very well. I had the rough proofs. I am giving two to the Agius's, 1 to Caruana, & 1 to Mabs, rest to be sent to Malta. Don't forget the Bish.

This part of France is just like England. You see nothing but plain English is spoken by nearly everyone and everyone accepts English money: You go to buy something . The price is x francs y cents. You give her a pound note then you pretend you are counting look at the change & count & walk out not knowing if you have been swindled or not. However I have got used to it now & I really ...

[Page 8 missing]

12th M.G.C. [Machine Gun Corp]
B.E.F. [British Expeditionary Force]

15/09/[19]17

Dearest Mater,

Received yours 24th, Helen's 26th. Will answer the latter soon. I am very sorry I caused you so much alarm and sorry when you received my last wire. I am at present far from the line and from the look of it will not be going in for the present. I was lucky in joining a division that had just come out to rest so there is no saying when we go back. Please dearest Mater don't worry. I am very happy and cheerful but when I think that you are worrying about me here doing nothing but eating and sleeping and getting fitter than ever it makes me feel bad too. Ergo. You don't worry and it will be alright. I repeat what I said in my last letter...we go up for a short time, danger not very much, we then come to rest. So very often you are fretting when we are miles behind the line fattening up. Out of this Coy there were only two casualties the last time it went in and they were men wounded. The Officers are quite safe in their dugouts except for a few minutes during the tour of inspection.

Sorry Helen's coming over has fallen flat but I quite see it's impossible. Must wind up now as I have to censor the men's letters. Went to Mass this morning (Sunday) I go to Communion tomorrow evening . Going to become a knight of the Blessed Sacrament. Goodbye. Your affect Son

Charlie

12th M.G. Coy
B.E.F.
France

Dearest Mater,

Don't you ever worry about me. Am still in captured villages miles behind the lines I sleep in a very comfortable Bosche bed found in the dugouts. Our abode is a corrugated iron arrangement.

Boxes of ammunition keep up the beds. I get heaps of riding. Have not changed any clothing for 10 days. Fancy wearing 1 pair of socks for that period doing on an average of 7 miles a day in the hot weather. Then riding for umpteen miles. Could not change because I had temporarily lost my Valise. I have found it about ten miles away from here & therefore I will change tomorrow.

["Amilt giosh passi gmulom"](#) 6 days ago just over 20 kilos The poor men were falling out at every mile, was running up and down the line encouraging them on and giving them chocolate.

I did not like having nothing to carry so I took the rifles of some of the bad cases. At one time for the space of one hour I had 5 of them hanging around my neck, but I felt as strong as ever and not mind them in the least. Could have carried more if I had more necks and more hands. It took us 8 hours to do the journey. The soldier of today is zibel [??] compared to the soldier of pre war time and therefore the long time we took to cover the distance. Again, dear Mater, don't you ever worry about me. A M.G. gunner aplra[?] is some distance behind the line. Everyone envies the M. Gunner. He gets the most cushy job. I can prove what I say by saying that out of this Coy in the last 9 days in the line there were only 3 casualties and they were wounds. The officer is still safer than the men. Have got quite used to hardships, in fact I enjoy them. So all you have to do is to be proud of your son and sometimes offer up a prayer for him.

Your well and happy as ever son

Charlie.

12th M.G. Coy

22nd September 1917

Dearest Mater.

Received Pater's of the 6th September. Tell him he need not keep on sending money now. Out here, including everything, our pay amounts to 12/- a day, expenses very few. If you did want to spend there is nothing to spend it on. We can only draw 125 francs 3 times a month from the field cashier, so there is always something being deposited in the Bank. Besides that I have drawn 250 francs and have about 160 left so there are over 125 francs extra waiting for me.

Went to Holy Communion this morning alter breakfast. Out here in the advanced area one can receive H/C any time of the day or night. I am still miles behind the lines and no news as to when we are going in. Having splendid weather but it will be very, very muddy when it rains. After a few hours drizzle we are ankle deep in it. I leave it to you to imagine what it is like when it rains for days and weeks without stopping.

Have just written to Eli B [*Fr Luke Bellanti*]. He wishes to be remembered to you all and says he is very happy and feels very fit. Have not succeeded in meeting Willie [Parnis] yet. Must dry up, hope you are all enjoying your summer holidays. Don't you ever think of worrying or fretting about me. I am as fit and as happy as ever. With fondest affection. Love

Charlie.

PS. Have you got the photos? They are ready and Daisy [Agius] and Mabs have received them.

26th September [1917]

12 M.G.C.

Received Pater's of 11th. Thank him for a lot of good advice. Weather is very good. Lovely sunshine and warm weather. We were inspected by our G.O.C. yesterday. We had to stand for a couple of hours in the sunshine waiting, but we are all as fit as ever and did not mind it in the least. It was hot.

So pleased to hear the girls are having such a good time down at St G. You ought to remain there for planti[?] this year. This is the last day here. We move up tomorrow. Sells [?] Oscar [Parnis] when you see him. Does he feel at all fed up and think Malta very slow. So long & fondest love

Charlie

Field Post Office
27th September 1917

Dearest Mater,

Received Pater's of 17th. They are creeping and crawling all over me, but I have got quite used to them. The dear little things. My section is at Coy H.Q. though well within range of Fritz's crumps. Received Holy Communion yesterday afternoon just before we came here, 7 20 minutes after my baptism started. It is still going on but we are as safe as houses. No German shell can penetrate 4 or 5 feet of concrete he made for himself but which he only enjoyed for a few days because he was driven back & the British Tommy is dwelling in them. They are called Pill Boxes. We sleep, mess and cook our meals here, 9 of us. 3 officers and the rest are men. I never knew sandbags were so comfortable to sleep on. Sorry to say I kept the other two officers awake with my snoring and I got strafed for it in the morning.

I am as well and as happy as ever. Your loving son

Charlie

October 3rd 1917

Dearest Mater,

Am now having a short rest after a few days close to the Bosche. My first experience is over. Stood it very well and as the first is the worst you need not worry about me. I think after this spell of good weather we are going to have some rain.

Received yours, May's and Maudy's combined today. Pleased to hear you all had a splendid time at St. G. I suppose you will be back in Sliema by the time this arrives How is old Jamru[?] getting on? Mabs is sending me hampers so I am always well fed. With regards clothing I've got heaps and I can always get more from ordinance.

Received Aunty's of 17th, Pater on same date, Aunty of 9th, and Pater of 11th.

I don't think it's very easy to get into the Indian Army from the M.G.C. because they are in so much need of men and it is so important. But I am making enquires. Must close. Fondest Love from

Charlie

5th Oct[ober] 19]17
12 M.G.C.

Dearest Mater,

Received yours of no date from St G. If you want rain I could send you some from here. Also mud & then “Belbusi” will come out in large numbers, enough to give you all Indigestion. We are having very wet weather. But I came out prepared for it. Trench boots, trench coat, Wolsey, Valise to sleep on, 3 blankets, a rug and a flea bag, besides woollen vests etc so I am quite warm day and night. Those huge long socks you sent me are coming in very useful, more of them will be very welcome. I admit I am not having a cushy time, but it’s not so very bad. The worst was during my (real) baptism of fire out here, but since then I have been hardened so don’t worry. Just pray for me and it will be alright soon. Of course don't become like Zia Filomena (R.I.P.) A few earnest ones are better than lots of bad ones. And don't get up early especially to hear three Masses for me. It will injure your health. God knows you have done all you can.

If you only knew how merry and cheerful we are you would not fret so much about me. At times when we are all singing and marching merry I think of you all at home and imagine you “bil luls” etc on account of me. It’s all wasted worry. So to end up, only think and pray for me during the hours of prayer. During the rest of the time think about scolding Lini, but at the end don’t. It's better for all. I wish I could send you a gramophone disc to make your hear what old Fritz is getting from our Army. Drum pre of umpty [?] guns for hours and hours. The Bosche is getting it in the neck. The last stunt we had way was very successful and we saw lots and lots of Bosche prisoners extending along under the escort of a few M.M.P.’s with drawn swords. The Bosche are now a rotten lot. Imagine the letter C with two knocked legs to support it. A huge tin hat coming down onto the shoulders. Dirty and patched uniforms all in tatters and you will have before your eyes a Bosche. Besides all this they are hungry and tired. Of course there are still many good ones and we have a lot of bad men as well so the war won’t end tomorrow, but the end is not very far off. Undoubtedly our Army is much superior to his and as I said before from the difference of his men to ours one can safely say “We are winning”.

Many letters may not follow for a few days, but I always hope to send one every four days while out here.

Eli wrote, he is not far, neither is Willie [Parnis], but still we can't meet yet. So Long yours

Charlie

C/O Man
11th October 1917

Hope you have not worried about me. It's only a flesh wound in the back. Chest, stomach, liver, etc untouched. A beastly Bosche sniper got me 10 minutes after zero hour when we were going for him. Worst part of it is that I did not even have a shot at him. But I will get my own back when I return. Am in France but might be going to Blighty any day. What ever you do don't worry. I am quite OK. Did not write before because I did not have notepaper etc and was travelling all day. I borrowed this paper and therefore the Dukes crest. Am in bed but will soon get up. Cheerio....Old Fritz will be sorry for it Sahha

Charlie.

14 Off. Hospital
Ward B4
B.E.F.

12th October 1917

Dearest Mater

Am practically alright again. I can walk to the scusi (lochr). I eat a lot and my lungs are as well as ever. The bullet went through a little flesh and muscle (I think). Will be X-rayed soon, bullet then extracted and Blighty for the winter. So you need not worry about me. Am very comfortable here. Sisters are very kind and patient. We are well fed and taken care of. Everything is clean and quiet & I sleep all night and eat during meal hours during the day & sleep the rest of the time. Hope you received the wire I told Man to send before the W.O. one. Could not send one from here. No P.O. Sahha I am yours affect[ionat]ly
Charlie

To: Willie Parnis 34 M.G. Coy BEF France

**14 Off. Hosp
B 4 Ward
B.E.F.**

12th October 1917

My dear Willie,

Old Fritz got me on the morning of the push, (9th). We had just gone over when we found he had left snipers “a nostra distance et anche a sinistra” hidden up trees. Was just going to tackle one of his guns with my M.G. when Thud! and I thought it was all over. However I started finding out that I was not dead and was not going to die either. My sergeant bandaged me up and we carried on. Later there were about six of us in a shell hole. One was dead (he made a splendid pillow), an Off of the L.F. (the Reg. I was attached to) & some men. Was carried off after 6 hours lying in the mud and being shelled. Had a few narrow escapes from them too. I hope to God you are alright. Please write soon and address letters to Daisy [Agius] as I will most probably go to Blighty when the bullets have been extracted. Wonder how my mates are faring. Bullet in back. Chest & stomach OK.

Sahha yours affect.

Charlie.

**24 General Hosp
Ward W.B. 4
B.E.F. France
14/15 October 1917**

Dearest Mater,

Received your wire enquiring how I was today & I wired back saying I was getting on very well. So well that I could play bridge sitting down on a chair. Have not been X-rayed yet. My only complaint is stiffness below the chest. Wound getting on very well. Hope the wire did not cause you my much alarm & anxiety. Can't write long letters because this is the only note paper we have.

With love from

Charlie.

Letter from Willie Parnis to “Kaptan” (Presume dad 's father)
[John Asphar]
15/] 0/1 7

My dear Kaptan,

Enclosed just received from Charlie - Cheer up he can 't be too bad or he wouldn't be able to write. I reckon he must have come under a shrapnel burst - no sniper could have pipped him three times. I am off on a gee to see whether I can find this hospital. I was on his right in the do - but I pulled through with a slight wound in the wrist.

Will write if I find anything out.

Yours Willie.

24 General Hospital
Ward W.B. 4
BEF France

16th October 1917

Dearest Mater,

Was X-rayed yesterday. They looked but found nothing so they had a photograph taken. We will know the results tomorrow (perhaps). I feel quite OK, only just a bit stiff. I eat a lot and sleep well, but all the same it is awfully tedious staying in bed. I don't mean its slow because we have books, papers and magazines to read. We are 24 in a ward too so we know how to amuse ourselves. There are a few bad cases but they like watching and listening to us playing the fool. We have a Staff Major D.S.O. M.C. and the sisters make a lot of him. Our temp is taken twice a day and beats of the pulse recorded also. We love pulling the sisters leg when she is performing this duty. One fellow pretended he was feeling bad one morning and when the sister was not looking he put the thermometer near the fire. Sister was very much alarmed and we were very much amused.

So Long....Yours Affect.

Charlie.

**24 General Hosp
Ward W.B.4
B.E.F.**

17th October 1917

Dear Mater,

Am sitting down to write letters for a change and what's more there is a table to lean on & not S.A.A. boxes on my knees. Getting on so well that I shall most probably go to England as a walking case. Have not received letters since the 7th but since then heaps of things have happened & I will most certainly find piles & piles of letters waiting for me at the Agius's. I suppose the W.O. wired to you saying that I had been wounded severely & that naturally made you feel uneasy. It's good to know that I am going to spend the winter in England. Some Luck! I'll have to buy a new cheque book, fountain pen, pipe, wallet, rain coat and fleece lining etc. They all went west but Govt will pay this time.

So long

Charlie

Letter from L. E. Bellanti SJ. CF

41st Battery

R.F.A.

[Royal Field Artillery]

October 18th 1917

My Dear John.

Promotionally quiet. I have been able to get first hand information about Charlie's wound. It is not at all serious, though it was a very narrow escape. A bit [of] shell ...or a bullet (I don't know which) passed through the back muscles within half an inch of the spine. The wound is purely muscular and is expected to heal up quite easily and quickly. I saw an officer of his own 12 M.G. Coy, a Mr Leask (I do not know how to spell the name) who saw Charlie at the CCS (Casualty Clearing Station) and he was looking very fit and pleased with himself. I came along in search of him for 18 miles on horseback and not knowing anything was amiss. I enquired for Mr Asphar at the Officers mess. Fancy my horror when the Sergeant told me he had gone and was wounded. Of course after that I walked in, found out where it had happened, (it was to the north of where I had been for over three weeks having an appalling time) & picked up all the details. When you realise I had been trying hard to see Charlie before I went into the line & had failed you will see how providentially it was that I picked up his unit this time.

I am fairly well. Thank God. And too surprised to be alive to know what to say. (I have lived somehow through 5 successive battles and never been wounded though everyone about me seems to have been laid out including my poor servant). God bless you all...Charlie is absolutely all right. Out here they all think him lucky!! My address is 41st Battery RFA.

Yours Sincerely

L.E. Bellanti S.J. C.F. [Jesuit Chaplain]

Letter from my Adjutant, 19th October 1917

Dear old boy,

Many thanks for your letter and good wishes. Your Valise is packed up in a sack and will be sent home through the usual channels and you will hear from your of ents [?] in due course. Money (our C.O.) had a relapse of his old [...?] (wind up) and has left the Coy and our new C.O. has arrived, a thundering good fellow. Possibly you may have heard that Granger (one of the officers) was wounded also in a place that will make sitting uncomfortable for some time. He is at General Hospital. We did a certain amount of damage with our guns (9th Oct) but not the amount we should have liked to. Wishing you a speedy recovery and a convalesce in Blighty.

Yours very sincerely

Beed

**24 Gen Hosp
Ward W.B 4
B.E.F.**

19th October 1917

Dearest Mater

At last I am going to England At least the M.O. told me I was on the list. But that does not mean much. I may have to stay on a few more days, anything may happen, e.g. bad weather, worse cases to go first etc. I was going as a sitting down case but I can't do that with a pair of field boots, a handkerchief and a wrist watch. I think I'd feel a bit cold, so after a lot of trouble and worry they decided to send me as a stretcher case. The scab of the 12-inch hole in my back has come of but I am still a tiny bit stiff about my inside. Receiving injections "bil babola" I find they do good. Hope my next will be from England. Till then au revoir

Charlie.

**Home for Officers
Arthur St
Chelsea S.W.3
London**

22nd Oct 1917

Dear Mater,

Am at the above. I arrived here yesterday night. It was so great to be in England again. Lovely cultivated fields with kept trees & peace everywhere, no sign of war. How different it is compared to the country I was in lately. Could not write on the last few days because I was on my way to England. Carried from one hospital to the other, from one bed & train to another and on to Hospital ships. Everything was nice and comfortable and everyone was very nice to us. We took a long, long time coming but that did not matter. I think I have been awfully lazy & lucky. Just fancy being carried all the way from Belgium to England. As all my kit is somewhere in France I had to write to Agnes for my civvy clothes. I can't imagine myself in that garb again. Will be X-rayed again one of these days. The M.O. thinks it might be somewhere in my liver but I am practically certain it is not because I feel very, very well. So it must be some muscles or travelled down to my ankle. Exact position of 4th hole is Back Right Side 10 "rib 4" from spine. Whenever a doctor or a nurse see it they say "Is that All?" So you can see it is a very slight wound. In other words its an "ideal Blighty" wound. Came over to England the same way I did with Pater and Alfred umpteen years ago. This place was only opened three weeks ago. It was a women's hospital but they saw we needed it more. So they swapped over. As it is new rules are not kept and convalescent officers come in at 10 PM instead of 6 PM. For your information - Visiting hours from 2 P.M. till 4 P.M. Only 2 visitors at a time. So Mater and one of the girls can come tomorrow for one hour while Pater and another of the girls ...

[page missing]

**Home For Officers
Arthur St
Chelsea S.W.3
London**

24 October 1917

Dearest Mater,

Today or tomorrow I shall most probably be going about London in my civvy clothes and a blue band round my arm just to show that I am an officer. Poor Daisy [Agius] has been in bed for 3 weeks and is now a convalescent with Maggie [Agius] somewhere. Mrs Agius will be coming to see me tomorrow. She wrote to me yesterday. It is really very kind of her. Those people have been a Godsend to me.

Agnes came to see me yesterday and Man will be coming to see me today or tomorrow. In the do Willie [Parnis] was on my right. We were so near and yet so far. He only got a slight scratch on his wrist and I will not be at all surprised if we will see his name in the papers as being awarded the MC.

We will beat the Germans alright. It will, of course, take time and I will go again but don't you worry, better days are in store for us all. All the letters from Malta are wandering around France and Belgium looking for me.

Went to Hillbank Hospital yesterday to be X-rayed. We will know the results today.

Cheerio. I do hope you do not worry about me. Sahha Yours

Charlie

Letter from “Mabs” to Mrs J.F. Asphar (Dad’s Mum)

**4 Balstrafe St [Bulstrode?]
Welbeck St.
W 1**

24th October 1917

My dear Mrs Asphar

This morning I heard that Charlie was over here. I heard it from himself, as a matter of fact, and as it was my half day off I went round to see him. He is awfully well. I should not have known there was anything the matter with him. He is so cheerful and quite himself. He will be up and about in a day or two. After all it is much better for him to be here ... out of it all, especially as he is not seriously wounded but just enough to keep him here for a few months.

Daisy is at present away for a change, she has been laid up for the last three weeks with a bad chill - or she would have already been to see him. Mrs Agius is going around to see him tomorrow and by the time Daisy returns he will most probably go to see her. I am so sorry you have had such an anxious time – but I’m sure you must be relieved to know that he is safe.

How are all your girls? Flourishing I hope. Do ask Mums to write and give me all your news. It’s such a long time since I had heard from her.

Hoping you are all well

Yours Affect.

Mabs.

**Home For Officers
Arthur St
Chelsea
London S.W.3**

25 Oct 17

Dearest Mater,

Mabs came to see me yesterday. Brought me books etc. Mr and Mrs Agius came this afternoon. They brought me cigarettes, Chocolate and handkerchief. (Kept handkerchief from the 7th October till yesterday). So you see I am very well looked after. Results of X rays not out yet. I only feel a bit stiff around the back of the waist. Still I am kept in bed till they know the exact position of the bullet. We are having concert here tonight. At the 11th hour I am going to dress up and go downstairs. Don't tell anyone as the matron may get to hear about and then she would say: "You are a naughty boy. It's very sinful of you". Whereupon I'll cry and say I won't do it again. I am getting awfully fat and am dying to get out and get rid of the extra flesh I have put on. There is nothing like being thin, bony and skinny. As soon as I get out of this I'll send a wire saying so. Agiuses, Caruanas and Mortimer all expected to find me half dead but were all surprised that I looked better than when I left England.

I gave poor Daisy an awful fright because I wrote and said: "Wounded in back, spine, liver, lung, stomach, etc (All right)". I however omitted the "all right" and she naturally thought I had a bullet in each of the parts mentioned. Just like me for not reading over what I had written.

Hope I'll enjoy the Concert this evening.

Sahha Yours Affect.

Charlie.

**Home for Officers
Arthur St
Chelsea S.W.3**

26th October 1917

Dearest Mater,

Results of X rays came this morning, but absolutely no signs of bullet. So it must have either gone down to my feet, hidden itself behind some bone or else it's not there at all. But I don't think either could have made a hole in me and laid me out for such a long time. However I'm going to be sent to be X-rayed again and they are going to look for it everywhere. It may have come out when I was lying there in the shell hole, pushed out by the blood. But I had a field dressing on, so we would have found it. It's a mystery.

Do you remember Sydney Street, the place you, Pater & Agnes put up at when you were here, also the place where Auntie Liza & Zio Fonsa spent some of their honeymoon? Man told me so today when he came to see me.

I still can't go out. M.O. said not until the bullet, if it's inside you, is located. I however, go down, sit in the drawing room, make and chat with the others and also mess with them.

Got a call from Mr Agius this morning saying that there are 5 letters at his place for me. They will arrive this evening. Hope they are from Malta.

Sahha. Yours Affect.

Charlie.

26/10/17

From Willie Parnis to John Asphar

My dear Kaptan

Very many thanks for your cigarettes which came in last night. I am puffing away like a chimney and will probably attract the Bosche's attention before very long.

I am wondering how you all took the news of Charlie's being hit, because until one can get definite details as to the extent of ones wounds, it may be rotten suspense. Anyway you should be pretty well acquainted with everything by now. It shouldn't be long before he gets over to England and all the comforts of a Bon hospital.

We are having quite a peaceful time in this part of the world. We only straffe each other by fits and starts and there is very little real hate as compared to the filthy strafing in our last sector, where Charlie was bumped.

What's news from Malta? The French have been doing very bon down South and our people ditto up North, but the weather has become pretty filthy and I suppose it means sitting down & spinning spinning till springtime comes ... and then more pushes. I must confess I've nearly had my tummy full of pushes now and could very well do with a months leave to Malta! I really think Charlie is awfully unlucky in one sense ... to get put into hospital before you have time to find your feet properly in France appeared rotten hard lines. But it also means every chance of a winter in Blighty, so it has its advantages. My dear old Mater is really very funny sometimes without in the least meaning to be. She ticked me of because I was fearfully keen on Lina and Helen coming over, and talked at great length of the terrible danger of the trip from Malta to Italy. Now she welcomes the idea of a remote possibility of my getting leave to Malta because there would be "practically no danger at all!" I am going to tease her as hard as I can about this lamentable slip on her part.

My love to all at Rocklands, Betheram [Villa Betharram, Sliema] I do hope Mrs Asphar is not worrying too much about Charlie. I was nearly knocked flat by the news until he said he was well enough to sit up and play bridge.

Yours as ever

Willie.



Alfred Agius



Edgar Agius



Mr and Mrs Edward T Agius



Richard Agius



Maggie Samut and Daisy Agius



Arthur Samut



Lennie Samut



Frank Samut



Charles Muscat

Chelsea Hospital
27th October 1917

Dearest Mater,

Received Pater's of 27/9/17, 8th October, P.C. 10th & May's 5th. All very interesting telling me about the "Saidu for lampuchi" and the "Rag" you had on the eve of departure from St G. I'd very much like to have been there for those two events, but as Pater said "I was having more exciting sport at that time."

I don't quite remember when the London Gazette with my name came out, but I was commissioned on the 25th July. However I'll try and get hold of a copy and send it.

The stiffness in the back is slowly going away. I can easily bend to lace up my shoes now. They feel so soft, delicate and uncomfortable after those good heavy ones I have been wearing lately.

As I am not allowed to go out I could not hear Mass today, but I'll be receiving a visit from one of our priests soon, a certain Father Christie, one of the many friends of the Oratory. It's quite close to here.

The lady who sent May that piece of music came to see me today. (Mrs Simon) a Canadian. She said food was very scarce and she was quite delighted with the tea I gave her here. At No.9 Belsize G. they get very little to eat. It's the same everywhere because everything goes to France or to the boys here. Quite right too. My valise has not come yet. Still wearing civvies.

Must wind up. Sahha. Much love from

Charlie.

**Officers Hosp
Arthur St
Chelsea S.W.3**

30th October 1917

Dearest Mater,

Received Aunties of 14th this morning. She told me that Pater had a[n] earache. I suppose it is his being in Sliema after St G's that caused it. So pleased to see that you have taken things so well. That's right, dear Mater, be brave and sunshine is sure to come after the storm. P.A. & Willie [Parnis] will come back to marry Helen & Agnes respectively. I will also come back and do all the eating during the weddings. Giamru will be wearing a "habit" for the occasion. (Hope he won't make a mess in it as I did once when they lay the foundation stone of St Patrick's Institute).

Sneaked out again this morning, walked to Harrods (quite close) bought a British Warm, a stick and a fountain pen. It all amounted to £6.18.6. But I am quite well off so it is alright. I'll have to buy more things before my stay in England is over. I am thinking of wasting time here, so if they are going to send troops to help those cowardly Italians I'll volunteer to go. Qualifications - Good knowledge of Italian. More used to the climate. Expert in mountain climbing, experience got in Malta. Knows how to prevent the Italians from running away by shouting "[Avanti Savoia, Connagio Fuzziamo!](#)"

What do the Italian fanatics think of the recent event? It's naturally a strategic movement. They will capture Vienna in a few days after this. I think it's quite good on the whole. The Germans captured in three days what the Italians took 2 1/2 years.

Missi [Mizzi?] can publish this in the "Malta" if he likes. Can write pages and pages of this so if he approves of it let me know & he can have it. (My apologies to Zio Fonsu).

Must wind up now as it is teatime. Sahha. With much love from

Charlie.

**Officers Hosp,
Arthur St
Chelsea S.W.3**

31st October 1917

[Dearest Mater?]

Received Pater's of 18th & 17th, May's of 17th, and Molly's of 2/6/17. All very interesting & full of news. I do hope that Pater's earache did not give him much pain. I take it for granted it's "na pu" now.

Did not receive Vi's & Alfie's & Agnes's yet. If he addressed them to No 14 Hosp they have gone west because I was never there and they don't know me. It was a mistake on my part. My Apologies.

Was X-rayed for the third time this morning and no bullet was seen. I don't know what to make of it. I thought I might have passed it, but they say NO and they know best.

Wound is nearly healed, dressing every other day. Medical Board tomorrow. If I am found to be fit I'll go to a convalescent home. I'll see if I can go to Holy Communion on Friday next, All Souls and First Friday, but we are not allowed out before 10 A.M. However I'll try. The Oratory is quite close.

It feels strange going around London in civvies and a blue band round the arm. I have no links [?], no gloves. I bought a small stick (Swagger cane), which does not go well with civvies. My dirty old cap worn 'a la loafers', hands in pockets, pulling up trousers every minute as I have not brought braces yet. One feels like that after a year of 'stuck uppiness'. Of course I was not allowed out. It will be all right for the future.

They are bringing in tea things so I stop. A concert tonight.

Sahha 'hanins omni sells at Tota u al culhat...Emimi ...Deirn ibnich tukks..??"..

Charlie

**Officers Hosp
Arthur St**

3rd November 1917

Dearest Mater,

I'll be going to Brighton until 13th December at Convalescent home. Isn't that fine? At that date I come to London for another board. If I'm all right I get some leave and then start work again. If I am not all right I go back to B. or do what the Docs tell me. I think it's very good. I of course, exaggerated all my ailments a bit and. consequently got all that time.

Went to see the Agius's yesterday but I never expected on entering to see the maid crying and hear her say "Did you hear the bad news, Mr Asphar."

"Dick?" I asked.

"Yes. Killed!"

I felt sick and rotten. Mrs A. was very, very brave. Daisy is a marvel. She felt a horrendous lot but did not show it. Instead she talked a lot and kept things going. There was Father Pace there, agreeing to all Daisy said, in very broken English. Mr Agius was quite normal to look at, but I knew he did not feel like that. Maggie [Agius n. Samut] and Dolly [Agius n. Noel] were also there.

Tell the Pater or one of the girls to write to them. They have been so very kind to me and treat me as one of them. I'll go to see them again on Sunday. Shall go to Man's this afternoon. I suppose it will be Brighton on Monday or Tuesday. The Mattei's are there. I'll be able to look them up. Went to see Toss [?] at Dury Lane yesterday evening. I did not pay for the seat. There is a committee of some kind hearted old ladies and they get seats at various theatres for the amusement of wounded officers. Very Bon. Received a letter from Willie [Parnis]. He is quite OK.

Sahha. Dear Mater. Yours effect.

Charlie.

Letter to Dad [John Asphar]. Enclosed with letter of Charles to Mater 5/11/1917

**“Cratloe”
Faversham.**

November 4th 1917

Dear Mr Asphar,

I have just heard from Willie [Parnis] that you are in Hospital in London. Will you let me know if there is anything I can get for you ... I should like to come up and see you too. Is there a particular time for visitors? I am glad to hear you are getting on well. I hope you will soon be fit again.

Yours very sincerely

Mrs P. O’Brien. [Inez O’Brien n. Parnis]



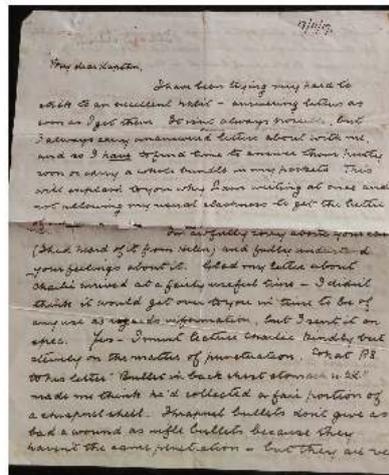
William Parnis



**Percy Alfred Micallef-Eynaud
'PA'**



**Bishop Maurus Caruana
'Bish'**



**Willie Parnis to
John Asphar/Kaptan**

**Officers Hosp.
Arthur St.
Chelsea, SW3**

**5th November 1917
Guy Fawkes Day.**

Had lunch with Man and Agnes yesterday. Then dinner with Mabs and Eddy at the Blenheim. I am getting on too well and too soon, however I'll be going to Brighton for 5 solid weeks and they can't be cancelled now. I'll look up Marquis and Marchessa Mattei there.

Last night was a bright and clear night & we all expected a raid, but to my disappointment, nothing came. I slept through the last one and was quite anxious and eager to see one.

Ines P. [Parnis married O'Brien] wrote to me today. I enclose her letter. Went to see Daisy [Agius]. They still feel a bit rotten.

Too busy to write long letters. Sahha Yours affect.

Charlie

**Officers Hosp.
Arthur St
Chelsea S.W.3**

6th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

Just received Pater's of 27 & 17. It is 12.45 & I have been up an hour. I went to bed at 10.30 last night. It's lovely to be able to lie down and sleep as long as you like. Nothing wakes me up. They come and do my bed. I drink a cup of tea at 6.30 sound asleep. They sweep the place etc etc. But we never get up. Wandered about the streets yesterday. Am going to a theatre this afternoon to see "Off Chance". Getting on very well. Stiffness is only trouble. I of course get tired soon. Am looking forward to 5 weeks at Brighton.

It will soon be Lunchtime so Cheerio Yours Affect

Charlie

P.S. I enclose a concert programme:

Programme

GRAND MEDLEY will be given in the Deer Wounded's Recreation room, on
Wednesday night - Huns
Permitting - at 8 P.M. sharp or sharper if possible

ALL STAR HEARTS LISTS

PROGRAMME

*A few words of wisdom by the Chairman ***** Major Flemming.*

- | | | |
|----|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1. | Piano forte Duett | Lt Baldwin & Lt Ord (the two Knuts) |
| 2. | Song | Capt. Potts (after taking bind seed) |
| 3. | Song | Nurse Jinks ('The Nightingale') |
| 4. | Another row on the tinkler | Lt. Fawnthorpe |
| 5. | Misplaced affections | Lt. Silley (the safest of the family) |
| 6. | A kittle fiddling | Miss Myers (pupil of Caruso) Our
VA.D. |
| 7. | Duett | Sister Hiscock & Nurse Jinks (the warblers) |
| 8. | Song | Capt. Cameron (The Irish Comedian) |
| 9. | Dance | Capt. Kennaway (KIT permitting) |

INTERVAL.

(For exchanging opinions sub voce)

- | | | |
|-----|----------------------------|---|
| 10. | Harpsichord Solo | It Burr (the absentee) |
| 11. | Recitation | Capt. Sorby (the beautiful elocutionist) |
| 12. | Step dance and song | Lt. Railton (alias Mr Wu from Chinatown) |
| 13. | Song | Sister Smalley (the giantess) |
| 14. | Song | Mr Jennings (the famous bass singer) |
| 15. | Recitation | Lt. Campbell (who needs no prompting) |
| 16. | Duett | Capt. Potts & Lt. Silley (the croakers) |
| 17. | God Save The King | ALL |

ACCOMPANIST - NURSE MOSS
of
Lichen

#####

All complaints to be made in person at the Orderly Room between 5 & 6 a. m. A guard will be mounted.

Letter from Willie Parnis to John F. Asphar in Malta

7th November 1917

My Dear Kaptan.

I have been trying very hard to stick to an excellent habit.... Answering letters as soon as I get them. It isn't always possible, but I always carry unanswered letters about with me and so I have to find time to answer them pretty soon or carry a whole bundle in my packets. This will explain to you while I am writing at once and not allowing my usual slackness to get the better of me.

I am awfully sorry about your ear (I had heard of it from Helen) and fully understand your feelings about it. Glad my letter about Charlie arrived at a fairly useful time. I didn't think it would get over to you in time to be of any use to you as regards information, but I sent it on spec. Yes, I must lecture Charlie kindly but sternly on the matter of punctuation. That P.S. in his letter "Bullet in back chest stomach OK" made me think he had collected a fair portion of shrapnel shell. Shrapnel bullets don't give as bad a wound as rifle bullets because they haven't the same penetration...but they are very nasty things and often cause gangrene. So I promptly got the wind right up and sweated blood till I got more news. A shrapnel bullet in the stomach isn't a thing to speak of lightly.

You ask me how I am getting on. Well I am nearly ashamed to say that I seem to be thriving on the war. Nature was not kind to me in the matter of eyes and my best friend would hardly dare suggest that I was in any way cut out for soldiering...but my nerves are very bon indeed, and however shaken up and played out I feel after a stunt, I recover with great rapidity. I move about looking like nothing on earth...in a tin hat and huge goggles ... a caricature of a civilian soldier. But so far they have failed miserably to hit me. One horrible night when I lost my servant, there were 23 of us. A big un came. Bang! 21 on their backs and yours truly and one more untouched. Needless to say I have become an absolute believer in "The name on it" idea. If it is meant for you...you will get it...but until your own ration comes along, nothing can do you in. This is a very useful frame of mind to get into... it prevents one from using one's imagination too much and thus one's nerves don't suffer too much.

As regards the I.A. (Indian Army), Charlie need have no fear. The I.A. takes precedence over most things and if they want him they can take him. Gunner or no gunner. Of course as an M.G. man he will never be allowed to transfer to any branch of the Service In the British Army. Once they've got you they cling to you like sin.

Yes the San Giorgio beano must be a thing that will rank high in the Annals of Culinary History “[Brodie to raise the dead insulota end primo ???](#)” but if it is to be followed by a sail, I can only offer my service as ballast! I can quite picture Ga Mary and the Mater grousing together about the war. And I bet they both feel better after an hour or so giving full expression to their feelings about war in general and this one in particular! As a matter of fact, though they are both extremely unfortunate as compared with other mothers in Malta. They are no worse off ...as a matter of fact though they are better off ...than most mothers in England, who have all their sons on some front or quietly put away in some rotten little grave.

I had a rather pitiful letter a few days ago from one poor woman whose last son (one of my men) was killed up north. They've all gone. He was the fourth. And now I believe poor little Dick Agius has been killed. I saw an Agius R.V.J.R. in the causality list and can't think who it can be except little Dick.

Glad to hear old Scariu is keeping up the morale at 84 and Rocklands. He was absolutely priceless as a cheerer upper at my sister's home. He tells such appalling but amazing yarns and is always so ready to talk about anything (whether he knows heaps about it or nix) that he is really very hard to beat as a companion when people start getting the pip at all.

Will dry up now. Helen would have told you that I am on a course miles away from the line ...near the coast ... a sort of rest cure. Very decent mess, comfy quarters and ink and pens provided. It's so long since I used a pen that I've nearly forgotten how to write decently in ink.

Love Yours Willie.

P.S. my humble salaams to Ga Mair and all at Zio Fonsu place.

**Officers Hosp.
Arthur St
Chelsea SW3**

9th November 1917

Dearest Mater

Went to see "Round the Map" yesterday afternoon. She (Violet Lorraine) was splendid. I fell madly in love with her. Going to propose to her next time I take her out to dinner at the Carlton.

Took Mabs out to dinner yesterday instead of Violet as she went to see the Duke of Somewhere, forgot his name. It's getting colder and colder! We had some snow two days ago. Letters from Malta are very scarce lately.

Nothing Import to report. Sahha

Yrs affect.

Charlie

**Officers Hosp
Arthur St
Chelsea**

10th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

Received a pile of letters yesterday evening as soon as I returned from 'Trelawney of the Wells.' There was yours of 28th Oct, Pater's of 29th, Aunties of 21st, Helen of 27th, Johnnies of the 20th and a very interesting one from Tom dated 22nd.

I had had two teas, a huge dinner and the consequence was I had, no, not an indigestion, but a lot of strange dreams. E.g. Auntie Gayan showing me the way to the tube in shell holed Belgium and many other nasty ones !!!

I had written to you giving you the exact position of my little wound, in case the letter went down I will tell you again. Back. Right side. 10" below spine and 4" from it. Have been X-rayed 3 times but with no results. Bullet or whatever hit me, if it did go in it has disappeared.

Dearest Mater I think you are spoiling me. You always want to give me money. I take it this way:- no matter how much you have you always want more, so instead of sending it to me keep it and spend it on a lb or two of butter for the family. The man in khaki gets the 1st choice and best of everything. So on our breakfast table for example, you see a plate full of real good butter, another full of bread, a huge bowl of sugar, and at lot of everything. We also have more inside "u anna betteh". We sleep as much as we like, we go to shows free... gratis ...for nothing. When the tube is full up young ladies leave their seats and say "Sit down there boys." It's marvellous what a blue band can do.

I am afraid the letters addressed to no 14 Hosp in France will either go back to you or else go west. It was I think my fault. Because my first day in 24 Hosp. when I was by no means comfortable, I asked the fellow next to me for the address. He, poor fellow, was worse than I was. He either said 14 or else I understood 14.

We have got a new billiard table now, its not as good & as nice and as strong and as expensive as ours but it's splendid to keep you going when you don't feel like going out.

I am still in bed & its 9.30 am. [Emma "Xlms"](#). I suppose I'll get out about 10.30 when the barber has shaved me in bed. Did not go the to the Lord Mayor's show yesterday. Have seen enough tanks, guns, M.G.'s etc etc to last me a life time and what's more I have not done with them yet.

Will write to Helen, Tom, Auntie and Johnnie some time today. Sahha
Yours as usual

Charlie

**To J.F. Asphar, Rocklands [Sliema] Malta from Fr Luke E. Bellanti
SJ CF**

**41st Battalion REA.
November 12th 1917**

Sunday,

My dear John.

I was pleased to receive your really charming letter yesterday. It is exceedingly good of you to go to the length of thanking me so heartily for what was not only a matter of duty but a real and genuine pleasure. Thanks for the message you gave me about Willie [Parnis]. I had chanced to see his name in the causality list ... one sees so many names of boys one has lived with and loved in their heroic rolls and was fearing that God might have seen fit to arrest further anxiety. This was indeed a wonderful escape.

I do sympathise with you in the feeling that you are, so to speak, born too late. Any man would want to take a man's share, but Lord preserve you, your duty is plain and in every way people like you and father- and so many other good people have the hard task of watching and waiting and hoping. You are the unrecognised martyrs the war and [... not its mills? find slowly and smile ??]

I am very well at present and my part of the line is fairly quiet, thankfully. I spent the week at the guns ...Saturday and Sundays I have Mass in the wagon lines 3 miles back to say ... Mass and hear confessions and preach and give Benediction to all who aren't in action. This is my life and converts keep milling in to give one some comfort.

Do you know they've awarded me the M.C. Don't ask me why. Please.

My kindest respects to Mrs Asphar, & to Agnes, Helen, May, Maude and of course to Johanna who taught me how to swim at St George's.

... Gods Mercy ...ask. Enjoy your peace

L. E. Bellanti S.J. C.F.

Chelsea
13th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

This, too, will have to be a short letter, because I am busy getting ready for tomorrow when I go to Osborne, Isle of Wight, for my convalescence. It's just close to the place where Paul C. underwent his training. In fact the buildings touch one another. They say it's a topping place and I'll be able to look at the sea and the ships going by.

Received a pile of letters, don't quite remember if I acknowledged them or not so I do so now and will answer them fully when I get down there. Letters were:- Helens 27th 17, Aunties 21st, Toms 22nd, Johnnies 18 & 20. Pater's 29th, yours 28th, Zio Diudus 1st Nov., May's of the same date, Pater's 2nd Nov & 27th Oct.

Went to see a concert with Mabs yesterday. It was a very good show though [a] little unconventional. In the evening we had a concert here. It was a bit slow but quite good on the whole. We are starting to get the fogs. None were really bad. One longs to be able to breath fresh air again after spending 2 or 3 months in the open, day and night. You may address your letters to

Cowes Convalescing Hospital, Osborne, I of W.

Au revoir for the present. Your Affect.

Charlie

**[Officers Hosp
Arthur St
Chelsea SW 3**

c14th November 1917]

Dearest Mater,

You wanted to know some of the things that happened to me when I was near Poelcapelle in a little pill box called the White House. That was during my first five days up the line.

We were on the salient there so Fritz dropped his shells from left, front and right. White House was about 700 yds from the front line, but what are 700 yards nowadays and with a bright moonlight behind your back. My two guns were about half a mile away from the White House and these had to be visited every day. They were there in case the Germans broke through. We would have killed a few hundred of them. We had a splendid field of fire.

However the first night I got there Fritz was comparatively quiet. The only thing that bothered me was the smell, but when you have something else to think of you forget all about it. That night at about ten I went out with my guides. It was quite safe to the first gun as we went behind an old trench. But we had to cross about 200 yards of open country to the second gun. The ground was quite flat & a bright moon was shining behind us. We crouched low and went for it. The smell was pretty bad, there had been an attack there. The emplacement was in a shell hole so we all got in and started talking. I issued out the rum and saw that they knew their orders. Suddenly ..Whizzzzzzzzz,.. Crescendo diminuendo, Whizzzzzz “Get Down!” “Keep low!” We did it years before we were told to by a Lance Corporal. I started getting the wind up, so Johnny Walker to the rescue. We waited some time then crawled out. We started creeping then walking bending low, then a few more bullets whizzed by and we ran. I never knew I could run so fast. I refused to take the guides back with me so I went off. It was quite easy. At the end of the third opening along this old trench I would find the White House.

But everything seemed to have altered and I walked and walked and found nothing. At about 11 Fritz generally sent over a few whiz bangs. They did come and I was still moving backwards and forwards looking for our blessed pill box. Splinters started burying themselves on the planks of the trench with a funny thud. There was no one to be seen. I prayed as I never did before and at last saw a party of men coming from the direction of the enemy. Gee whiz!! Were they Bosche? Seven of them. I crouched low. My hand went to try my revolver.

“Aye! Hello. Who are you?” I shouted, when I had distinguished our tin hats & ran to meet them.

“I am a machine gunner. Who are you? I am looking for our pill box. Where are you going? Do you know where it is?”

They were a bit surprised to get all those questions & no time to answer them, but they saw I had the wind up. Luckily the sergeant knew when it was and pointed. I looked around and sure enough there it was... all properly camouflaged, but I never saw it although I had been within 10 feet of it.

I said goodnight and thank you and ran to it and took a header right into the door. I startled our servants a bit, they did not know whether I had gone mad or was wounded. So I explained, lay down, had some food & went off to sleep. Fritz shelled all night but I did not hear them. Only those that fell a bit close woke me up because there was a funny smell coming up from somewhere. We afterwards found out there were two dead Bosche buried under the wooden floor. We forgot all about them and lived comfortably for 5 days. During those days I witnessed one of our barrages. There was a push made and things looked better after.

Sahha here comes tea... Your affect. son

Charlie

PS. Did not go to Osborne. Internal troubles prevented me. Am in bed on diet but “awfully hungry”. I get up tomorrow.

**Officers Hosp
Arthur St
Chelsea SW 3**

15th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

In yours of the 28th Oct. you tell me not “to begin to hurry to go back because you have very well seen that you did not go for a picnic.” I knew that all the time, even when I was still in Malta. I did not join up to go to France because I liked going to fight, to watch shells bursting & men being killed. I came because I always liked the Army and because it is the duty of every man under the Union Jack to do his bit.

After my convalescence I’ll most probably get some leave (in London) & then go to Grantham for two or three months. When there I’ll either apply to go into the Indian Army or for some work on the Italian Front as I know their ‘lingo’ (Interpreter).

The contras in the Indian Army are:

a) Living very expensive. There is the usual “throwing away money” business. That’s what I heard,

b) Its very difficult to get out of the M.G.C. because they are badly in want of men. So unless you will be more good in some other unit, they won’t part with you.

c) I’ll go to fight again. (I don’t mind it.)

The contras in the Italian stunt are:

If I am taken as an interpreter I won’t get any experience in the fighting line, and so won’t be accepted into the Indian Army after that.

The Pro’s is:

I’ll get to know big fat people with red bands around their hats & they can do a lot of things in the pushing line. So I have come to this decision: Italy first & India later. War will still be going on, at least so I think. I’ll see what P.A. and Willie [Parnis] have to say & Pater will also tell me what he thinks.

Arthur St Hospital
Chelsea
16th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

I got two of your letters and am going to send this one for the two of them.

Got out of bed this afternoon and went and opened my Valise. Everything was covered with “moffs” and I have got to send practically everything to the laundry. I wish I knew I was going to be here five weeks ago. I would not have had my clothes washed in shell holes. They are still wet. When out there I thought they were clean but now I think otherwise. Just fancy sending clean clothes to the laundry. But still I am very proud of my weather beaten and war beaten tunics. All faded and patched up and with our Brigade distinction marks on the shoulders. Our mark is the red cross machine guns and a crown on top. Just like our badge my poor revolver is covered in rust and on looking through the barrel I discovered it had not been fired. I carefully examined the butt in the hoped of finding a few hairs and some blood but with no results and with a sigh I came to the conclusion that my sergeant had not used it. Lets hope he used his. My good old faithful rug is still alive but is in a very bad state. Just fancy I have been using it every day for over a year, under all circumstances and it has never been cleaned or brushed. It was full of sand when I left England. Dew and rains got into it. Scum dirt and perspiration from my body and so I suppose its thickly populated with all kinds of germs and fearfully lousy. My flea bag is just the same. They are all being aired in the damp cellar of the hospital. My place at Osborne Convalescent Hospital is “[finif, napu](#)” so I don’t know where I will go for my convalescence. I am quite happy and comfortable here so I don’t care how long I remain.

We are having a concert here this evening. Lets hope it will be better than the last. I’ve got my trench coat from Harrods. It’s a lovely thing. Quite capable of keeping out the rain for any length of time. I wonder where my old one is. Lets hope it’s been of some use to my poor servant, if he got lost or was taken prisoner. But perhaps it has blown to pieces with him. If that is the case & I had remained where I was told to, your brother [?] would not have been writing this letter now.

I suppose I had better tell you something about the morning of the 9th of October 1917. Just 2 minutes before zero hour (5.45A.M.) (I am having a good hard suck at my thermometer: It is always the same result 90.5 [degrees]).

I pulled it out and said to my servant “Files, you keep this and remain with HQ. I might have to run about a bit.”

“Yes Sir.”

A good drink of rum, hearts beating, knees shaking like “[cuibininis](#)” body. Shivering with cold & excitement, voices hoarse and every one talking in whispers. Seconds dragged on. They seemed to be like hours. Fritz was getting awfully uneasy, he was putting up star shells & shelling us pretty heavily. Rockets of all colours and descriptions going up. (Put thermometer up to 105 degrees. Sister thinks it is a bad one and has given me another one to suck for 3 mins.)

At last a wall of fire, smoke and mud sprang up before us and thousands of flashes appeared and disappeared behind us. The wind stopped. Nature seemed to have come to a standstill and was watching us. We could feel the heat of shells 200 x away.

Fritz put down a barrage behind us. A very small one and we started. You forget you are a human being, you feel nothing. There is only one thing you want and that is to kill. Our boys came on, bayonets fixed, all advancing with a grim determination look on his face. Some fell but the rest carried on. In the melee I lost sight of my two guns, so left H.Q, who were advancing slowly, jumping from one shell hole to another... I looked for my gun on the left. But all in vain. We were still advancing. I went to our R. flank and found my R. gun. They had strayed a bit so I got them together, deployed them and started towards H.Q. By now we had advanced a good bit. We were on German land. They had left some snipers & M. G. in tree trunks. These opened fire on us with very good effect. I wished I could have laid my guns on some of them, but it was impossible. It was against orders and there were a lot of our men between the gun & the snipers. We could see the Bosche running away. That gave us fresh courage so we went on. But I hadn't to go any further. Something hit me. I thought it was a bullet. It may have been one or a small piece of shell.

Sahha I will continue some other time.

[Charlie]

**Chelsea Hosp.
Arthur St.**

19th November 1917

Dearest Mater

Received yours of the 15th this morning. Pretty quick work, 4 days. But you must have been in a bad state when you wrote it. I suppose it was the effect of poor Dickie's death. From what you write Zammits [Samuts?] & Pullicinos are just as bad.

Cheer up all of you. You are not doing any good by fretting and worrying. The Germans like that, so just to spite them, smile, whatever happens. Do as the Maltese do in Lent in fasting 4 days to spite the devil. I mean keep up the same spirit and spite Kaiser Bill!

It's only natural that one should feel bad after hearing those bad news but if only [you] saw how Mrs Agius is taking things you would all behave differently.

Saw her yesterday. They kept me for tea and dinner. Edgar and Alfred were there. They are both looking well and cheerful, in spite of all they have been through. So follow suit for yourselves and ours too.

I am going to Holts to draw some 'flus'[?] so Sahha dearest mater.

Always make the best of everything just to spite the Germans. I forgot to say how I am. I am very well. Interior troubles **napu fin**. They thought I had appendicitis...the silly asses.

Sahha Yours affect.

Charlie

**Arthur St Hosp
Chelsea S. W. 3**

21st November 1917

Dearest Mater,

Received Maud's of 4th, yours 15th, Pater's of 5th. Went to see 'General Post' for the second time yesterday evening. Some time ago I saw 'When Knights Were Bold' and all for nothing. It's grand to be wounded and in Blighty.

Got up at 10.30, bath etc and it's now 11.30. I am looking forward to lunch. After that some other show then a Concert here this evening.

Weather very gloomy. It's drizzling. Have not seen the sun for some time now. Mrs Condell wrote to me. I'd love to go and see her. I'll do so as soon as I get some leave.

Some time ago I meet an old Inns of Court fellow on the moving stairway at Oxford Circus. He is at the War Office and he told me to go and see him. I'll do so, if I can. Its good to be on good terms with that sort of people

A great pal of mine is leaving the hospital today. He was and is a splendid fellow. A catholic. Married. Very quiet and not extravagant. We always went about together and to the 11 o'clock Mass at the Oratory on Sundays.

Must wind up now

Sahha, dearest Mater. Love to all... yours affect.

Charlie.

23rd November 1917
19 Casualty C.S. [Clearing Station]

Dear Old Boy.

You see by above that I am no longer on duty. A piece of shrapnel case, 4 inches long hit me above my ankle, making an awful wound and smashing the bone. Have been here since the 18th & do not expect to move to Base yet. Probably when I do it will be for a Coy change, as I hear they don't send helpless case across the sea. Will let you know my various addresses in due course and how I go.

Yours

Bead

**Arthur St
Chelsea**

26th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

Have not written for some time, but I was always with P.A. He took me sight seeing. We went to see a show at the Playhouse and to the Palladium on Sunday. Of course dinners, teas and luncheons at the Blenheim, Corner House, Regent Palace, Strand Palace, etc etc. He looks very well and feels very fit. You ought to see him run to catch buses or tubes. I was quite astonished the first time I saw him doing it. He has got rid of lots of superfluous flesh. But there was something troubling him. Some bad news from home. I don't think it is his mother so who could it be? He is really a splendid fellow. I am sorry I did not know him before.

We said goodbye yesterday evening. He slept at the Grosvenor, Victoria. and went away this morning.

I would not envy the Germans who had the misfortune to fall into his hands. He is another fellow doing his bit for Malta. Really, I mean, not like some of those who go and come back suffering from an imaginary disease that does not exist. (A friend of ours, a Maltese and a relative.) It may not be true.

Going to see 'Inside the Line' for the second time today. So Au revoir.

The day after the night before

Received Maud's of 27th Oct. One from my Adjutant saying he was hit by a shrapnel case 4" long. His ankle was a bit hurt. Bone just above smashed. He is still in France.

Received Pater's 10:vi:17, Mats [?] of 11 Nov., Pater's of 16:xi:17 and one from Consul. Also one of Aunties which I forgot at Man's. I am writing to the Times to send the London Gazette of 25th July. The day my name appeared in the paper as having received my Commission. I know nothing of the Commission itself. If it can be had I'll send it too.

Many, many thanks for birthday present, will send the two sets of badges soon. Hope they will get to you because it seems those of the S.C.O.T.C. I sent to Joe Galea never reached him.

I was joking when I said the M.G. colours were grey and red. We have none yet. So sorry.

Discussed the Italian business with P.A. Knowing their lingo may come in very useful & as I can't get into the Indian Army before I will have been a year as a 2 Lt. P.A. and I came to the decision that I was to volunteer for Italy when I am fit again & just before my first birthday as an Officer to apply for India. Will you please give me your opinion of things.

Did not receive Alfred's and Vic's letters. They will most probably go back to Malta.

We feel awfully bucked with our new success on the Western Front. P.A. arrived safely in France. Got a P.C. this morning.

Going to a Show so Sahha.... Yours affect.

Charlie

**Arthur St Hosp.
Chelsea**

30th November 1917

Dearest Mater,

Just received Maude's of the 17th. She seems to be a bit fed up with the smallness of Malta and she too wants to come over. I don't blame her but she does not know she can't walk a step without spending money. It's quite all right for me being in hospital with food, bedding and amusement free, but I could not do that in normal times.

Have been to a lot of shows viz 'Billeted', 'Loyalty', 'Inside the Lines', 'Browsers, Millions' etc etc. Went to see 'Loyalty' this afternoon and it made a lot of the audience blow their noses frequently. Taking Daisy and Mabs to see 'Dear Brutus' this evening.

The fire alarm is just ringing. There was one (fire) some time ago, but I did not see it, although it was quite close (2 miles).

Mrs Condell wrote to me wishing me a happy birthday. Must wind up as I have to run away & meet Daisy & Mabs at the Theatre.

Sahha Your very affect.

Charlie.

**Arthur St Hosp.
Chelsea S. W.3**

1st December 1917

Dearest Mater,

Got one letter from Lina Samut yesterday. Enjoyed 'Dear Brutus' with Daisy and Mabs yesterday evening.

We have had bad news from France today. It's all those troops from Russia coming against us. But we will keep them back right enough. Our Arty and M.G.s are simply splendid.

Thank the Pater very very much for his birthday present. Will write to Auntie tomorrow. Weather is still very good. Time is flying by, it always does so when one is having a good time. I go to the Agius's tomorrow.

Sahha fondest love from

Charlie.

Arthur St Hosp.
Chelsea SW3
6th Dec 1917

Dearest Mater,

I actually heard the guns again last night when some Bosche planes came over. But how very weak and small everything seemed to be in comparison to what takes place over the seas. Two raiders were brought down. Went to the Savoy yesterday afternoon to see the 'Invisible Foe'. Irving is one of the principal actors. Saw 'Billeted' this afternoon and I see 'Romance' this evening. Also saw 'Caminetta' the day before yesterday. I have now nearly seen all the shows in London.

Have not had Malta mails for some time now. I am quite well and ready for the Board on the 13th.

So sorry to hear Willie cannot go over to Malta for his leave.

I am expecting news from Malta any day now.

Life is getting a bit monotonous now. It's too much of a good thing. I would not mind some little adventure or a big one too.

Must get ready for dinner

Sahha Your very Affect.

Charlie.

PS: Received a letter from Mrs Condell telling me not to go and see her because they are some way from town and there is no spare room. If I can manage it I'll go and put up in some hotel in the town.

**Arthur St Hosp
Chelsea SW3**

13th December 1917

Received a couple of Pater's letters (those sent to S of W) & one from Helen.

Went for my Medical Board this morning. Lt Col Pratt RAMC. "What do you want me to do with you?"

"Just what you think fit, Sir."

He asked why I had not been to Osborne. I told him.

"How do you feel?" "Quite alright. Sir."

"How is your wound ?"

"Let me have a look at it?" He saw it.

"Do you walk much?" "I've done about three miles."

"Could you manage 9 miles?" "I'm afraid not."

"Then how do you want to rejoin your unit?"

"You had better have a month convalescence at the sea side."

So I go in a few days time to the seaside. Tell the Mater she need not worry for some time now as after the months convalescence I'll get three weeks leave and a couple of months Home Service. That will carry me on to March or April 1918.

Went to Harrods this afternoon and got half dozen handkerchiefs for Agnes, Burn's Poems for Helen, Music for May and Johnny. Novel for Maudie. I have not read it so it had better be censored. If it's not good for her tell me and I'll send something else. I'll get something for Vi & Jamroll [?] tomorrow. I don't know what to get for Alfred. He had better write and ask for something. I don't suppose he would like a blouse or a pair of socks and combination etc etc. Ergo he had better ask. I think I can afford a quid or two.

Sahha.... I am going to play bridge. God love and protect you. From your loving son

Charlie.

**Arthur St Hosp.
Chelsea SW3**

13/12/1917

Dearest Mater,

Last Sunday I went to see a certain Catholic family by name of Wandale. I knew one of the sons at Bisley. Had tea there. The one I know is on his way to Mesapot [amia] so I gave him our address in Sliema. If he comes get him to sing & you will spend a very jolly evening. He has got a lovely voice and his brothers play the piano better than Agnes & Vi put together! That's saying a great deal.

As I am having a months convalescence + 3 weeks leave I tried to get permission to come and spend a few weeks at home but my scheme has not worked.

I am spending Xmas with Man & the Agius's. Will also get 2 days holidays on Xmas Eve & Xmas Day. I'll sleep at No 9. That is if I am still in London and not at some seaside. Winter has come in earnest but I am not feeling it at all. We have had frost for two days and nights so everything is frozen and is very slippery outside.

Heard from Willie & PA They are both very well. The first going through some Inf. Course. Most likely before he is made a Kaptan.(Private?) The latter, poor fellow, very sad & cut up & fed up through no fault of his or luck. I am really very sorry for him, but he will always be my very good friend and I'll trust him as a brother. I am sending some Xmas cards a bit later in the day but "[Neglio tanch che man](#)". So Goodbye, wishing everyone a happy Xmas & New Year too

Love Charlie

Arthur St. Hosp
Chelsea S.W.3

3rd January 1918

Dearest Mater,

Willie [Parnis] has not come yet, but that is all the better because I'll be able to see more of him later on when I am on leave which will most probably start tomorrow when I'll be boarded. I am 'quite' fit again and ready to face anything.

Received Pater's of 29th December. So pleased to hear Maudie's and Franky's bazaar was such a success, same with your 'Amalgamation' dinner.

It was a bit cold today, snow everywhere but still I was able to go out without a coat and dressed as I used to be in Malta. Met Alfons Carreras today. He is studying for the Bar here. He took me [to] Lincolns Inn and showed me all over the place. Had tea with him at the Regent Palace. Took Daisy to see 'The Saving Grace' at the Garrick yesterday. It was very good.

Nothing special to report, only London is lovely and I wish I had the money to live here all my life.

It's dinner time so

Goodbye and fondest love

Charlie

**Arthur St Hosp
Chelsea S.W.3
Thursday [?]**

4th January 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received yours of 19th Dec. Pater's of 29th and Helen's of 19th.

I am sorry to say I know nothing of Robert. He disappears for a certain time, does not tell anyone where he is and does not write to anyone. The last time I heard from him was just after poor Dickie's death. I answered his letter and heard nothing else from him. At that time he was again in hospital with the old gas complaint. It's nothing serious. He is just staying in Blighty. Got a letter from Willie [Parnis] two days ago saying he expected to arrive in London this week and he was to wire me so that I might meet him at the station. Have received no wire as yet. So don't be surprised if a few days go by without me writing. You will know I'll be having a good time with him.

Joe Muscat is trying to get back to Malta and rejoin his unit. It's the best thing he can do. So sorry to hear Freddie Pulli is not at all well. Why does he not come and live in England. Some place in the country? I am sure he would get cured in no time. However it can't be helped. We are constantly praying for him.

Thank you Pater very very much for the Xmas present. It was very welcome. Tell him too that I am not going to send the bills of the presents I bought for you all. I am not hard up, he can keep the money for me in case I need it some day. I might want it when I get my three weeks leave as then all my pay will go to the bed I'll sleep on and the food I'll eat. But I might be able to manage it with what I've got. About £20.

It seems I forgot to tell you how I was in regards to my health. Well no news is good news. I am quite all right again and ready to kill some Bosche. When I come across nice pieces of music I'll send them to Mary. But tell me what voice she has and in what key she sings because when I do go and buy some they ask me lots of questions I don't understand, so give me full particulars about her. I'll write them on a card and read them out to the Lancelot of London.

How is the 'nursery' getting on? Are they all going to accompany the labour battalion from Malta and not come to France where they are very badly needed?

It seems you have all got the wind up about my having got to go back some day. It's quite OK. Remember I have Syrian and Indian etc blood in me & when those people are determined to get their own back they get it at all costs. I of course, don't feel exactly like that, but there is a little of that feeling.

I can't imagine Ben incur [?] saying "Have you news of C presently". May must have burst out laughing, unless his eyes & mind were [?] on the round form of Maxinu?

Have seen 'Arlette' & 'Peter Pan' with Mabs. Going to some show with Daisy, tomorrow most probably. Weather nice and cold. I am getting to like it very much, its so healthy and bracing.

PRIVATE.

I am sorry to say I had spread Agnes's bad news before I got instructions from home telling me not to. But I don't see the good of keeping it secret. It can't be minded, now, so let all the people say what they like about the matter and have done with it.

You are sure to hear a lot of nasty remarks, but don't worry they will all go in through one ear and out the other.

Well so long. Staying at the above till my next board (13 Jan) when I'll get my three weeks leave and perhaps some light duty & home service after that. Goodbye Fondest love etc

Charlie

**9 Belsize Grove
Hampstead
N.W.3.**

15th January 1918

Dearest Mater.

Six days of my 3 months sick leave are over. But there are many more days to come and after that 2 months home service (at Grantham). So you see I am well away & will only go to get my own back in April or May.

Willie [Parnis] has arrived & is living with Ives [?] I had to meet him at Victoria Station, but he sent his wire to the Hospital and I was at the above address so only got it yesterday. However I talked to him on the phone and his voice is more musical than ever. He comes up on Friday. Till then Au revoir. Nothing important to report.

Charlie.

P.S. Paul has 3 weeks leave too. We went out together. He is very smart & has grown broader & more manly. Very small scar on his neck. Hardly visible. So long.

D.G. Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham

[Post Mark] 31st January 1918

Dearest Mater,

I must start by apologising for not writing to you for such a long time, but you know what it feels like to be on leave, besides that Willie [Parnis] was here so I did not have much time to write letters.

I met a very nice young lady who took me to see her parents at Bournemouth and I stayed for the weekend with them. I know what you are all thinking of. But I assure you there is absolutely nothing of that, it is quite a platonic friendship. It was the first time I had been to an English sea shore & I enjoyed it very much. We could not go out the first day as there was a thick sea mist & everything was damp & sticky so we stayed in and danced and played and had a very good time. Sunday turned out to be a beautiful day so we went out for a walk on the beach. I went back to London on Sunday evening.

Willie looks and feels very fine, same with Henry and Inez. Poor Willie misses Helen very much. He was always talking about her, wishing she was here for him to take out to theatres, plays, dinners etc. It would have been the ideal way of spending his leave. However it could not be helped.

I met Brian Balbi here last night & we had dinner together. He has grown very much and towers over me but he is still “Hisah in indigst” to me. I wish it was Willie here instead!

It's very nice to see the old place again. To look at my old hut, see the same instructors, the same parade grounds, the same everything. Perhaps we are treated a bit more nicely & are more comfortable, but we don't get the same good times. A lot of those good old fellows have been killed, others wounded and some are still in France. I met one fellow who was here as a private with me.

I have not got my camp equipment yet, so I had to sleep in my valise on the ground. It was a bit hard compared with what I have been sleeping on, but that did not keep me awake. It's nice and cold and bracing. This one day here has done me more good than the 3 months in London, but I would not have missed them for the world.

I am orderly officer today. I can't go out of camp but you have practically sweet all to do. I am now sitting in the mess close to a blazing fire writing letters.

We had a few exciting evenings in London lately, during air raids. The first night I was having dinner when they came. You should have seen the people getting the wind up. They all turned white and cold and shivered. Ran nervously about until they all settled down in the lounge. Needless to say the young ladies felt my arm round their waist very comforting.

I went out to Vera's place, (the girl who took me to the beach) but found they had all gone out to some tube station, so I wandered around the streets watching the shells bursting and listening to the whirrrrr of the Gottus & the rattle of the splinters (of shells) on the roofs of the houses. How I wish it was only as bad in France.

I saw an old special constable at a doorway. He said "Do come in Sir. I have 5 old [?] here crying and thinking the end has come." I felt sorry for him so I went in & asked if he had any brandy. We gave them some and they felt better. During a lull I went out. An old lady taking shelter in a door way asked. "Is it all over? Can I go home now?"

"Yes they are in Germany by now. It's quite safe. Keep along the side of the street and go home."

I had hardly finished when they started again. The old lady gave a cry and disappeared inside the house. During another lull Carreras came for me and said his family and Vera & Co were in the tube, so I went too. Naturally as soon as we got in the guns started firing again and we had to stick in there for two hours. There were people lying asleep all over the place. The atmosphere was stifling and lots fainted. I took Vera home at the first opportunity. The others remained there. Must wind up now.

Pater's letter which arrived here before that one with Lennie's enclosed was stolen from no 9 Belsize Grove. Another letter from Canada went west & one with a crossed cheque disappeared. A pair of my gloves are now being worn by someone else. If there is anything important in the missing letter let me know of it.

Well good bye dearest mother. Hope Freddy will come round again.
Love to all
Yours affect.

Charlie.

**Alnwick Command Dept
Northumberland
B Mess**

5th March 1918

Dearest Pater,

Received yours of 15/2/18. Re my commission. They send that anytime between 6 & 12 months after being gazetted so that it's hardly due yet. It will most probably come to me. I'll send it along when it comes. My position in the army now is Temp 2/Lt in the regular Army (M.G.C. being Reg). I don't think I have the right to continue in the Army after the War. The fact of my being a Temp. Commission explains it I think. My application for a transfer to Italy was going to be sent in today, but a medical certificate has to accompany it, saying (med cert) I am fit or will most probably be fit. As my board is due on the 9th of this month the M.O. thought that it would be better for me to wait these few days. He also said you stand a very good chance of getting an Interpreters job. My application runs something like this:-

"I have the honour to request that you will forward this, my application to serve in Italy as I am able to speak the language fluently, having spent 6 years in an Italian College. I enclose Medic Cert. etc etc."

I don't want to apply for an Interpreter as it is a non combatant job, but on the other hand a cushy one They tell me I am a bit [?] about this but I would not like to be an A1 man miles behind translating letters etc. As long as I am fit my place is in the trenches. However I am letting things take their own course. I think my application is well worded with regards that i.e. I am ready to fight and do Interpreters job.

When you all write to P.A. don't pat him and stroke him, just write to him as a friend & give him news. He wrote and told me he hates all that kind of soft letters. Poor fellow he did not even know Willie got his M.C. In one way it is good that he is in Belgium because Fritz will keep his mind concentrated on what is happening there to prevent him thinking of bygones.

I forgot to mention that on the last few days of my leave I had to draw £5 from your account with Man. I was absolutely broke & had to do it. Four months in London is very expensive. However I am quite a millionaire now so I can refund the money I took out. I suppose you heard that all the Officers got an increase in pay, 3/- for subs so that makes it 10/6 at day. At present I get field allowance too & don't spend much. Expenses being mess, tobacco, drinks, billiards and laundry. The increase of pay started October last so there is a bit of back pay due (£18:9:0 for Oct-Jan) and that has not come yet.

The pay of the M.G.C. ought to be 1/- more than the infantry, but for some unknown reason we don't get it. However in 1950 it might all come in at once.

It's very late, was on a route march this morning, it rained all the while & my coat is still drying (on me) so I am a bit tired. The leather waistcoat I have got keeps the wet & cold out beautifully. Good night.
Your very affect.

Charlie.

**Command Depot
Alnwick
Northumberland.
B Mess**

9th March 1918

Dearest Mater,

The result of my last Board were another months Home Service in spite of my efforts to get passed G.S. It seems the M.O. took to much interest in me and said something about X-raying me himself to see if he can locate the bullet. I don't mind another month here, although it's a bit cold, but one feels very little.

I was Orderly Officer yesterday (Friday) and I had to stay up and wait for 300 men coming here. They arrived at 12 midnight and we had to see that they got some grub and were comfortably quartered. It had been snowing all day and everything froze during the night. It was beastly cold standing out in the open. The cold penetrated my thick soles and made my poor tootsies beastly cold. However when all was over at 1 AM we had some hot tea and a glass of hot milk, then a snug warm cubicle with a bright fire and lots of blankets. In a few minutes I was in the land of dreams.

Today, Saturday, we had very little work to do, so this afternoon I went out with a friend to Alnmouth and played golf. It was my first attempt. I missed the ball 40% of the time; hit the turf 10%; hit the turf and ball 20%: hit the ball correctly but in a bad direction 20% and hit rightly at an average of 10%. We then had a substantial tea of poached eggs, lots of bread and butter, tea but no sugar.

Tomorrow is Sunday and I have to be Orderly Officer again, but it can't be helped. I'll have to take the Presbyterians to their Church and not go myself to mine. But then again it can't be helped.

Daisy [Agius] sent me some Malta rags (chronicles). I saw Fr. Maurud's Bread Fund so I sent him a cheque for one pound. (I sent it to Zio Fonsu as he is treasurer). I did not know Roncali had kicked the bucket. RIP.

Played in the Billiards tournament two days ago and lost. But my friend beat me so I don't mind. Besides he is a much better player than myself.

Practically all our superiors here are going to be changed. Just as soon as you get to know them and start chumming up with them. But that's the army all over . So "buch, par vani?"

Going to play squash [?] so cheerio fondest love

Charlie

Alnwick Command Depot

14th March 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received yours of 24th & Pater's of 27th. In yours you inquire about my spine, bullet etc. They are all perfectly all right and I feel nothing. In fact I feel better than I ever did before joining up, in spite of wounds, Huns. France. etc etc. However these two letters must have been carrying germs, microbes and all the other live stick [?] Doctors imagine and they have given me a slight cold. The day after receiving them (letters) I started feeling a bit rotten & feverish. I took no notice of it. I stuck it the next day, yesterday, until the evening. I meant curing myself by carrying on as usual, but after dinner I happened to be alone with one of our M.O.s & during the conversation (I did not faint) I told him I had not been feeling well all day and had a sore throat. He tried my temperature.

Gee, Whiz, bang!!! I had one of nearly 102. He bunged me off to bed. Got me 5 different types of powders to take and umpteen bottles of gargle stuff.

I slept right through the night, sweated like a pig, had a dose of salts at 7 AM, a hearty breakfast (porridge etc). At 8.30 my temperature went up eh! sorry down to normal. However my throat is still swollen a bit so I am still in bed or at least supposed to be, because I have been running around the place with my British Warm over my pyjamas.

I am staying in tomorrow, excused parades for Saturday and Sunday and will start work again on Monday. Lt. Col. Parry, our C.O. is being sent to his home. He is too old and weak for this job. A Lt. Col. De Sales is coming instead. I wonder if he is any relation to Francis de Sales. Richitto must be very pleased to have George back again.

Re Joe Muscat, (tra noi) it seems "helsue minmu". He was on leave and went sick. Instead of going to the nearest Hosp. or to an R.A.M.C. doc, he went to a civvy doc...against all rules and regulations...and overstayed his pass. The case has been pushed up by their sending him back from where he came.

We have had very mild weather up here, only one big snow fall, but we still have frost in the mornings. The days are lovely spring days and everything is turning green again.

Cheerio, love to all, Salaams to Freddieyours very affect.

Charlie.

P.S. Anxiously waiting the new arrival. Has the old one and his mother received my Xmas presents. Affy has not told me what he wants yet.

Alnwick Command Depot

18th March 1918

Dearest Mater,

Recovered from my cold on Saturday. It only lasted for Thursday and Friday. On the third day I went to Alnmouth and played golf in the rain. Went for a route march this morning so you see I am quite fit again and the wetting on Saturday did me no harm. If anything it did me good because it cleared the little sore throat I had left.

Played bridge with our new C.O. yesterday. He was Adjutant with the 2nd Bn. K.O. M. R. and so knew all the fellows; PA, Huber, Sciortino, Zio Dider, etc etc. His name is De Sales and was in Malta till 1912 (I think).

He said he missed the Militia Cigarettes very much, so I have wired for some. Hope you get the wire, 200 or 300 will do. I don't mind paying taxes. It will be worth it. So pleased to hear Vi has a baby girl, she has come in time to replace Agnes. There was Johnny to replace me, so they are always filling up the gaps so our Christmas and New Years dining table will always be over crowded as they have been in the past.

Hope Alfred and Vi got my wire congratulating them.

Weather is pretty good, but still cold in the early morning, more so when the wind comes from the east. But its nothing compared to what it was, it very rarely freezes now.

I am always looking for odd jobs so that I need not go on the usual parade which means strolling around the wet pastures supervising. It's very cushy but also very tedious. On Saturday I spent the morning with the Asst. Adj. Today it was a route march. On the other days it's being present at Court Marshals for Instruction. Helping out C.(Coy) & so on.

I am applying for a week-end leave to London. Wonder if I'll get it. I ought to because it is the first time I have applied for leave since I joined up 16 months ago. Fondest Love

Charlie.

PS 1: Have not received Simeon's letter & Maudy's letter yet. Got Pater's of 5th. Will answer it later on.

PS 2: Claim for Trench Coat has this minute come in. It has been approved. I get £6.6.0

**9 Belsize Park Gardens
Hampstead NW 3**

25th March 1918

Dearest Mater,

Managed to get a few days leave just from 23rd to 27th. I am staying at the above address because at the old place (No 9 Belsize Grove) the grub was very bad. The people who run this house are Catholics so it's much better. Well, what do you think of the news? Now that it's so exciting and serious out there I am wishing I was helping to keep the Germans back. I have not put in my application for the Italy [?] yet. My cold and leave preventing me doing it, and I am glad in a way, because we might all be needed soon and I'll be only too glad to have another go at the blokes instead of translating letters. I still feel it is my duty to go on fighting as long as I am fit. However on the whole I think the news is very good because if we are at such good odds (6 to 1) can keep them back only retiring a few miles why then they will never never break through and we will be bound to win.

I don't think the Allies at present can make a push to Berlin, so the only way of winning the war is by tiring them out...and the Germans are complying with this scheme beautifully.

Don't forget that the attacking party loses men at a proportion of 3 or 5 to 1 more than the defending party ... 30,000 prisoners (as the papers say) and God knows how many dead what must the no. of casualties on their part amount to? It will be close to 100,000. So on the whole it's very good news and I am longing to give a helping hand, but I don't see how it can be done. I still have a few weeks H.S. + 3 months at Grantham, so by the time I am ready to get out, all the lovely excitement will be over. Just my bad luck.

Well dearest Mater, I am as fit as a fiddle and so are all our friends here in London. I am enjoying myself as much as I can, theatres, dinners etc etc but my stay is very short. I go back the day after tomorrow. Till then
Au revoir.

Yours Affect.

Charlie

Alnwick Command Depot.

28th March 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received Pater's of 11/3/18 and May's in the same envelope. Jolly pleased to see that some of the Militia people have wakened up. It's high time they did something. It's very dirty of them to come over only because they are getting more money. I never believed & will necessary believe that that was their excuse, because if the British Govt. was willing to give me £125-0-0 as a wound gratuity, I don't see why it should draw back when asked to pay for the Militia a few pence extra.

It is quite true, dearest Mater, I have been given **cento a venti unique live** sterling for my small wound. I am investing £50 in War Bonds, giving about £20 for charities and leave the rest in the bank with the rest of my fortune (£10). This [is] what I think of doing and have consulted Man about it. I feel I have more than I ever want & so go out with my note-case full up and giving a few pound notes to anyone who asks for them. Just fancy, me the owner of £138.0.0. They all dropped from the clouds, it seems, because I have not earned them. However as luck is smiling on me now there is no reason why I should turn my back on it. So you can all have Champagne for dinner the day you get this letter & I'll pay for it.

If the girls want anything in the dress line tell them to buy it and send the bill to me. If Alfred wants books on the Navy let him do like wise and buy the Navys too. If Giomre wants a ga ga za let him have it. If Tom wants birds let him buy them. If the Aunties want to give a few hundred in Charities let them do it. If Zio Fonsu wants to build 50 more churches + 20 Oratories + 10 Convents in Africa let him do it.

If Pater wants pipes, cigars, tobaccos let him buy them. If Johnny wants twenty billiard tables let him write for them. If Louis Vella wants a menagerie let him get it; if Victor Vella wants a few herd of horses let him go to Americas for them. If the patriotic Italian people want to camouflage their cowardice by means of talk and writing etc etc let them do it.... I'll pay expenses.

If you, dear Mater, want servants ad lib and a house consisting of two rooms, one over the other on the [pony ta Bleana](#), get them all, I'll pay. I can afford it. I am quasi a millionaire. (Not so you should notice it) so buy! buy! buy! I'll pay.

I am seriously thinking of getting married so will you please put an advert in the D.M.C. saying that I am willing to marry any old wench & that I can afford to buy her a Ford. (Did I hear Alice S. say she would?) and take her to "[Kristu Irrscinctat](#)" and I am [Ghirzor & Limmonia etc etc](#) [?]

Pleased to hear you all had a good time at Boschetto and we will have hundreds more before long and when "The Boys Come On".

It seems courses at Grantham are being washed out so I very much hope to be going out to France soon. Don't start worrying, dear Mater, it may be months before I'll have the luck to go out again: It may also be weeks, but never mind, I'll be quite alright.

Hope the Militia Cigarettes have been sent. That Alfie and Vi got the wire & that Zio Fonsu got my cheque for one pound.

Cheerio dearest Mater,

Fondest love to you and all

Yours affect

Charlie

Alnwick Command Depot

5th April 1918

Dearest Mater,

Some very good news for you. They have started the courses at Grantham again so that will mean my having to stay there for a few months before going out again. Sorry to say that my war fever has gone up again and at times long to go out again, if not for anything else but just to say I was in France during one of those big wonderful retreats which only the British Army can perform without losing their heads, moral and discipline.

We are having some lectures from a War Correspondent of the Morning Post. He is a Capt. in the R. A. After his lectures officers and men who had been fed up with the war, all become mad to go out again. He was cheered and clapped and all the men are asking to be allowed to go and hear him, but only 50% at a time can go as the Hall won't hold them all. So you can very well imagine why I want to go out again so badly. His talk made a big difference in everyone, but more so when he told us we were not fighting for France, Belgium, Serbia, etc but for ENGLAND for our families and for those who are afraid to come out and fight, (when I said England I meant also Colonies and Protectorates). If this war had not come on Germany would have defeated England without a shot being fired. I mean to say they were making English people believe Germans were better than them in everything. They would have overrun England and by degrees crawled up to its neck & suddenly strangled it. But luckily for us all the Kaiser wanted war and so he saved our situation. I only wish Malta would wake up and do something for itself.

Re Pater's Questions:

We have not got an RC. Chaplain here, but the Parish Priest is doing the work of one. He gives Holy Communion and says Mass every Sunday in Camp and he is always at our disposal in Town for Confessions etc. I could not attend any Holy Week Services because things went on as usual except on Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Monday.

We knock off at 4.30 PM and dinner at 7 PM so there is no time to do anything. However on those three days I made up for lost time.

Cigarettes have not arrived yet. I am making enquires about them. My C.O. is looking forward to them. Having invested the £77.10:0 in War Certificates, I get 100 pounds after 5 years. Also giving the 15 pounds to the Society of St Vincent de Paul. The rest I keep. Have spent 52% of it on a Kodak. "I am in the pink".

Sahha Yours affect

Charlie

Alnwick Command Depot

8th April 1918

Dearest Pater,

Got your wire two days ago but I don't know what to make of it. I'd very much like to please you and apply for the interpretership, but now that I have been passed for General Service again I feel it is my duty to fight & not to translate letters and conversations especially at such a critical moment. It would not be right and would not be playing the game. England is in need of men & I don't see why I should apply for a cushy job. My duty as a soldier is to fight until I am unfit, for that then I would not mind becoming an interpreter. I thought for long while about it and have written to Man to see what he has to say. However I came to the following decision:

In going from one place to another you always have to fill out umpteen forms telling them what you had for breakfast on such and such a date etc and one of the questions often asked is "what languages can you talk?" So I always say Italian, fluently. From this I take it for granted that if they want me for that job they'll send for me. It will mean I am of more use to my Country as an Interp. than as a fighting man and I'll be happy. But I could never apply to get it. If I am refused I will be looked upon as a coward, a lead swinger and a shirklander [?].

So in short I decided to let things take their course. I want Man's opinion about it.

It's rotten to see names of fellows I know in the casualty lists and also see names of villages on maps, villages I have lived in umpteen miles behind the front line such as Bassart, Blairville, Hendecourt etc which are now in German hands again. It makes my blood boil and makes me want to go out again and strike a blow for that which is lost, either temporarily or forever.

It's bad enough to know that Malta has done such a little for the War, and from the look of things, it won't do anything until made to, like Ireland!

No, dearest Pater, I really could not apply for an interpretership. I know it will cause you all a lot of pain and worry but I look at it from another point of view which is this:-

You all know a bit of what the Germans did and are doing to the Belgians, French and Italians etc. I know much more so I'll rather give you a little bit of pain by going out to France than see the Germans in Malta. I know one little Sub like me makes no difference at all but still I am giving good example to the Maltese and doing my little bit. More, I can't do.

I don't want you to think for a minute that I am afraid we will loose the war. NO!! Certainly not!! We will win. We are bound to win. But with some sacrifice. What sacrifice is Malta making? I don't call sending a few hundred men to the Labour Battalions and a few to the Motor Transport a sacrifice and doing its bit. Those men are merely doing the work old and unfit men and WOMEN are doing here. All those men ought to come to fight. England will pay them as the Governor said and Malta ought to do the rest. If there is no money why don't they levy taxes? Why don't the local papers write a lot of rubbish urging the Maltese on? Why won't the preachers from the pulpits urge the men to join up?

Why isn't there someone to encourage them, to talk to them? It makes my blood boil to think of all those young men walking up and down Strada Reale listening to the Band while other people are giving up their lives for them and that is the way they show their gratitude, by loafing about and grumbling when they mention Taxes "[fill Consill](#)"

I wish I could do something for Malta. Write some articles to all the papers, get up and talk to them, any old thing to encourage them. But I can't for various reasons which I need not state. So I have to gulp it down, however I could nor help writing all this ... it had to come out.

Harry got a good share of it in a letter I sent him yesterday, but only you and Alfred can read it. It's not for women to hear. Well Pater, I think I'll let things take their course. I am in God's hands. His will be done!

I am now waiting to be replaced then I will go to Grantham. There is no saying how long I will remain there. It may be days. It may be months. It all depends on the number of casualties. I'll be sorry to leave Alnwick. I have spent two quiet and beautiful months here. But it can't be helped. I'll get used to Grantham, to wherever I may be sent. I am fit to go anywhere. I don't care where it is.

I have never received Vie's and Affie's letters when I was wounded and am very sorry the presents for Vie etc have gone west. They were very nice ones and would have been much appreciated by Vie etc.

It still freezes at night time but it's quite mild during the day. Have not written to Auntie Mary for a long time. Apologise for me please. I'll do so as soon as I get some more envelopes. Love to all

Yours affect.

Charlie

PS.

Has Zio received the cheque for one pound for the Bishop's Bread Fund?

Cigarettes have not yet arrived. Hope they are not lost. I got letters posted in the same date. Making enquires at the Alnwick P.O.

**Command Depot
Alnwick
Northumberland.**

15th April 1918

Dearest Mater,

Was looking through the Malta papers when I saw and read that little article about poor P.A. It was the first I heard of it. I need not tell you how I felt. At first I thought I was dreaming and had to read the thing over two or three times before I was certain that it was not an illusion and that it was the name of the P.A. we knew. After thinking of his people and you all I thought of the Germans who had killed him and I am afraid I did not think well of them. It made my blood boil & made me want to strike a blow for him who I treated and loved as a brother. I told my C.O. about him and he was deeply grieved. It was only two days ago that we were talking about him & I never heard any speak so highly of another as I did that afternoon. I was proud of the fact that he was a friend of mine and we treated each other as brothers.

I think of all the good he has done me. It was he who helped me most in getting my Commission in the M.G.C. He was always my friend in need; when I was in trouble I always wrote to him and he always wrote back telling me what to do. He was a second father to me. And now to think that he is no more is enough to make anyone feel as if he could murder those fiends in cold blood.

However it does him no good by wishing evil to others so all we can do is to pray for his soul. I am sure God received his soul with open hands, because he was a really good and pious man.

I knew him well in Malta and I got to know him still more when in London. There was no other fellow better than him. It's rotten to think that a lot of the best people are sacrificing their lives for others who are not human beings but animals with the body of a human being. But never mind dearest Mater, God is selecting his servants and P.A. was one of them and I am sure he is in a better place than this. It's only natural that we should grieve for him, but he is by now praying for us on this earth. I can't help thinking this of him, because he was so good and pious when in London. Why, he must have been a saint when in France and he has died in the most honourable way imaginable and that is on the battlefield for his God, King, People and Country.

May He Rest In Peace

He has gone from this earth to Heaven. .
I leave this for Grantham tomorrow. No other news.
So cheer up and be of good cheer. Yours very Affect.

Charlie

**G. 22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

20th April 1918

Dearest Mater,

Have been two days at the above but I was so busy looking for huts all day that I had no time to write.

There are hundreds of huts all lettered and numbered & you've got to go to D 36 to report to the DAMS. C 76 for your quarters. A 45 to your Coy Office etc etc. They are all miles apart & no one knows where they are, so as I said, I was too busy to write. It's nice to see the old place again, but how different to what it was in March 1917. The place has not changed much, but I have.

There are two courses that I have to go through. The Left Wing C & the Right Wing C. The first is a 4 weeks one and the second is 7 weeks. So you see I'll be here for another 3 months starting on the 29th of this month. In the meantime I am attached to the Light Duty Coy where I do odd jobs. I took drafts to Belton Park, was on a Court Martial for instruction. I'm Orderly Dog today. Nothing tomorrow (Sunday). Some P.T. and revolver shooting on Monday, and if my application for leave comes through I go to London Tuesday till Sunday. On the Monday after I start work in earnest. Had received Pater's two reg. letters with the crosses and as I had not lost the two given me before I left had four and was going to send one to P.A. and one to Willy. On the day when I was going to send them I got the bad news of P.A. RIP. I feel rotten about the matter, but it can't be helped. All we can do now is to pray for him and me fight for him when the time comes again.

I met an old Cpl of mine this morning, one of those men I was in charge of when I went up the line for the first time. We stayed a long time talking about old times and friends gone, wounded or still giving the Germans !!!!

How has Mrs P.A. taken the shock? When I think of her my fever goes up again. How can I help it when I know that her own people have killed her son and given her this awful shock. If I could I wouldn't hesitate a moment to kill them all in cold blood, (except Mrs P.A.)

And poor John Simeon is no more, R.I.P, poor fellow. I'll never forget his ghost letters and those of his adventures in Italy. I never knew him so that's the only way I can think of him. However I'll go and fetch Mollie if you like apres la guere, and then there will be more reason for those who did not know him to think and pray for him.

If and when she does come what will happen to her Aunts? I'll go and cart them all along to Malta. I'm sure Lenny [Samut?] will help me, it will be some picnic, but we will always think of those gone to a better place than this.

Both J.S. and P.A. are now praying for us from heaven.

If I get the time I'll write after tea to conz, the Bish [Maurus Caruana?], I'm sorry he is still suffering from Xiatenica [?]. Why does he not apply for leave to come to England or go to Fort Augustus again, if only for a weekend? I'd love to see him again, and you all, naturally, but mostly him because he did such a lot to get me this job.

Must wind up now as it is tea time and I am famished. Cheerio
Fondest love to all..... from yours afftly.

Charlie

**G. 22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

9th May 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received Affy's, Helens from St G. Maudy's one from Willie's (28/4/18), May's of 12/4/18. Pater's same date. Yours 14/4/18 and Pater's 22/4/18, the one with the copy of an article in the Bassein News & Poems about Malta.

I suppose by now Agnes is a postulant at the Convent. I suppose it corresponds to my training at the J.C.O.T.C. Tell her she will find 'route marching' 'Drill' hard at first but she will get used to it and in fact get to like it. As I do. I hope the girls enjoyed their stay at St G. very much. It looks like it from the very way they all wrote about it. Paulo must have enjoyed it to with all those girls with him. He must have had a busy time, poor man, it was too much of a good thing for him.

Is that huge fat person sitting on a chair close to Laferless [Laferla?] and Drussilla and on Cissie Fallon's left side May? If so why is she sitting there like a sentry? Both she and Cissie seem to be like a Governors Guard of Honour. How can those civvy young men get photographed amongst those wounded soldiers? Dearest Mater, if I were to come to Malta I'd be having umpteen free fights every day. Especially with brother officers of the Kings Own (I don't think) Malta Militia.

Fr O'Grady looks very well. I recognise Lady Mialeif [Micallef?] Mr Borg and that's all. Mettun, Lady M. naturally.

I met a fellow here who was in hospital with me. He is my pal now. He knows a fellow in the Royal Air Force in an aerodrome close to this place and he has promised to give us a flight. However luck was against us as he was inoculated and was not allowed to fly. A friend of this fellows came to know of this so he very kindly offered to take us up. He did. My pal went up first and after about half an hour he came for me.

It was a very warm day so I only put on that head gear of theirs and gloves. I got in. Was strapped up. The engine set going and we started. We ran along the ground for about 50 yds until we got up speed of about 50 m.p.h. and started rising. The swaying was a bit rotten but by the time I started to realise I was not on terra firma he talked to me on the phone and said we were at 1000 feet up. I could see Harrowby Camp, Belton Park, Grantham etc etc, all just like doll's houses. I started to enjoy myself when he again talked to me on the phone and said:
"Are you alright?" "Yes."
"We are 2000 ft up." "Good."
"I am going to loop." "Fire away."

Our pace increased to 100 mph, a slight dive. I felt funny so I clutched hold of the seat, closed my eyes & put my head down between my knees. I felt a huge pressure on my stomach as if someone was pushing a beam into my middle trying to squeeze the inside out of me. I closed my mouth tight and said I won't and I didn't. I was sort of senseless by now. We were flying upside down and next minute we were flying nicely again.

"Are you alright?" "Yes" I murmured. We flew for a minute or two and I was ok again and enjoying it.

"Are you ready?" "Yes." I can't give the name of the stunt as it's a rude word, but we turned right around, upside down. I can't describe it exactly. I again felt as I did while looping but again recovered. The pilot was as cool as ever. He turned to look at me, smiled, looked about him as if he were sitting on an easy chair. Again I heard his voice say "Are you ready!?" "Yes." We nose dived and started spinning round toward mother earth at a terrific rate. I opened my eyes for a bit. One field came and went. Others came and went & they all seemed to be rushing toward us. I closed my eyes and waited. The pilot did something to his rudder and we were sailing horizontally again. Then we did a "switch back" business. That wasn't so bad. We flew about turning at sharp angles and playing the fool generally. I was again enjoying it. It was lovely. There was a strong wind blowing, he came up against it about yds to leeward of the landing ground at something like 150 mph then stopped the engine. We seemed to stand still for a second and then started dropping perpendicularly from a height of about 2000 ft. How the earth rushed toward us. The feeling was that we were going to crash but I had absolute confidence in the pilot. I could have gone anywhere with him. He had that in his look that tells one "He is all right. Trust him." However he started his engine again and I found we were running on the ground again.

I got out, still feeling the pressure on stomach, but a cigarette sent it completely away. My hospital friend and I invited this man to dinner. We both sort of fell in line with him. His name is Steele and he seems to be as true as steel. I don't see why we shouldn't go up again one of these days.

[Diagram of loop the loop and spiral nose dive.]

During the stunts, especially during the loop, you would think that when flying upside down you would be held up only by the belt around you. But it is not so. The speed you are going at makes you, no pins you, on to your seat. You could not fall out if you wanted to. I really did feel inclined to put in for a transfer to the RAF. But you need not worry. I love my guns too much for that. I could not leave them.

Had some photos taken of us on and near the aeroplane. Will send prints later on. I enclose snaps taken during my last leave in London. What do you think of Vera? And the Belgian girl? No 3 is a Catholic girl who works with the Belgian one in one of the London Country and West Bank Offices. Must wind up now

Cheerio dearest Mater.

PS.

Have neglected writing lately because I have been awfully busy with lectures, writing notes & FLYING!!!

**G. 22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

15th [May?] 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received yours with one from Lennie [Samut] enclosed. He is in Mesopot[amia] recovering from a touch of Malaria but will soon go back to the trenches. I wrote umpteen letters to him but he has not received one of them. I'll try sending them via Malta.

Two and a half weeks of the left wing course have rolled by. We are all looking forward to our 4 days leave. Have you received the photos I sent? Spools are very scarce. I have to send to Alnwick for them and then I only get one or two at a time. In one way it is very good because I can't spend and you know how expensive photography is, especially when you are taking girls photos. They want to be taken in umpteen positions and then want umpteen prints to be sent to all their relations and friends. Don't think I am soft and allow myself to be played about with and sponged upon. I know when to say "Halt" and then the order of "Quick March" comes when the troops have quite rested, that is when my pockets are jingling again.

Meat rations have been decreased from to 10oz to 8oz a day, but we get lots of other things so I am never hungry. We had a very interesting lecture called 'Criticism of Recent Fighting!' The lecturer told us a lot of interesting things done by our famous M.G. officers. How they volunteered to take our guns forward and cover the retreat of the Infantry and Artillery. They did it very successfully but I am sorry to say, very few returned. They were either killed or taken prisoners. But they kept the Huns back. I hear Robert has come back & have written to him asking to tell me all about our good old Malta and the Maltese. Sorry Balbi is still missing, but he may turn up yet. If the worst has happened let us hope he died sitting behind his gun while the Infantry were retiring.

Cheerio dearest Mater. Needless to say I am quite well.

Yours affectly.

Charlie.

**G 22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

1st June 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received Auntie's letter and one from Maudie, also one from Consuelo with a few snaps. Also Pater's reg. letters with photos. They are all quite good and I was very pleased with them. Have put an application offering my services to the Statran [?] Front.

Received an answer from the C.O. 2-Munster Fus. re PA.

Following is a copy:

"In reply to your letter I am afraid I cannot give you any particulars of Lt. P.A.'s death, as there is no one here who was with him at the time. He was known, however, to [have] fallen near Tetard Wood in front of Epehy and would most likely be buried in that neighbourhood by the Enemy. Hope this little information will prove of value to you."

Which all means that he died while trying to keep the Germans back during one of our raids. Whatever it is he died as a soldier ought to die and his soul went straight up to Our Lords open arms. If I am sent to Italy it will be against my will, but there will be one great satisfaction and that is I'll be doing all I can to please you.

Must cut short as it is 11.50 and I feel a bit sleepy, so Cheerio dearest Mater. Don't let the Bosche offensive worry you. There are many, many, more of us all ready to go and push him back. And what's more we will. We will wipe the floor with them all. Of course it will take time. Slowly, slowly, catch a monkey. Good night. Fondest love to all.

Charlie

**G 22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

14th June 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received a letter from Maudy dated 1/3/18 and a John Simeon letter to the Pater enclosed. I don't know why it should have taken such a long time in coming. It was posted on the 6/3/18. As you were. I have just found out the reason why. Pater forgot to put St James Sq. so it went to some other Branches of Man's Bank before it got to him. It does not matter, there was nothing important in it.

[John Simeon's letter is going to Man. He will like it very much (for him to see only)]

Went out for a Reconnaissance Scheme this morning, weather was fine and we enjoined the outing very much. It was such a change to the monotonous sitting down in lecture halls taking down notes as fast as ever you can. We do a lot of Gun Works. I like that best. We have an exam tomorrow. Immediate Action, which means what one has to do when he gets a temporary stoppage on the gun. It's a time test as well as a test on I.A. (immediate action). Some of us went for a rehearsal this afternoon. We had to remedy the stoppage of 4 guns. I did it in 1 min 48 secs and got 77 out of 80. Average time is 2 minutes. Naturally my hands were bleeding pretty fiercely by the end of it, but we take no notice of that. We also had a written exam and one of the questions was a problem to find angles. Like a fool I made use of my Trig. Geom. etc when I could have used a formula and done it in a few minutes. Consequence was that 10 minutes before time was up I had three more questions to answer. However I got the first one right. The second one right. Half of the third R. 7 2nd out in the last. Not to bad on the whole.

It's dinner time so Cheerio. Fondest love from

Charlie.

**C22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

19th June 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received Maudy's of 2nd June. I enclose results of the search for P.A.'s things. Cox-Watts, Watts & Co have all his things, engravings will be in the safe keeping of one of the two firms. Just found out that one of the fellows on my course was with the 2-Bn. Lancs. Fus. on Oct 17. That is the Regt. I was attached to on that memorable 9th Oct.17.

He did not go over the lid with us, but he said that nearly all Head Quarters were knocked out. A shell fell pretty close to them So that if I had remained with them (as ordered) I would most probably have got a harder 'hit'. But God did not want that, so He allowed my feelings to overcome my sense of duty and go with my guns.

All is for our best. The results of the last week Exams were not so good. I got 55% (minimum) from my written and 77% for my practical. The written exam was a bit stiff and we had only 3/4 hour to do it in. 60% of the course got below 55% so it was not too bad. I am quite pleased with the Italians, I do hope they'll stick to it and keep the bally Austmans [?] back.

Lots of notes to copy, so cheerio dearest Mater. Love yours affectly.

Charlie.

**C. 22 Mess
Harrowby Camp
Grantham**

7th July 1918

Dearest Mater,

No news from Malta of any kind for years. I am working a little bit, but not too hard, for our final exams this week.

I enclose some more photos. That fellow Webb is an R.C. He was converted 2 or 3 years ago and Fr. Boyle S.J. (RIP), the man we know, instructed him and received him into our religion. I am always about with him. We both went to Holy Communion this morning and are going to evening service in an hours time.

Arthur is another friend of mine .. an Irish-Welsh man. He drew a splendid caricature of me on the wall of my room. The other photos are of our squad on the Right Wing Course. All very good I think. Agnes Caruana is sending some I took of her.

We are going for an all day Tactical Scheme Stunt tomorrow on bikes. I hate Tactics because you generally get this sort of questions:

“You are Brigadier General with 3 Btns of Infantry, 2 Btns R.F.A., 1 Coy M.G.C., 1 Field Section RE. You are at such and such a place. The enemy is at such and such a place. How would you attack the enemy? What positions would you put your Arty., M.G.s and Inf. etc etc ?”

It is so absurd I think. When would we ever become Brigadiers? But I suppose they know best so we all look wise and pretend we know all about it.

We naturally all come out with the wrong solutions and get cursed for it. But we know how to take strafing nowadays. It all goes through one ear and out the other. The man who strafes us has got to do it. He does not mean what he says. The worst man for strafing is generally the best man in the Mess.

Went out night firing on Friday. It was very interesting. For the first part of the evening I was at the butts (Targets) and the sound of the bullets whining by and the thud, thud, thud, thud on the ground reminded me very much of France. We were then relieved and we started firing. Of course we had to find the proper direction and elevation with maps, compasses, clinometers etc. etc. and also remedy stoppages all in the dark.

We got back at 11.30 PM all very thirsty but as the mess was closed I had to drink some of my bath water. It wasn't too bad. Well cheerio dearest Mater. Fondest love to all from

Charlie.

4th M.G. Bn

9th August 1918

Dearest Mater,

You can write to the above address. It's my old Division and will be joining it soon. Sorry to say that my application for Italy has been a dud. Why, I can't say. I was told nothing about it. Tried getting into Willie's Bn but there were no vacancies at the time, so the next best was my old Div. and I am going to it. I'll love to see the old fellows again, Officers and men. A lot have been changed but there are still a lot left. One of my old brother officers is adjutant of the Bn. Have been at the base a very long time, i.e. 9 days. A lot of the fellows I came out with have gone up already.

Well dear Mater, I am now going up the line to finish the war. When at Church last Sunday we were saying the litany of Our Blessed Virgin and at the end and after the Regina Pacis our Padre said "Queen of Victories" I wish you would all do the same.

This can't be a long letter, dearest Mater, as I want to have my last set of tennis this morning. I'll be very busy this afternoon paying out a Coy, Confession and Holy Communion and packing up.

So I must wind up. Don't fret and worry. I am simply splendid in health and in spirit and don't forget I am in God's hands and not in the beastly Germans. Cheerio. Enjoy yourself as much as you can at St G.

Your very affect.

Charlie

4 Bn. M.G.C.

B.E.F.

13th August 1918

Dearest Mater,

Just a few lines. Saw Arthur Zammit [Samut?] yesterday. Met him at a horse show we had some way from here. He is splendid. Our Div won it lot of prizes. We did very well.

Have not been up the line yet (worse luck) but it's a question of a few days or day. Chances to got some good souvenirs too. We did very well on this part of the line and hope to go on doing so. Have not had any letters for some time now, but I suppose they are following me.

Have got quite used to shelling again and I slept through bombardments of ours and explosions of Jerries shells.

Met my old brother officers and my section sergeants. The two who came over the top with me. Had along chat with one who bandaged me.

Cheerio Yours Affectt.

Charlie

4 Bn M.G.C.

26th August 1918

EXCUSE HASTE

What do you think of the news now. Didn't I tell you that I had come over to finish the war? Zio Fonsu prophesied that it would be over before Xmas. I can't let him down so the war will end before Xmas.

We too are going to have a splendid time finishing it. I am afraid you will have to buy a house in Sliema and I'll furnish it with souvenirs.

We have had two strenuous days. The first was Saturday (24th) morning when we left our Coy. HQ. at 4.30 am . We got to our destination at about midday. I was billeted in a Convent. A lovely clean place and the 'civilian nuns' were very nice to us.

Our mess was in a splendid little house. The people were very nice and kind to us. There was a fruit garden. (I ate more than was good for me, and I was a bit more than a jar). However everything was as good as could be. In the afternoon I went to lie down and dropped off to sleep. At about 4.30 the 2nd in Com. came in and said " Get ready to move off at 6 PM."

We did not know our destination. So we got prepared for war again. However we sent our valises etc at 6 and we got orders to leave next morning at about 4.30. We had a lovely dinner out in the open under a "[commungatta](#)" of vines. It was a lovely clear evening. Flowers all about the place and nice "[langious](#)" plums, apples, etc all around and all very inviting. There was a Church close by and the bells were ringing the 'Ave Maria'. I can't describe it all. Only we appreciated it more than that and we were going away.

Early to bed, soft springy and clean but with war clothes and atmosphere. At 4.30 we woke up and left at 5.30.

We marched that day until 5 PM. with no food, a hot, burning sun and heavy packs. As soon as we got to our destination we (Officers) had to see to the men's billets and comforts. So by the time everything was over it was 6 P.M.

A kind old French lady had pity on us and gave us some coffee. I never tasted anything better. We washed and changed and then had dinner at 8.

We had some rotten wine but it tasted and went down “[asel](#)”. This did not improve my happiness.

However I slept as I never slept before and woke up this morning as fresh as it daisy and fit and ready for anything and anyone.

We don't know how long we will stay here and why we came here. All we want is to get in touch with the Bosche again. We are doing splendidly and we are going to do better.

Re my promotion. I get my second pip after 18 months commissioned service.

Can you send me some tobacco please. The Malta stuff has always been very good. It's a bit scarce at present here. Dearest Mater, take away from your mind the idea that I am delicate and with a weak constitution. I have been on Route Marches when huge strapping young men fell out. *I have never fallen out. My weak health has never troubled me a bit.* I may be thin but that does not mean that I am not stronger.

I don't pray for peace but I pray that we may beat the Bosche.

Cheerio yours very affectly.

Charlie

4th M.G.C

10th September 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received Pater's from St G's, the one he wrote when he had a tooth ache. I hope by now you would have received a wire from Man telling you that I have been alright. I also hope you did not worry about me as I did not write but I repeat that I absolutely could not. You have only to thank Jerry for it, and I have been thanking him with bullets all this time. Tell P.A. people I have got some of our own back but not quite enough yet. There are many more Germans to answer for it. If I fail it won't be my fault.

We are resting now in a small French village but we are training hard as usual. It's a job I don't like. I much prefer being up the line. However we will soon go in again, at least I hope so. I have got a lovely billet. It's very comfortable but the people become too familiar. My room happens to be next to another in which the whole family lives and they have to go through my room to go out, so there is a passage continuing at all hours. They don't knock or give any warning, but there are no young girls so it's all right. There is a little three year old kid who insists on fiddling with my gear. Last time I was hard at work on a piece of Bosche M.G. An intricate piece of machinery. There are lots of screws about and the blessed kid came in and knocked everything down. I nearly said blow twice. However I got the better of lock [that?] part of Bosche M.G. and assembled it. You will see it when I get back. When on the line I was fiddling with a Bosche Subre [?] Pistol and that went off. I was ready for it and the bullet buried itself in the valley of the dugout in front. However I got the better of that too. I hear that you can send Bosche steel hats abroad so I will do so as soon as I can get a good one. It will most probably arrive in a sand bag.

Many thanks for the 3 pound you sent me. It was very welcome. Such presents are always very acceptable, but don't bother. I am not hard up and they may be more useful to you in Malta.

I am running a section on my own now and I am quite accustomed to giving a few short lectures. I already hate the work. I take after Pater in that line.

Cheerio Yours affect.

Charlie

4th Bn. M.G.C.

16th September 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received lots of Pater's letters via Man, Base, Direct. I forgot to mention that some time ago I told Man to buy me a watch with Pater's money. My old one had its winding apparatus out of order and I sent it back to the A&N Stores for repairs. In the meantime I could not go over the top without one so I had to ask Man to get me one. It cost about two guineas I believe.

I also received cigarettes via Man and straight here. They are splendid and liked by nearly everyone. The first day they arrived I smoked 20 consecutively. They were splendid. Tell the Pater he need not be afraid to treat his pipe roughly. Those Dunhill pipes are as strong as ever. I also carry mine in my pocket through thick and thin, sleep on it, sit on it, etc etc. and still it's as strong as ever. Once you start smoking them you won't smoke any other. So if perchance he loses it tell him to let me know and I'll spend another 15/- on him. It's not extravagance. Dearest Mater, its a question of 'casting pearls before swine' if you don't get one. So pleased to hear that you are at St G's, after all it's the place no doubt about it.

Nowadays Bosche prisoners when passing through our lines say tauntingly "Finish war for me. You go back and I go to England." We stood this for some time but not for long. One time one of our sections was going up the line and they came across some Jerries coming back all on their own. They very rarely have escorts as they never escape. They know too well how they are treated. On this occasion two of them got in the way of the section and started laughing and gabbling away in German. The sec. officer who is a huge strapping 6 ft man struck one of them on the nose and the fellow fell on one side of the street. He then kicked the other fellow on his and he could not walk for some time. Another incident was in a train. Two trains...one going up the line with Yanks and the other going down the line with Jerries. Carriages of trains are cattle trucks. The Germans started the usual sentence "Finish war for me etc" and laughed loudly. The Yanks got out and went for them. There wasn't a single Boche standing when they had finished with them. Another time in a train a Jerry looked out and said to one of our boys: "finish war for me". "Is it?" said our boy hurling a tin of bully beef at the Jerry and hitting him full in the face. That Jerry did not speak like that again.

Once there was a battery of M.G. and some prisoners were coming back. They passed about 30 feet away and started laughing at our boys. One M.G. rang out. The escorts went back for some more prisoners and a burying party was seen hard at work on the roadside. Etc...etc...

So you see, dearest Mater, that the Germans are beaten. We can now start guessing as to whether the war will end before or after Xmas next.

Zio Fonsu was quite right after all in his prophesy. We are still resting and training hard.

Dearest Mater you are always fretting and worrying about me. DON'T. I am alright and doing well. You can easily see that by reading my letters. Must wind up now.

Cheerio your affect.

Charlie

20th September 1918

Dearest Mater

Have not received any letters for some time, but its because we have been on the move lately so all the mail is following us.

I am up the line again but it's quite cushy here and as I went over the top the last time so I am now at Coy H.Q. and not right up with the guns Bon Aye!?!

It's very exciting watching the Jerry come over and try to knock out our Balloons. There is one close by here and a few hours ago 3 Jerry aeroplanes dropped from the sky somewhere and went for it. Instantly our Archies (anti aircraft) opened fire on them. However the occupants from the balloon jumped out in their parachutes. It's rotten dropping the first 100 feet or so until the parachute opens out.

The poor observers kept twisting around and around until the thing opened and then they dropped quietly down. In the meantime ten of our planes came up as if from nowhere and chased the Jerries back to their lines. We then went out to see how our boys had fared in the decent. One fellow was a bit stunned because he was dragged but there was nothing wrong about him. He was calmly smoking a cigarette when we got to him and smilingly said "The last three times I've been up I have had to jump out!"

It was quite a casual remark, same as a fellow would have said if he had dropped a pencil three times. The balloon was not hit. Of course some of our boys are doing the same to Jerries balloons and with our glasses we watch the balloons burn and come down in flames. No other news.

Yours etc

Charlie

22nd September 1918

Dearest Mater,

Things are going on very well with us. We are cheerful and as happy as ever. Fritz has tried to counter attack and strongly too, but with absolutely no success. We have got him under our thumb. Serves him jolly well right. Willie [Parnis] is by now having a good leave but he misses Helen very much. However I don't think the day is far off when they will meet again and get married. A happy couple they will be.

I saw a lovely sight yesterday. Ten of our boys tackled ten Jerries in the air. All we could hear was the rattle of 20 or more M.G.'s firing away at each other for all they were worth and the aeroplanes flying around and around each other like wasps. They spread all over the sky in couples or fours. Finally our fellows sent one down out of control and set another on fire. Then quietly came back as if nothing had happened. We are Jerries masters in the air, on the earth, on the sea and under the sea. The phonograph is now playing the Hungarian Rhapsody so I can't write any more. I can imagine Agnes playing it on the piano with her left (I think) shoulder up in the air. Good old Agnes.

Cheerio Yours affect.

Charlie.

30th September 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received yours, May's and Auntie's. Many, many thanks. Keep smiling we are getting on splendidly and remember Zio Fonsu's prophesy "WAR OVER BY X-MASS". I quite believe it at the rate we are going. This sort of fighting is grand. In this last stunt we (M.G.C.) did not have one casualty, so you need not worry about me, I'll get through alright.

We are at present having a two-day rest and living in the remains of houses. They are naturally empty and with no doors or windows. We make fires with them. Our men live in the cellars of French Chateaus. Today the owner came to see its remains. Poor fellow! Mater dear, just imagine Rocklands or [Villa] Betharram with huge shell holes in the walls and roof. No doors. No windows to speak about. Empty inside. Rats, mud and dirt all over. All the walls falling in and soldiers living there making fires with Chestnut Antiporta. Wouldn't that make you wild? Wouldn't you feel like catching a hold of something and going for the Germans? That's how we all feel and that's what we are doing. Wouldn't you then feel proud to know that your hands are red with their blood? That's how we feel too. We sometimes get to the remains of villages and start excavating, not for hippopotami or deer, etc but for cellars and there we find the remains of French women. The allies very rarely shell villages but as we capture it you'll see Jerry's shells falling near the Church until it is down, then the rest of the village follows suit. Don't you feel like cursing them? We feel like it and do it too. Imagine St John's at Valletta and all our fine churches tumbling down. But strange to say you never see a crucifix down. It stands over everything. It sort of shows the Germans and bad people that there is a God whom they can't knock down. There was once a crucifix standing right in the front line where everything was lying flat, trees and all.

A few days ago I saw the remains of a Chapel and I went in. Everything was broken. Altar rails twisted all over the place, the corners & edges of the altar were broken. But the empty Tabernacle was untouched.

So, dearest Mater, we enjoy strafing and bullying the Bosche.

Yours Afftly.

Charlie

4th M.G.C.

2nd October 1918

Dearest Mater,

What about news now Aye!? Isn't Victory staring us in the face? Haven't we beaten the Beastly Germans hollow? We will make him lick the ground we tread on, the curs!

We are still resting and all longing to go back and push him further back. Now that the Bulgarians are out of it, Rumania will come to life again. Turkey will be next to surrender. Austria will follow and Germany won't surrender. It will be crushed by us.

My Div. is a regular one, so when the Germans will have been crushed we will be sent to occupy strategical positions, most probably in Germany. Bon Aye? I think one is then justified and allowed to swank and we will do it. For myself I will shoot a German if he even dares look at me. I can't write about all these things. I'm too excited and happy.

I forgot to enclose the enclosed Tom's letters. Give it to him will you please. I also enclose a letter sent me by a mother of a boy who was killed on 2nd of September when we went over the top together.

I also sent a Bosche Steel Hat in a sand bag a few days ago. I hope it shan't be stolen.

I don't know if I have acknowledged the following:- yours of 11/9/18 & 3/9/18. Pater's of 15 and Agnes's of [?] (typewritten) May's of 3rd Sept. I'll write to Agnes and May later on.

No more news from this particular spot. We are only moving everything forward after retreating Jerry. Don't Forget Zio Fonsu's prophesy.

Yours Affly

Charlie

4th Bn M.G.C

10th October 1918

Dearest Mater,

Many thanks for yours of 22/9/18, Pater's of 19/9/18 + 22/9/18 also for socks, baccy and papers. It is really rotten about poor Dr Galezia. As soon as I heard what he died of I said to myself "I'm sure it's due to his starvation stunt". However God willed it.

This can't be a long letter as we are busy moving about all over France. It's only natural. We can't see Jerry for dust. What about President Wilson's reply? Bon Aye? We are at present at rest and yesterday we had a 'field day'. How different to real warfare. But we enjoyed it very much, especially me who rode a horse all day. It was grand.

Don't worry, dearest Mater. I am all right and so are the Allies. Not so with the Germans. They are beaten and will give in soon.

Cheerio

Charlie

4th Bn M.G.C.

13th October 1918

Dearest Mater,

Isn't rotten that the War is nearly over. But all the same we are getting some splendid sport. These last three days we have advanced miles and miles. Jerry has made some very good stands and counter attacks. But it's futile. Nothing can stop us now. We have millions of men. They keep flowing in daily.

The Pater knows what Piccadilly Circus was like before the war with regards to traffic, but it's a mere nothing compared to what it is like here now. Streams of lorries, guns, cavalry, infantry supply wagons, timber, cyclists, etc etc all day long and also at night time. You then see a stream of prisoners trying to go against the current. Oh it's good! Our sails aright up [?]. Our men often advance mile after mile without seeing anything of Jerry. Then he comes as if from nowhere with Tanks etc. but as I said before, its futile. Our men seem to have the very devil in them.

Naturally all kinds of rumours are flying about. The latest are that the Kaiser has abdicated and that there is a new parliament sitting who are in favour of an unconditional surrender and the evacuation from France and Belgium etc etc. We spread our tents building castles in the air.

I have not had a bath for about a month. We sleep in any old cellar or house and on any bed so we are all absolutely crawling, but that is quite a trifling matter. The number of French Villages I've been to lately runs into hundreds. We are in territory that has been in German hands since 1914 so our spirits go up higher than ever. Poor Jerry!

Yesterday some of our cavalry patrols came across two Bosche lorries full of Tommies going up to what they thought was their lines They were made to drive on and passed along the roads here to the P.O.W. (prisoner of war) cage.

Our artillery is splendid. They are never far behind us and are pounding away for all they're worth. Ammunition has no limit. It keeps on coming up, tons and tons of it.

Poor Jerry leaves two or three batteries firing like mad all over the place, to make believe that there are lots here while the rest run away. Poor Jerry. He is absolutely beat.

Après la guerre (soon) the men will start getting demobilised according to their trade, i.e. trades that are most badly wanted will go first, such as miners etc. The British Army will most probably stay in France for a bit. The regulars will be given a couple of months leave and then go to replace Territorials in India etc. Some of us will have to go to Germany for a triumphant march through Berlin, some will stay there. So my future is more obscure than ever. It's now that my critical moment comes. I think I'll put an application for the Indian Army, but I have not quite decided yet. I sent you a field PC saying I was not writing for some time. I thought I would not be able to. But things have changed. However if I don't write don't worry about me. I'll be all right. It is because we can't send of letters from where we will be. I'll always do my best to write. I was quite close to Willie [Parnis] yesterday. I did not exactly know his whereabouts and we are waiting for orders to move off at any moment.

Must wind up. Keep up your spirits, dearest Mater, I am all right and enjoying it, and for all I know peace may have been declared by the time you get this. Love to all. Yours affectly.

Charlie.

NB. I had raw onions for lunch today. They were grand.

4th Bn M.G.C.

15th October 1918

Dearest Pater,

Received yours of 2/x/18 yesterday. Now that we are always moving about mails are very irregular, but they always turn up somehow. I am very sorry you got hardly any sailing cond. at St G. but never mind we will get lots of it when I'll come back and we'll make up for all this lost time. What do you think of motor bikes now that you have been on the side car of one? Bon Aye? .

Has Freddie received the letter I sent a couple of months ago? Johnny can ask him the first time he sees him.

I got the baccy right enough and am now enjoying a lovely pipe full of it.

Any old baccy suits me. I smoke whatever I can get. There have been times when I smoked shag. The best is medium strength of anything. The cigs were fine and any donation in that line (baccy) is always very welcome to yours truly. It's hard luck for Helen, but all is for the best. Willie [Parnis] will come for good and not for a month, so it is worthwhile waiting a few days more.

The Editor of the Herald is not at all humorous and that joke of Sant Cassia would have been ideal had he only been out here; but I don't think it is up to him to make that joke, he being in Khaki and in MALTA. Still it was a good snub!

I was reading the MALTA and as I was looking at the telegrams I saw the word DUMPS in Italics. It seems poor old Mizzi must have run through all the blessed Dictionaries he could lay his hands on and could not find the word. Naturally it's a war time word. It can either be used as a verb or a noun. It means: (noun) = a store, pile, 'magazine' etc. (Verb) = to make a pile, store, etc or to throw away some of the stuff you have on you while going up the line to lighten ones weight. (For Mizzi's information).

Yesterday our Division General [Maj. Gen Louis James Lipsett] was killed. He was out reconnoitring and 'sight seeing' with our Colonel (4th M.G.C.) when some beastly German sniper saw him and shot him. The German line is now practically held by M. Guns. He's got thousands of them and as it is all open country he gets some good targets. All the same it does not make any difference. We are still advancing.

We are all anxiously expecting news of the Armistice. For all I know my next letter will be from the Frontier. And where is the Kaiser? What is happening in Germany? These and many other questions are being daily asked in the Mess and we all attempt giving answers, but no one really knows. All we know for certain is that Germany is at its last gasp and we are going to put it out of its pain as soon as possible like good Christians.

This morning we saw two lorry loads of civilians (French) going DOWN the line. They had just been released by the Germans. I've never seen a happier crowd.

I am still thinking and trying to make up my mind with regards me after the war. I think it will be the Army, Imperial or Indian. If there is an Indian M.G.C. I'll go there like a shot. But there is lots of time yet as it will take months to demobilise the Army.

I've actually spent two nights in this place and from the look of things I'll be sleeping here again tonight.

In a big French Town we captured lately we found the Cure and three civilians. During the time the Germans were there they dug a secret tunnel and as soon as they found out that the Bosche were evacuating the place they got into it and came out when our Boys were in. The rest of the civilians were taken away.

This morning a piano was being shifted by an orderly and the whole house blew up. Lots of these booby traps about. But don't worry about me. I touch as few things as possible and when I have to I look at them from all directions and examine them carefully. You might get this in peacetime so Cheerio

Yours affecty.

Charlie

29th October 1918

Dearest Mater,

I am very bon. Just received a letter from Auntie and one from Maude. Will answer them soon. Jerry is still going East and we are close on his heels pinching prisoners and tons of souvenirs. My valise is getting heavier and heavier. I'll soon have to dump some of my clothes to make room for more souvenirs.

I sent another Bosche Hat with a Bosche Cap inside. The Cap is a bit gory. All the better, says I.

I've got a lovely little Automatic Mauser Pistol.

Poor Jerry will soon be out of France. Then out of Belgium. Then right into Germany.

We are having a few hours rest and will go in to fight or chase again. Had a bath and a change after two weeks continuous fighting in mud.

I've had no startling adventures lately and no narrow shaves. But lots of time for a few more.

Cheerio. Yours affctly.

Charlie

3rd November 1918

Dearest Mater,

Received yours and May's. So pleased to hear that Pater is feeling OK again. You must have felt a bit worried about them, but there was no need. "[Ta Asphar andum Adina taiba](#)". They can stand a lot. Received fags, tobacco, and a letter from Tom. All today and all welcome.

In my last letter to Auntie S. I said I was going in for a fray. I have been in and enjoyed myself very much and am now out again. We pushed Jerry further back and in two days captured about 5,000 prisoners.

One morning, the first, I saw a bantam Scotchman, hatless with his arm in a sling, dirty and gory but with a huge grin of satisfaction on his face. Behind him a batch of about 100 Jerries. All in fours with a look of submission on their faces.

It was comic! We cheered him as he led his party through our batteries. They are giving themselves up in hundreds. That morning Jerry counter attacked. He came in great force and used tanks. One of our 18 pounders came right up. Knocked one tank out in the first shot. The rest retired. But the Germans came on. The Inf. retired on our flanks, but we formed up a line. The Jerries had to cross a valley. They never did. Next morning they had all retired. It was all a Chinese attack. They found we were advancing too much.

I've got more souvenirs. I enclose an Iron Cross Ribbon and a message I sent to my Coy. Com. when Jerry was coming over. On the back is his answer. I've got a lovely Bosche Automatic Mauser Pistol. That's 4 I've got. All of different kinds and sizes.

Met Willie [Parnis] this morning. We had a good long chat. He's staying quite close to me and we ought to see a lot of each other if things go on well.

It must feel safe now that there are no more Submarines in the Mediterranean. Letters ought to get to you more often. Isn't news good? Germany left all by itself. Don't worry. Leave her to us. She's in safe hands and we can manage her all right. Shouldn't be at all surprised if I'll be writing from the German frontier soon. Bon Aye?

I feel awfully tired today. Last night we marched from 21:00 to 03:00 then again from 10:30 to 12:30. My feet are a bit swollen but that is all.

I've lost my good old Dunhill pipe but I've got a huge cheap one now and I'm smoking some of Pater's tobacco. It's fine.

Received a parcel from Mabs today. A huge lovely cake and box of very good chocolates. It's a treat to eat delicacies like that after bully beef. Will write again sometime tomorrow if nothing happens.

In a village we captured yesterday morning we found 4 women and three men. They had stuck it out during two bombardments. One terrific one from us and one gassy one from Jerry. Brave people some of these French people are.

Cheerio,

Charlie

12th November 1918

Well, what about IT now Aye? Fighting is over and both your future son in law [Willie Parnis] and son alive and kicking. After this you must never even think of worrying about anything: the worst is over and there is nothing but sunshine in view.

I shan't be able to come to you for the present. I've got to see a bit more of the World before. Some time in Germany. Aye What !?!?

We are still moving Eastwards. Its always new country, new surroundings, new beds and new faces. I don't think we are yet allowed to say where we are so its sufficient for you to know that I am close to the Belgium frontier in a little town and living in one of its 'Chateaus'. The rooms are bare and lofty and cold at night, but not as cold as sleeping out in the open. The place has a few huge shell holes in it, but the greater part of it is OK.

We moved into the village yesterday and I was billeting officer. So I left at 9 AM on a bike with two men and we started on a 15 mile ride. The only event was that when about 3 miles from our destination my bike had a side slip on the muddy and shell holed roads. The pedal snapped off and yours truly landed on his legs and nothing happened to him. My training from Sliema to B'Bgia [Birzebbuga] on a bike came in useful. I rode the good bike and pulled my orderly on the broken one.

On arrival I took possession of the Chateau then started searching for billets. I started knocking at every door with the same old questions. "Bonjour Madam. Avez vous plas pour soldat cuche ici?" They all insisted on giving me coffee (which was very welcome) and told me all about the time they had under the German yoke. One old man of over 60 who was suffering from rheumatism wanted to sleep on a cold floor while the boys slept in his bed. They wanted them to sleep 5 or 6 to the room with the whole family. They gave us all coffee and would take no payment. One young girl, very good looking, talked to me for half an hour. She told me how the Germans used to make them get out of bed and sleep on the floor while they slept in the beds. How they used to make them cook their meals and clean their stuff. In other words they used them as their slaves. This young girl told me how badly our prisoners were treated and fed. They were altogether in a big room all hungry and dirty. The French civilians used to give them some of their scanty food and give them soap to wash themselves. My blood boiled and to tell you the truth I was sorry all was over and I would not have any chance to kill those swine. There may be peace between the nations but never between me and any living Germans. But they are beaten and crushed and I am proud to say that I am with the victorious army and that my hands are stained with their blood. I am proud of it and would not have missed it for anything.

I went into one house and found an old lady ill in bed and 3 others as old around her. They asked me if it was true that the fighting was over. I said it was and yet their faces kept that sullen, sorrowful expression. I was surprised and asked the reason why. They said that they each had 2 or 3 sons prisoners in German hands. I then gave them the good news that all prisoners, civilian and military, were to be repatriated "tut suit" and then the prisoners in our lands were to stay where they are. That cheered them up.

Have to stop here as I have to go and pay out the Coy. Just as I was finishing a runner from the 7th Btl. of the S. Staffs came with a note for me and to my surprise I found a note from Charlie Muscat. He was in another Chateau about 100 yds up the road. He was going up with some other officers and men looking [?] his Btl. They were very short of rations so I brought him to have dinner with us. We had a long chat afterwards and we said goodbye to each other at about 11.30 PM or rather 23:30.

We started the educational scheme today and I offered my services to teach Italian, but luckily no one wanted to learn it so I am helping in the French and German classes. I know nothing about these two languages but with ignorant men one can learn things and then teach it to them.

My commanding officer was very keen on having an Iron Cross so I gave him mine. Hope I'll be able to scrounge another from somewhere else.

We got the news this morning that we are now allowed to say in our letters where we are etc. and to use cameras. So for your information I am in a little village south of the Valenciennes called Saultain. We also leave here any day for a march to the Rhine. Bon Aye!!??

We got the news that the Armistice was signed on the night of the 11th at about 9 PM. or rather 21:00. The message was intercepted by our wireless and messages sent out to all Coys.

It came so suddenly that we took some time to realise what had happened. The men took less time. Our band came out playing the Marseillaise and God Save the King and started marching through the Village of Avesnes le Sec. We started throwing up Very lights and singing. Aeroplanes came over burning huge lights and we were all as cheerful and as happy as could be.

I think I forgot to mention that I received the cigs, the large Aristocrat ones. They are very bon and are very much liked by everyone. I also received some more of those you sent via Man. He is sending them on to me gradually. Tobacco is always very very welcome. I enjoy it immensely.

Weather is getting very cold, especially at night time when everything starts freezing. The rotten part of it is that we have no glass in our windows. But still that does not disturb our sleep. It's better than sleeping in muddy trenches or shelters.

Aren't the peace terms Bon? We have got Germany under our heel now.... and we are going to keep it there too. The owners of the Chateau came today and they were a bit cut up with what they found, i.e. bare walls and shell holes. But they took it very well. German Flying Corp people used to live here and the old girl told us that they used to get drunk every night and then start fooling around with revolvers shooting at the ceiling and huge looking glass.

Post is going so ...

Charlie

5 M.G.C.
Rhine

14th July 1919

Dearest Mater,

Here I am back at Cologne. The Bn. has been up the line and down again and back to our old billets. The place is the same as usual. It has not changed a bit. Of course we are now allowed to fraternise but we are urged not to do it. In fact you only [see] Tommies 'arming' girls about. Peace may have been signed in paper but neither they nor we can quite get over the chasm there between us. It will take some time before we'll be pals again.

Have not been yet able to find out where Willie [Parnis] is exactly but have written to him and if it is possible we will meet in a few days time. It's been raining here last two days, but at least it's not as hot as it is in Malta.

It's teatime and I feel very hungry so Cheerio.

Love Charlie

P.T.O. Received three letter from Pater, 1 from May, 1 from Tom and some others from England. They have been waiting here for me for some time. Sahha

6th August 1919

[Dearest Mater?]

We celebrated the 4th August very well out here. The 1st American Div. had a circus in which we saw wild animals, gymnasts, acrobats, clowns, cowboys, Indians, rough rides, etc etc. Dramatis Personae = 200. There were thousands of spectators for both matinees and evening performances of 4 successive nights. As an advert the entire troop used to go about the town in their fancy costumes and with their band.

We are now having a torchlight tattoo, bands, fireworks etc It's simply gorgeous. Imagine a lovely green field as large as the Marsa and all rigged up like an Arena. Four huge searchlights at the corners and two huge stands, one for officers and friends and the other for a massed band.

Four regiments come into the field with a line of men with torches on their flanks, bands playing all the time. They then give the Royal Salute and the four searchlights are fixed on a huge Union Jack. 'Last Posts' are sounded and then there is a torchlight display by the 3rd M.G.C. After that 'Lights Out' is sounded and everything is in darkness. Suddenly thousands of rockets of all colours are fired from all around and the heavens are lit up with balls of fire. Feeling was something like a barrage therefore grand. Thousands of spectators, mostly Army but lots of civvies. I'd like to know what they felt like. That day five years ago they had set out to "conquer the World !!" Thousands and thousands of pounds were spent. But it was worth it. In about a week's time we are going to march past as a corps! It will be SOME SHOW. Coming to see it? Lots of room for you all.

I'm going to take up tennis again so I've started by buying a racquet (125 marks). Later on I'll buy flannels, shirts and shoes. Racquet is not too bad for the price but nothing like a good old Holden .

We (officers) played the N.C.O.s at football on Monday last. We were losing the first half by one to nil until your son, with a huge stroke of luck scored the only two goals for the Officers who won the day!

Cheerio. Fondly

Charlie

18th August 1919

Dearest Mater,

Had a most glorious review this morning. The V1 Corps and a Div. of Cavalry took part. Over 20,000 men. All for Winnie [Winston] Churchill, Sir Henry Williams (Field Marshal) and the Army Council. We left the Barracks at 7.30 and did not get back until 3 P.M. Willie's Bn. must have been there but I did not see him.

When all the big boys were inspecting the 3rd M.G.C. Sir William Robertson turned to Churchill and said. "This is a dam fine Battalion. Its the best M.G. Bn I've ever seen." So Churchill shook hands with our Colonel and then Sir Henry Williamson had a few words with our old man who was very bucked. I believe there were people cinemaring us, so in 1056 [?] you might see the show on the screen.

It was a very hot and dusty day so you can imagine the state we were in when we arrived. We had dinner at 3.30, tea at 5 and supper at 6.30. After a hot bath I feel as fit as a fiddle.

We are having our Bn. Sports next Thursday. It's going to be a good show and I'm sports officer for the Coy so I'm up to my nose in work.

No news from Sister Dickie's Sister yet. I've written as I can't go to Duren.

Cheerio

Charlie

P.S. Stick to the same old address.

30th August 1919

I'll be leaving Cologne on Monday and going to a little place called DROVER quiet close to DUREN. Don't exactly know what I'm going there for but its got something to do with the rifle ranges and firing. I'll tell you more about it when I get there. Staying there for a couple of weeks.

DUREN as you know is the place where Sister Dickey's sister lives so I'll be able to go personally and see how they are. I've received no answer to my letter I sent her three weeks ago.

Went to KONIGSFORST to see Willie [Parnis]. We had dinner together but could not speak much about Helen [Asphar] as there was another officer with us. When with Willie that's the main topic of conversation. I'm sure he dreams of her every night. But now all will soon be well. I suppose they'll grant him leave all right.

Wish we could see into the future a bit! We are always wondering what is going to happen to us in a few months time when they start kicking us out of the army. There are many in the same boat as me. Off course I may be lucky and get sent out to India (Molly will you come?) or to some other part of the world. But everything is as vague as ever. One can't see 2 inches in front of his nose. We will keep on making fun of everything so we are now talking about becoming tram conductors or railway porters or waiters or postmen or re-enlisting in the Imp. Army as a Pte or in the Canadian Army with 12/- a day. Personally I would not mind one of those jobs for a short time. It does one a lot of good, especially in these democratic or shall I say Bolshevik times.

Hope there is lots of fun and adventure in store for me.

Cheerio.... tons of the best

Charlie

**Machine Gun School
British Army of the Rhine**

3rd September 1920

Dearest Mater,

I am at the above for a couple of weeks. 1st week preparing for the 2nd week when the Shooting Competition will come off.

We are out on top of a hill, most gorgeous country and the weather absolutely fine. Therefore I'm feeling as fit as ever and quite happy.

Next [Went?] to Duren yesterday. Can't say I liked the place. It's as bad as Malta, nearly!!! This afternoon my friend and I are going for a walk into the country. My friend is an officer from the 3rd Bn. He is also an RC, so we get on very well together.

Next week will be a busy one at the firing Points or Butts all day doing umpiring and seeing to the scoring and patching up of targets.

Don't write to the above address. Stick to the old one.

Received your written in pencil and note from Pater. "[Tanki Sher](#)" (Don't know how it's spelt). [Danke Schon?]

It's a lovely day. Love to all

Charlie

**Machine Gun School,
British Army of the Rhine**

8th September 1919

Dearest Pater,

In a few weeks time I might find myself in England as a demobilised Officer. This is the reason: They are reducing the Army. They are going to say to some of us: "You can go now. Thank you". As for as finding jobs for us I was always under the impression that they did so. But I find out that that only refers to Ptes. [Privates]

Ref: Reg. Army. At present they don't know how many they'll want. But if one puts in for it he can be demobbed and if admitted into the Reg. Army will be sent for. I take it for granted that will apply to us as well. I mean to say for those who are forcibly demobbed. The strength of Officers per Coy is going to be 7 instead of 11. That is that 4 will have to go. Am I going to be one of the 4? Efficiency and long service count.

Any news of what the Bish had to do?

Just to be prepared for the worst if I go out I won't come to Malta, at least not for the present. Reasons being: I'll be close at hand in case I'll be ultimately wanted and if not it'll be easier to find a job.

Ref: Money I have about 70 pounds at Holts. About 80 pounds invested in War Savings (Blood Money) and then there will be the War Gratuity. About 130 pounds. That ought to carry me on until I'm finally fixed up.

However everything is still in the air. I'll let you know as soon as possible what shape things are going to take. Hope I've explained myself properly.

Perchance you hear of someone wanting a person with my qualities let me know about it. But don't forget I'd rather be a Tram Conductor than have a job in an office where you sit down all day.

Needless to say you must not worry about me. I can look after myself all right. I may have to rough it a bit at first but that will only do me good. So whatever happens will be good. I wait and see. .

Went to see Aix la Chappelle last Saturday. We spent the night there but had to come back on Sunday without any lunch. The 200 marks we took with us did not carry us very far, (2 of us). But we got our moneys worth.

Love to all

Charlie

P.S. No letters for some time. I sent parcel some time ago. Pair of old breeches and inside a shell case and a German bomb which is quite safe. It hasn't a grain of explosive inside it. Emptied it myself.