

1.
2127 Pte G. L. Sherwood
E Company, 1st Herts. Regt
British Expeditionary Force.

Dear Sir

Just a line to thank you for your kindness and parcel which I received quite safe. The belts and socks will be very handy as we have not had any yet. I have given a belt and pair of socks to Jack the others I gave to Pte H Noon another Norton lad. Sorry I could not give them to Bill Johnson as poor chap he is missing we think he is buried alive. I was one of the party who when night fell had to go and get out the dead and wound but we could not find anything of Billy and one or two other fellows. It was not a very nice job to walk about outside of the trenches helping to lift dead mates while the Germans where firing and up to one's knees in mud I can assure you but we don't take any notice about ourselves glad to help others. All the time we have been in the trenches it as either rained or been snowing we are having rough weather and very cold there is not much room in the trench as one as to keep low so we cannot move about much to keep ourselves warm still we makes the best of it. Thank God I have came out safe and sound I think I have been lucky as I was right close where the shells where bursting that is all we hear all day and night shells bursting and bullets whistling about our heads then perhaps one shell will drop and blowing in the trench kills or buries the chaps in it. Now I am able to tell you we have got out of the thick of it to have a rest I think we need it as we are about all done up with one thing or another such as frost bitten feet. Now I think I must draw to close thank you again for your kindness Jack and Noon tell me to thank you for them also. It seemed quite nice to hear from old folks at home and cheering as well. Now I will say goodbye for the present hoping for a safe return home some day. I remain your friend.

G. L. Sherwood

2.
Pte C Reed
1st Bedfords
Ward No. 5
Ancoats Hospital
Manchester

19/10/1916

Dear Sir

I am writing a few lines to thank you for the 18 eggs which Mrs Armishaw sent me, she told me you had given her them to send to me and that they were collected at Harvest Thanksgiving for wounded soldiers. Well I ought to be asleep they gave me some morphia a few hours ago to ease the pain and sent me to sleep but as they are operating on me tomorrow I thought I must write a few lines somehow today. Very pleased my pal Arthur has got some too. I hope I shall be better after my operation tomorrow I have had an awfull time lately. Well I must close thanking you again very much

I am yours sincerely

Pte A C Reed

3.

177 Common View, Letchworth, Herts.

Aug 10th 1918

Dear Sir

I know you are always anxious to know something about the soldiers which are serving their country in your parish, so I thought perhaps you might like a copy of the letter which I received from my husband yesterday after not hearing from him for a fortnight. It is the most beautiful letter I have received from him since he has been across the water, so I thought you might like to have it. In it he also says he has heard from Mr Barber and is still quite well and safe and writes very cheerful.

I remain your obediently

Esther Rock

Pte E S Rock

D Company, 16 Platoon

1/6 Royal Highlanders (Black Watch),

B. E. F., France

Before doing any telling of what I have been through the last ten days, I must humbly and heartily thank God for bringing me out of the terrible fighting safely which has been going on and I want you to do the same as it is a miracle that I am alive and safe and well and not wounded.

We went over the top on the 20th July after riding 28 hours in a cattle truck and then 8 hours on a motor lorry we have not had our clothes off since we left our last camp for this part of the line. We went over the top again on 27 and again on 28th July making three times in eight days. We lost a good many on the first time and a few on the second but the third which was the Sunday 28th was the worse and the regiment has come out only about 200 strong out of 600. My Gun Section of twelve only 2 or us are left. I saw four wounded in 5 minutes and I was only about a yard away from them,. A small piece of shrapnel struck me on the chin but only making a small scratch which has entirely disappeared by now and we are on our way to somewhere unknown to make up the strength again so we shall be resting after being continually fighting since May 5th. Talk about horrors. I have seen some the last ten days. We were made a lot of fuss of when we came out of the battle we had plenty to eat and smoke tobacco and cigarettes which I gave to an Italian soldier as I do not smoke them. General Foch send a message to say he cannot speak well enough of us and says we have saved Paris. Last night which was Aug 4th was the first time I had my clothes off for ten day and the first good sleep. Thirst is our worse enemy of which we are all suffering and you will be pleased to know that I done a small kind action while I was crossing a field of corn in a shell hole lay a lad of about 19 or 20 not much older out of the Gordon Highlanders terribly wounded and crying for water. Unfortunately I had only half a bottle left so I gave him all I had not knowing when I should get a drop more for myself but I am proud I gave it to him and sincerely hope he was taken in and attended to but I am afraid he laid there all night bravely waiting for God to call him home to Him. Thirst is a dreadful thing and water is more value to us than gold dust.

So I want you to still have the same Faith that God in his great mercy and goodness will watch over me and keep me safe through all battles that I go into should it be his will. We prayer and received Holy Communion before and after we came out of action. So have patience and courage until I return

Edward Samuel Rock

4.
Hall 5, Room 73
Settlement
Princetown, S Devon

Dear Mr Bailey

I am writing to thank you for all your goodness to me and mine since I was taken from home. I'm sure that the majority of people, (if they had been through what I have during the past 10 weeks and were of the same sensitive affectionate disposition as I) would be less severe in their judgement of us and do their best to get those powers that be to allow us to find our own work of national importance. I should be of vastly more use to the country working on a farm in Hertfordshire or Bedford than making mailbags here and I should be a great deal happier. If I wish to see any of those I love they must be prepared to spend £7 - £10, stay here several days and only see me from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. I feel very downhearted this afternoon so you must excuse me. There is one great thing which it has done for me and that is that my faith and trust in God and increased considerably and I hope you will sometimes see my dear mother and the others and try and comfort her for I know that she is deeply grieved at my absence.

I would be glad if you would help me in two or three matters and I should like to know if it is possible to remain a member of the C of E when I hold these views. Namely, that in the Fiquerunt volt (*I can't read this*) (no quite sure it that is right but you will understand what I mean) it is wrong to say "Whosoever will be saved must hold the Catholic faith", I believe that all men who do what they think to be God's will and endeavour to serve Him, will be saved.

2nd I do not believe in two of the Articles of Religion namely that a man may swear, for any purpose whatever because Christ distinctly commands, swear not by God or man and of course the other is that which concerns the bearing of arms.

I should be very sorry to leave the Church because I believe that I could do something to help as I used, but at the same time, this is the opinion I hold on these three things and I must leave if they are not permissible. I hope and pray that all things may be well with you and Norton and I look forward to returning and visiting those who are poor and sick, because when I was in prison I decided that I would try and comfort others even as He comforted me. Trusting you are in the best of health and again thanking you. Mother will tell you all about me if you desire to know

Yours very sincerely

Leslie Barker
A Conscientious Objector

5.
On Active Service
Royal Horse Guards
Sunday 20 - 1915

Dear Sir

Just a line to say I arrived back to my Regiment quite safe and a Happy man. I feel now that I can go on with my duties without any worry I wish to thank you for the kindness you showed towards me when I were at home and for my wife because I feel sure I that everything is being done for her comfort I am going to say a prayer each day from that little book you gave me. Thank the nurses at the Hospital for me for those kindness they are doing for my wife. I have written to Mr Bourne to say I am alright. Please excuse this short letter as I have got a such lot to do I feel tired.

From your sincerely
Charles Cripps

6.
On Active Service
Royal Horse Guards
June 28th – 1916

Dear Sir

I have just received your kind letter so glad to hear my wife was a little better when you last went to see her. I also received Mr Bourne's letter of which you say he sent you a copy. I have written to him to say that I am quite willing for her to go to the Infirmary as he has made enquiries and finds that everything is so nice and comfortable there I feel sure that every one is doing there best for my wife but if there is any chance of her being kept at Letchworth I know you will do so Thank Mr Ball and Dr Ledward for me for all they are doing I know how serious my wife illness is and if it pleases God to take here I shall feel that everything has been done for her while she was alive it is hard to part after so many years but I still have hope of meeting her again in this world if not in heaven God bless you for what you are doing.

I have not yet received the Citizen from Mr Bourne but I suppose that will come later you must excuse this paper and bad writing as I am writing by the light of a candle and laying out in the open fields I am on duty all the night looking after the horses we are expecting to make a big move before long don't say to much about it because we are allowed to tell anyone what we are going to do. I will give your best respects to the which I hope it won't be long before we do

I am glad to say I am still keeping the best of health trusting you are the same

yours sincerely
Charles Cripps

Remember me to Mr Irland

7.
On Active Service
Royal Horse Guards
4 - 7 - 15

Dear Sir,

I received your kind letter so please to hear that there might be a chance of my wife being taken into St Luke's Home I feel sure that everything is being done for the best. Thank you so much for calling on Mrs Bennett about my house. I was afraid she would not let Mrs Reid take it because of her family about letting it furnished. I think it is to late now because I have written to my friends and told them to put everything in store which they have already being making arrangements I had such a kind letter from Mrs Reid telling what Mr Bourne and yourself were doing for my wife and me She told me not to worry because everything was being done for the best and I feel quite sure it is so Mrs Reid said she had been to see my wife and there was no improvement I quite understand I am glad to say I as keeping so well myself and as ever the weather here is very hot a bit to much at times I will give the Germans one for you I hope it won't be long before we are on there heels again.

Yours sincerely

Charles Cripps

8.

Church Army Recreation Hut or Tent
On Active Service with the British Expeditionary Force

10th August 1918

Dear Rev Bailey

No doubt you will think me a long time in answering your welcome letter and wonder the reason for the delay of the enclosed one dated 24th May 1918. I will endeavour to explain. I intended sending that letter along with some others to the Base Signal in a green envelope but things unforeseen then prevented me doing so for you will remember on the morning of the 27th May the Hun commenced his rush for Paris. Well I was in this retirement also, at the time two chums and myself were looking after communications at a forward artillery observation post. An artillery Officer and a gunner were also there. It was an awful morning one I shall never forget, the Bosche's bombardment was very heavy and the air was filled with gas everywhere. Shortly after he started every communication had gone west. Unfortunately one of my chums were sick so it fell to the other lad and myself to carry on, long before dawn we went out under heavy shell fire and gas in the hope of re-establishing communication but our efforts were in vain. After we returned and reported the result of our outing the Officer decided to send a message to his Battery by the gunner and asked one of us to go along with him. Well we could not expect our sick comrade to turn out so we thought the fairest way for my chum and I would be to toss for it, well I lost, and the gunner and I set off, I took some repairing outfit with me in case we might come to the end of the barrage, we had not gone many yards when I discovered a break in a line at a "sunken" road crossing this I repaired and then diving into a machine gunners dugout (which was then gas proof) just to get a minute or two spell. We had just entered and I had just taken off my gas mask when a gas shell burst outside and blew the door in, I got rather a nasty dose of gas and I thought my life in this world was short, however I managed to make my way back to our Signal dugout, only to find that it had suffered in the same way, but my two chums were alright. After I had spent a few minutes there the Officer came down gassed also, and he took me along with him back to his Battery, at the same time he instructed my two chums to collect all the instruments etc and wait until he returned. Fortunately we got through safely. We had not been at the Battery long when I was sent with a message to my Brigade Headquarters, in getting there I had about a quarter of an hours walk through a wood and a heavy barrage, which was gradually creeping back. I was alone and wearing my gas mask, only once before had I been that way, shells were dropping all around me, I walked steadily on and God guided my footsteps in the right way. A step to the left or to the right might have been death to me, on the other hand I might have taken the wrong path (for there were many running in different directions through this big wood) and wandered into the Bosche who were coming up rapidly, although I was not aware of it then.

I had not been at Brigade Headquarters long when we got the order to smash all our instruments and get outside with our rifles, we were then between the Bosche and his barrage which was creeping on and on, so again I had to come through a heavy barrage, unfortunately an officer was killed just in front of me otherwise we all got through without a scratch, later on when we came near a point at which we crossed "a well known river"? we came under heavy machine gun fire "at rather short range", but the shooting was rotten thank God, for not a man was hit, later we reached our wagon lines just as they were moving off from a village which was under heavy fire, here I was able to get a drink of refreshing cold water, after which I felt much better, but was still feeling the effect of the gas. Unfortunately two chums of mine were wounded as we retired from this village, we were still under fire for several hours for the Bosche was shelling all the roads for several miles back.

The two chums who were with me up forward were either killed or taken prisoners, I am afraid they were caught in the dugout for it was not long after I had left the Battery that the Bosche were there. Unfortunately the officer who brought me down, (I think) was killed, for he was too ill to leave the dugout just before the Bosche came upon them. However I am pleased to see that the ground has almost all been retaken in this sector.

We are getting splendid news these last few days really the tide seems to have turned and looking all round things seem to be very satisfactory.

You may have heard that I came down the line about a month since with influenza and I am now enjoying a rest in a convalescent Depot.

I have just heard from my sister that a church army van is staying in the parish, its several years since the last one paid Norton a visit, but I can remember it well standing on the green in front of the School House.

Well dear Vicar, I am pleased to report that I am quite well again now. I hope the time is not far distant when I may be home once again. I will close now with all good wishes.

Yours sincerely
A. E. Ridley

9.
POSTCARD
from Pte W Johnson, 1st Herts, E company
No 2428 British Expeditionary Force, France

November 7/14

Dear Sir,

Have arrived safe, had a good journey. Job to understand the French. I should like some cigarettes. Remember me to all

Will

10.
No 93898
Bdr. H Reed,
32nd Bde BFA
Head Quarters Staff
BEF

Dear Mr Bailey

Received your letter yesterday with which I was delighted with Sir.

Was pleased with the two nice little books, I must say I think the war is awful sir because look at the dear ones who have lost there lives already, I often think about the times we have had will be not more, not as we used to have them Sir. That little verse is very true in the Midst of Life we are in Death, But it is all for the best sir. I did think Arthur was very badly hurt at first but I glad he wast not, I had a very nice letter from Willie the other day he must be in the North Sea somewhere I think, I am send you a Christmas card with the Infantry Badges and our own, all of which make the 32nd Brigade and in the wreath are all our honours and engagements we have been but they left one out Mon's. I think they are very good Sir. I met a chap came from Baldock in here, his name was Sherwood. I did not know him but I was pleased to meet him, Sir. I am just doing my two hours night duty on the Phones and it is awful cold frosty and we had some snow the other day again but I am getting used to it now, Sir do you ever hear from any of the other lads if so tell them I am quite well and shall not be sorry when it finishes Sir. Well I must close now Sir

I remain yours ever
Bdr. H Reed

11.
Leslie Parkes
3rd Bedfordshire Double 6 (& Section)
Landguard, Felixstowe
Suffolk

Tuesday 13th

Dear Mr Bailey

Hoping alls well with the club and Church and sorry I have not written before, but have wrote letters until I have got sick of it. Am with all Norton boys there are half a dozen of us in our room. I am sleeping with A Armishaw on the boards with two blankets apiece. At first we had rather a rough time but we are getting on pretty well now. We have plenty of services here in the tents. Did you read a piece in the Citizen this week on Kitcheners Kitchen? This was written by A Armishaw and sent to the Skittles Inn of course it is rather exaggerated and things have altered altogether since then.

Am supprised at the fellows here as I expected a few rough chaps but cannot find hardly one, I saw two trainloads of Hitchin drunkards leave for Bedford and I see some of them here but they are as quite as mice, the pubs are only open one hour a night so that we very rarely see a drunkard. We see plenty of sights here, on the sea, at the fort, the aeroplanes are out all times of the day, we have been on twenty-five mile route marches twice a week, the other day we were given the name of a road and had to find it having to try to get there first, it was about ten miles out our company got there first and were taken about a mile away here we were told to get home the best way we could, making strait for home we went through ploughed fields, cabbage fields and woods and caught one or two rabbits.

I must close my letter now as it is bedtime 8.30

Yours truly
Leslie Parkes

12.
No 12425
Mess H
HMS Powerful I
Devenport, Devon

Sunday 18th

Dear Mr Bailey

Just a few lines as promised to let you know that I am still alive and well. Well I am very sorry I did not write before but you see I have been rather busy for as soon as you start to write a letter the bugle sounds and you have to go hoisting boats or scrubbing or swimming so you see it is no use writing until you have a bit of time off. Well Sir I the lads had a nice time and I can assure you I only I were with them and I also hope the brigade is still going strong. Well Sir we get liberty leave three times a week, but glad to say that we are not allowed in Devenport for I mean to live a clean life while I am in this service. We are not allowed to smoke and must not have any food sent to and we are not even allowed to have any cake sent to us either so you see they are stricter than the Army. I thank you very much for the prayer book and that other little prayer book which I am reading. Well Sir we go to church every morning and Sunday, well it is not exactly a church it is our gymnasium room but it does for us. Well Sir I don't think I have any more news this time so hoping this letter will find you in the best of health I remain your truly

Spencer William Drewitt
PS Hope to hear from you soon. Remember me to all the lads.

13.
Pte A. E. Reed
Section 1 No. 7
B Company 8th Batt Beds
Shoreham Sussex.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you very much for the body belt and mittens I received this morning. I can assure you they were a very welcome gift. Please give my best thanks to the Norton Church workers it is very good of them to think of us who are trying to serve our King and Country. I am sure they are doing their share. I am glad to say we are in our huts but you will be surprised to hear it was warmer in the tents at night than it is in the huts. They are just boarded on the outside with thin weather boards and the wind draws through the cracks nearly enough to blow a candle out. The boards are all mildew inside where they have been saturated with water so you can tell it is not very healthy sleeping inside. Several regiments have been billeted out because their huts have been condemned but we have got to stick in them. Nearly all of us are choked up with colds and there are several chaps got the measles in the next hut. But still it is no use grumbling I expect we shall have to rough it worse when we get to the front but we shant be going for a month or two. Well I haven't got much more to tell you. I hope to be home for a few days soon after Christmas, one of our companie have gone home for eight days so I suppose we shall have the same. I wish to thank you all for thinking of me in your prayers I am sure I need them all and may it please God to answer them. Religion is thought very little of here but still the majority of chaps are honest and try to live about right. Well I will close hoping you are in the best of health

Yours sincerely
A. E. Reed

I hope the lads still attend the Bible Class we only get a Church parade on Sunday morning and this is a treat.

Well Goodbye Sir.

14.
Pte L. O'Dell
Isolation Hospital
Dovercourt,
Harwich, Suffolk

Dear sir

Just a few lines hoping these will find you in the best of health as I am please to say I am a lot better now as I have been in Hospital 4 weeks come next Wedesday with Diptheria I don't know how I got it it started with a saw throat and then it turn out to be Diptheria but I don't suppose I shall get out of Hospital not before another fortnight or three weeks time then when I come out I shall get 14 days sick leave and then when I come home I will come over and see you Dear Sir I like the Army very much and I wish that their was more join it than there is I have given up ever think to serve my King and Country. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down is life for his Friends and I would lay down my life for my friends for I love them all for God so love the world that he gave his only begottern so that whose so ever believe on him should have ever lasting life for ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you. Well I don't know if I have much more news to tell you only I thought you would like to hear from me as I am up now the Doctor lets me get up for a little while now. Hoping you will forgive me for not writing before but I have been so quier that I have not felt like writing to anyone but now I am better I will write to you ever week. Hoping to hear from you soon so good by I remain your ever loving Friend
Leonard O'Dell

15.
Pte A. E. Reed 16755
B Company
8th Batt Beds
Shoreham, Sussex

Sunday

Dear Sir

I hope you will forgive me for not writing before. Well things are just about the same here now. We are having a very stiff time its all route marches and field days etc. This hot weather makes us sweat when we are marching full pack but we have got to get used to doing it I suppose. Since I last wrote we have been to Redhill in Surrey for a fortnight making trenches which they say are to form a defence round part of London in case they are needed any time. It is good practice for the troops but I don't think at least I hope they will never be wanted. We were billeted out in private houses during our stay there and we had a pretty easy time. We expect to move away from here in about a weeks time to Aldershott or somewhere to finish our musketry and then I suppose we shall be well away for the front. I hope we shall get four days leave before we go so I shall be able to come and see the Letchworth people again. Our food has been awfull since we came back from Redhill but its no use complaining we don't get any sympathy. We are in the huts still they have boarded them inside so they are quite comfortable. I was very sorry to hear our comrades have died for their country. I think the Norton lads are doing their bit Sir. I hope some of us will be lucky enough to get back. Our friend William Jackson soon got killed he had only been out a few weeks. I am very sorry for both Mrs Jackson and Taylor. I am sure the formers lad was a big help to the upkeep of the home. Still we must look on the bright side and trust God to bring us through safely. I don't know where Harold is but he is getting on alright I believe. I hear from Arthur Armishaw every week he is quite alright. I suppose Letchworth is very quiet now, but I think their are quite a lot more chaps who might come and join us yet. I think it is about time Deveril thought of coming to do a bit last time I spoke to him he said he didn't think they would want any more men but we want every man we can get. Perhaps he is his mothers main support but he could allow his mother something and the Government would make it up to a decent figure. Well I will close trusting you are in the best of health as it leaves me.

I remain yours sincerely

A. E. Reed

16.
Pte J W Johnson
E company
1st Herts. Regiment,
Long Melford, Suffolk

21/8/1914

Dear Sirs

Just a few lines as I though you would like to know how we are getting on. We have been on the march all the week. We shall stay all next week at Bury St Edmunds. The journey is 80 miles from Romford. I been to Holy communion 2 Sundays, and this morning we all went to church for special prayer. The church here is very old indeed, it is just being restored. We get very poor food now, what is called war rations and sleep in fields. I cannot write any more now and we are on parade in ten minutes time.

I remain yours sincerely

Will Johnson

17.
Pte J W Johnson
E company
1st Herts. Regiment,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Friday

Dear Sir

Just a few lines in answer to your most welcome letter, which I was very pleased to receive. We are moving again very shortly nearer to the coast. We are having special training now, ready for going on Foreign service. We have been medically examined and a lot have been rejected through their own faults. In our tent we have got five Norton lads, so we get on together, but I can assure you we have got some very rough chaps in our camp and it is a very hard job to keep alright but still we have managed alright up to now and will still continue to do so. This town has a very bad name and quite rightly to. I shall be glad when we move, the town is very old fashioned, plenty of very fine ruins to be seen. Our chaplain is a very nice gentleman indeed, he gives us some very nice lectures every other night. We are getting some very good drill and physical exercise. I am very glad to think you are praying for us, it will give us a lot on encouragement to keep on. The food is very rough indeed that we get, we miss not being able to smoke as we only get a little money every now and then, but still we shall soon get used to it. I should like you to give my brother Albert a good lecture as I hear he has been and done a very bad thing again. I do not think he is with right company at all. Will you please remember me to all our bible class and football team, as I hope to be with them again someday. I must now close thanking you for writing to me

I remain yours sincerely

Will Johnson

18.
Pte J W Johnson
E company
1st Herts. Regiment,
Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk

Sunday

Dear Sir

Just a few lines hoping you are in the best of health. We moved last week into billets. The weather got too rough for stables. We have no idea how long we shall stop here, probably only 3 weeks. We are doing a lot of trench digging now. We had a church parade this morning and went to the cathedral St James. There were 1200 it looked fine. We had late Holy Communion today at 12 o'clock. Our vicar is the rector of Codicote, so perhaps you may know him. Were Jack and me are living the landlord is an old soldier and both him and a son are in the cathedral choir so I reckon we have got a good house considering as Bury itself is a very degraded town. We have been given some very good lectures by our chaplain. I also remember to things you told us in the Bible class at times. I must now close with Kind Regards

I remain yours sincerely

Will Johnson

19.
26.9.1916
Pte J. L. Harris
54/215818
No 23 Hut, No 1 Camp
A.S.C. "K" Coy
Thornhill, Aldershot.

Dear Vicar

I have at last been able to find time to send you these few lines to tell you I have got quite settled down to my new surroundings. I find plenty to do and at present am studying for an exam. I recently passed my clinical test and a few of us have had about 10 days at school. The A.S.C. study us well in the matter of food which taken on the whole is good and plentiful.

With the exception of a slight cough and a stiff arm (the after effects of a second inoculation and vaccination yesterday) am feeling very fit. To give you an idea of our daily routine would mention that we rise at 5.30 Parade 6.15 for route march return and dismiss about 7.15. breakfast 7.30. 2nd Parade 8.45 Drill dismiss 10.30. Parade 10.40 Drill till 12. Dinner 12.30 Parade 1.45 Drill till 3. Parade again 3.15 Drill till 4.30 Then we have tea about 5. During the intervals between meals there are the usual domestic duties such as cleaning kit, tidy hut and making bed, shaving etc.

Everything works with clock like precision and after all I am sure there is no better training for a man.

We are given food and exercise for the body and lectures by doctors for the mind.

If every man now in the army was to always act up to the advice given, we should live in a totally different world.

In fact this war makes one wonder what purpose there is in it and I can see even more clearly now the reason of our National Mission. I am however sorry to say there are a few men who cannot use their tongues without bad language. I noticed it very markedly at first but now I have got settled down and find plenty to do, I hardly know there are such men in the hut. There is a church parade every Sunday but owing to space only 150 men and officers are detailed out of about 1600 in this camp. The remainder go on route march and this was my part last Sunday. We went about six miles with a short rest half way

I hope I have not ... you with this but must ask you to excuse paper and pencil. I have just run out of the former and all pens are in heavy demand.

Must now close. Trusting you are quite well. With Best Wishes
Yours sincerely
J. L. Harris

20.
Pte J. L. Harris, 54/215818
No 10 Section, 1st Base M F Depot
B.E.F. France
1st December 1916

My Dear Vicar

It was only last night that I had positively made up my mind to drop you a few lines and my wife reminded me of it in a letter I received today. First of all I must apologise for not writing sooner but I know you will understand circumstances after a brief explanation. I was indeed pleased to get your letter card at Aldershot, it seems ages ago but in reality it is only about 7/8 weeks. It was just after that I found myself on draft and in less than a fortnight after was in France. I had or made a bad journey was very queer which I could not understand unless it was the surroundings, as I travelled to Belgium and back 4 years ago. I have taken other sea trips without being upset in the slightest degree. When at Havre I was very busy and much engaged. We had to turn out at 5 a.m. and drill every morning and afternoon and in addition school of

lectures every morning and afternoon. In the evening if we were fortunate enough not to be picked for fatigue duties, we had to study and learn up our lecture notes for examination. We were 17 days there and now I am settled down to a permanent job which is very interesting and I like it very much. Wish I could continue it as a profession after the war provided I could get home as in the old days. Well Vicar we commence duties at 7.30 and go on till 5.30 p.m. with a break of 90 minutes for dinner. Saturdays included and Sundays 7.30 – 1 p.m. We turn in at 9.30 so you see our time is limited. I understand there is a church service Sunday morning at the Y.M.C.A. but it is during working hours for our special section.

Time is getting on and I have to get back to the base at 8.45 and I still have some correspondence to pick up. It is now 8 p.m. I must not close without mentioning that the country is beautiful and we are in a cheerful spot. Trusting you are quite well and with kind regards.

I remain your very sincerely
J. L. Harris

From the tone of her letter I think Mrs H is settling down. Is this so? Shall be very please to hear from you.

21.
Pte H. J. Taylor
No 2425 E Coy 1st Herts. Reg.
British Exped. Force, France
Wed Nov 25th 1914

Dear Sir

Just a few lines in answer to your most welcome letter I received a day or two ago. George Sherwood lent me the Parish Magazine and I read it. I thought your letter was very good indeed.

(The Censor has blocked out the next bit)

We were inspected by Sir General French and he gave us a very good name. He told us that we had done our work well and that we was called up at the most critical point of the field. The (blacked out) have relieved us now for a time and we are having a rest. I hope the war will soon be over as I think everybody is fed up with it. We get plenty of smokes from all parts of England. All the Norton boys are still happy but we are not as well as we ought to be. We have nearly all had something the matter we us, bad colds and one thing and another. Still we must put up with that and live in hopes to have better times when we come home again. There is just one thing more and that is that I say my prayers every night before I go to sleep and that is the main thing, and I think God will guide us safely through this war. Well I think this is all now Sir, I wish you would tell my people that I have written to you and also give my best love to the lads of the club. I think I will close now. I am your very sincerely
H. J. Taylor

(Note from Cannon Bailey that he died of wounds May 3rd 1915 at No 4 Field Hospital, France)

22.
Pte S. W. Harrison
No 2476, E Company, 1st Herts. Reg. British Expeditionary Force

Rev Bailey

Dear Sir

Just a line hoping this will find you in the best of health as it leaves me fairly well I thought I would write and let you know how we are get on we have been in trenches also under fire and now we are having a rest. I shall be very pleased when it is all over I have a prayer book me and my friends have a morning and evening service on our own and at the end we have a hymn (O God our help in ages past) which I am sure is helping us on to victory. My mother tells me you pray for us and I give you my word Sir if ever I reach England safe again which I hope and trust in the Lord I shall I shant never neglect my religion again. Well Dear Sir I think I have said all for now so I must close with kindest regards and best wishes
From Sidney Harrison

22.
Pte S. W. Harrison
No 2476, 3rd Batt, 1st Herts. Reg.
65 Parliament St, Peterborough

Rev Bailey

Dear Sir

Just a few lines hoping this will find you in the best of health as it leave me not very well I have been ill ever since I have been here with very bad pains in my side I was examined by the Regimental Doctor last Friday and the first thought I had got Scarlet Fever He has been e very day to me He told me yesterday not to be afraid I hadn't got it I had got a slight touch of Plurisy of course Doctor Wilson told me that when I was at Letchworth and he also told me I ought to have my teeth extracted and I am in all probability going under an operation sometime this week and have them all out. I cannot say which Hospital they are going to send me to. Dear Sir you must forgive me for not coming round to see you before I went back but the last 4 days I felt as if I couldn't leave my dear Mother because I didn't no what they was going to do with me when I joined my Regiment again I have had my name called out for France again but I was to ill to go I have been worrying about it what you would think of me and I wanted to ask you if you would pray for me during my illness I myself say the Lords Prayer night and morning. Well Dear Sir I think I have said all for now so I will close by wishing you the best of health and Gods Blessing

I remain Sir yours faithfully
Pte Sidney Harrison

23.
2702 Pte Dean
C Coy. 1st Herts. Reg, 4th Brigade of Guards
Expeditionary Force, France

Dear Vicar and all,

Since in answer to letter and parcel which I received in the best of condition and I gave W Ashwell is lot and we both thank you very much for them for they come very exceptable this weather which we are having very tough now out here but we have to put up with for we are use very good by the officers while we are hear. I thank you very much in the way you pray for us on Sunday and other times which we pray for the Lord to spare us through this was which I think will last a long time yet. I think this all I have to say present.

With love from yours truly
C Dean

24.
No 1618, Pte H Noon
1st Herts. Regiment C Coy.
British Expeditionary Force
France 14/12/14

Dear Sir

Just a line in answer to your letter and to thank you very much for the magazine I was very sorry I had not answer it before but I am very pleased to tell you I am going on fine just very wet and cold out here but we all hope to be in England again before long as we don't care for France much but I don't think it will be long after the war is over hoping it will not be long I think I have said all this time I remain yours sincerely
H Noon

25.

10147 Drummer C. W. Cornwell
3rd Batt Buffs Regt. Drums
Citadel Barracks, Dover.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to let you know that we have moved from Ireland to Dover, because our Battalion have gone to Cambridge waiting orders for the front. We are under siege here and are not allowed out only under pass. Hoping you are quite well. I remain yours sincerely

Cecil Cornwell

PS Would you kindly remember me to your boys.

26.

No 93898 B-Dr H Reed
32nd Bde RFA, Head Quarters Staff, BEF
24/11/1915

To Rev J. H. Bailey

Dear Sir

Hoping this will find you in the best of health and luck.. Well sire I am getting on grand since I joined the Army not so bad if you put your mind to it. I have had my stripe now 4 months now so you will see by that I have not done bad in the time. I am got a good job out here only a bit dangerous at times, here because we have to stop at our post, I am on the phones I am just doing my night duty now 3 hours a night, that is by trade telephonist, We are in a village were we are very often getting shelled but we don't take any notice of that now.

We are having it a bit cold out here now we had had it three times up to our ankles already and with very cold frosts, I have heard that two or three of the Old Boys have been killed out here, but you never know when you are to be taken away out here. I have been out now about 3½ months so I am used to it by this time, I have heard from my pal who I used to work with two or three times and he as joined the A.S.C. now.

Fancy my cousin Will joined the Royal Naval Div, but I know that boy will get on, he has the brain and mind to succeed, well Sir how is the Church going on hoping that I shall soon be back to come to it because we don't get much out here you see we don't get the time but we all like to when we have the chance. We had a lively time this morning they started shelling us about six oclock and they did not leave off till twelve but they know now that they generally have the worst of the game. We have some fire Batteries in this Bde, we are in a village and the houses are all knocked down but still some people live here and wont leave it.

Well Sir do you still run the club I don't suppose there are many of the lads about now for that, but Sir one thing I can say and that is I have lead a better life since I joined the Army. I have not had the easiest of times either but I have pulled through quite safe.

Well Sire I must close now

I remain yours truly

Bdr H Reed

PC Dear Sir. Hoping to hear from you first opportunity
Good Bye

27.

April 15th 1915

Pte L O'Dell

No 19307 at Coy., 4 Beds

.....Rd, Dovercourt Bay

Harwich, Essex.

Dear Sir

Just a line hoping you are keeping well as I am please to say I am the same and though I would write to you to let you know I had join the Army and I like it very much and we start out firing on Monday for a week and then we come on pass for 6 days and I shall have 4 day at home and when I am at home I will come over and se you if you will be at Home I am at present on the sick list I have been in Hospital with influenza and bad feet and whn I came out on Monday the Doctor gave me 4 days Light Duty and I go on Duty on Saturday dear Sir whehn I go on S Guard for 24 hours. I often think of my dear mother and I pray to God to take care of her and father and I think he answered my pray and the last Guard I done it was raining down heard but I put up with it and when I came off I got a cold and this where I got influenza I have been to the Y... lot this week this had been The Roll week and I have singe a pledge to say I will serve God and my Country as much as I can and I have givern up servile things though that cause dear Sir I am sorry I have not wrote to you before but I have seen lately that I have not had time but I though I would write to you today and I hear that you doing good work at Norton and my God bless you while you are doing it I know that I shall not have a better frend as you was to me while you were at Hitchin and when you went they lost a good frend and the people new it and they have not had one like you since you went away I had a letter from Miss Smyth and she sent me the New Testament and she said that mother gave her my address and she said I was a Christain soldiers of Jesus Christ well I am please to do help my mother and I shall all way do that as long as I live so I am send you her letter so you can se what she said (send it back when you write as I want to keep it as a keepsake) so I must close so good by and forget me not I remain your every loving frend
Leonard O'Dell

28.

2702 Pte Dean

C Coy, 1st Herts.

4th Brigade of Guards, 2nd div.

Expeditionary Force, France

Dear Mr Bailey

Just a few lines in answer to letter which I received in the best of condition and it found me in the best of health and I hope this will find you the same. I am very glad to hear that there are prayers set up for us that are serving for their King and Country and to save there home from this small Parish I am very glad to think the people in this Parish sacrifice prayers for there comrades but I am very to mention the loss of young Will Johnson how he's been killed in action and we have had several other men wonded while we were in the trenches I remember when we were in action and it was a terrible sight to see are comrades buried in there trenches alive by the Germans big guns shells which are terrible things. I thank you very much for your letter and also your magazine which I was very please with and all the other lads wish to be remember to you and they are all alright and in the best of health but they would rather be at home for they say it is not war but it is murder to see the poor people cut down and drove out of there homes. Well I think this is all I got to say at present.

With love from Friend

Cecil Dean

I wish you all a merry Xmas

29.
396 Icknield Way
Letchworth, Herts.

To Mr Bailey

Dear Sir

I have sent you the promised photo of Private Arthur Dean that nobly fought and fell at St Julians on the 31st of July 1917 and we sadly miss him and I am very much comforted to think so many as respected him both here and his regiment and I hope by God's blessings that we shall meet him in a better resting place

From yours sincerely

R Brown

30.
Pte A. C. Reed
B Company, 8th Batt,
Bed R, Shoreham, Sussex

Dear Sir

I am writing to let you know I received your letter and book quite safe on Saturday morning. Thank you so much for book it is a jolly fine one, it is just the book for soldiers to read I shall let my mates in the tent read it when I have done so I quite agree with you we are doing our duty in helping our country in this great war, but we shall all be pleased when it is over. Well they are keeping us busy we do 8 hours a day or more but it is very interesting work. We are having a very decent time here, the majority of the chaps are very decent but there are a few rotters. We get plenty of food now we are settled down a bit we did not get so much when we first came but things are more settled now. The weather has been a bit rough here lately but we shant mind so much when we get in oru wooden huts they are building them as fast as possible. I think there are about 25 thousand soldiers here now the place seems crowded. You spoke about the chaplain. I think he has a busy job we don't see much of him only on Sunday at Church Parade he seems like a very nice chap I think. They haven't got enough recreation tents for us their is a big Y.M.C.A. tent but it is always full up their is also a Salvation Army tent here supposed to be a rest tent for us but although I don't like to say so all they want is our money if you go in to write a letter they keep coming round asking you what you want they charge us a penny a cup of tea or a cake and give you 3 sheets of writing paper and three envelopes for a penny. I hope to be home on Sunday if possible I have been in the hospital 3 days I have had a rash on my face they said it come through inoculation I have been done twice of course I haven't been in bed but they thought it might be catching in the tent. Well I have no time to write more now we have had a busy day we have had 9 hours drill already and we expect to be called out again tonight. So I will conclude hoping you are quite well as it leaves me merry and bright.

I remain yours sincerely
Arthur Reed.

PS Please excuse pencil and bad writing.

31.

A letter from a newspaper

Lance-Corporal Hook -- Interesting Letter

In our issue for Nov. 13th we published a letter from Lance-Corporal Frank Hook, of the 6th Dragoon Guards (Carabineers), whose work in Letchworth lay at the Spirella Factory. He has written now to his friend Mr. F. L. Price and his letter is dated December 1st. He refers to meals of stew and bread and butter and cocoa, eaten in a barn. "In front of the farm there is a hole in ground, made by an aeroplane bomb. There is also one at the back. The windows of the farm at the front are all broken.... The first day we went into action was Sunday. We prepared a bridge for blowing up, and then advanced looking for Germans. We found them before long, and came into action, firing at 1,500 yards. We retired after a bit to the other side of the canal. Whilst I was standing there, I noticed the dust at my feet getting flicked up and heard something hum. That was my first experience of being fired at. About two or three days later, we were defending a village. We could see the Germans in another village, coming out in the open, one after another. Presently, on our right, we saw masses of the Germans coming up. We were not at all alarmed, when bang! A shell burst 20 yards in front of us; and then we got it pretty hot. Shells all over the place. We lost one man and some horses. That was my first experience of German shrapnel. On the retirement, we used to get food from the inhabitants. One night I was hungry, so I pulled up at a house. The good lady came out, only too willing to oblige. The trouble was that we did not understand one word of French, and the lady not one word of English. I wanted bread, so I went through the motions of chewing, as if I had been eating, and said 'bread'. The good lady went into the house and returned with – pen and ink!.... Alongside the road was a dead German cavalryman, a non-commissioned officer. He was wounded in the chest. His lance was some distance away, broken. As the guns went by, and the transport, they covered the corpse with dust. That experience made me rather sad, as here was a man, the same as you and me, treated as a dog. Such is was in the twentieth century. Before we moved on we put the corpse over the hedge.

A FRENCH TRAITOR

"The same night I saw a French traitor pegged down to the ground, and every Frenchman who came by gave him a kick in the ribs. They shot him at daybreak.

We were on a plateau. The sun was shining and we were having a rather good time. Anyhow, we were not worrying much when we saw, about a mile away, a column of black smoke shoot up in the air, followed by a loud report. During the day they gradually worked nearer, and before we went to billets I knew we had had our first experience of 'Jack Johnsons,' 'coal boxes' etc. Since then we have seen hundreds come over. They rarely do us bodily harm; but if they hit a house, or any building, they smash it. If one were to hit the Spirella Factory it would have the same effect as though you were to tread upon an egg shell. When I say 'Jack Johnsons' do us no harm, I mean that the result of all the shells they send over is practically nothing, except if they burst right where you are. But, nevertheless, 'Jack Johnsons' try your nerves a bit.

"We have been in the trenches plenty of times. We lost 57 men in one engagement, but the Germans must have lost hundreds. The last time in we lost two men killed, and three wounded.

"If you could see the towns and the farms out here, you would think that the country had experienced about ten earthquakes, and a dozen hurricanes. Everything is ruined, and every building smashed to smithereens.

"From what I can read in the papers, a good many men are hanging back. If they are single, where do they think they will defend their sisters, fathers, and mothers from the tender mercies of the Germans? If they are married, where do they think they will protect their homes and wives and children from the things that the people out here are suffering. Where do they expect to do it? If a man has a sore finger, he does not bandage his toe. So it is no good for able-bodied men to say they will fight in England. For then it will be too late. Let them come forward and get fit and ready to come out here and give a hand to destroy this Prussian Militarism.

"You cannot make progress towards universal peace when such a think exists as the German idea that brute force shall prevail. There is nothing in the papers that can show what the people out here have suffered. May it never fall to the lot of England!"

32.

Pte A. C. Reed
B Company, 8th Batt Beds
17 Camelford Street,
Marine Parade, Brighton

Dear Sir,

I am writing to thank you for the muffler, I received it yesterday. Please give my sincere thanks to Miss Hall and the other Church Workers I appreciate their kindness very much. We are getting on fine in our billets we get plenty of good food, and we can keep ourselves a bit respectable. On Sunday we paraded to St George's church and had a fine Service. We do our drill on the promenade and we get plenty of admirers. The other day when we were striped to the waist with just our shirts and trousers doing physical drill we were cinamatagrahed so I suppose we shall be on show at the picture palaces here. Well Christmas will soon be here I wish I was at Letchworth to spend it at home but it cant be helped I hope to be home soon after but I don't know exactly when. I suppose you will be sharing out the Slate Club tonight I hope everything will work out correctly. Mother is drawing mine for me I shall want it when I come home. I don't think I have much more to say so I will close. Wishing you and the Norton Church people a Merry Christmas and A bright and Happy New Year.

I remain yours sincerely

Pte A. C. Reed.

I might mention that I received a parcel from the Citizens of Letchworth containing 50 cigarettes and some tobacco and a very nice Card, it is very good of you all to think of us like this.

33.

Pte A. C. Reed
B Company, 8th Batt Beds
17 Camelford Street,
Marine Parade, Brighton
Tuesday

Dear Sir

I am writing to thank you so much for the little book you have sent me. It is a splendid book I hope I shall read it every day for their are splendid sentences for every day. I am afraid it got delayed considerably for I see it was posted on the 23rd and it reached me this morning the 29th but is better come late than never. I have only received the Citizen which was posted before Christmas today it is very sad about poor Will Johnson I feel very much for his parents but he has done his duty. We used to think he was a rum lad but I am sorry for what I have said about him sometimes, he was a jolly good hearted fellow but he was always for a game of some sort. Well I am sorry to say I have not spent a very pleasant Christmas. I had a rotton cold in the huts but after I had been in Brighton two days my voice failed me and I could not speak for over a week and now my voice is just coming back I can only speak in a low tone, I didn't feel very bad and yet I couldn't speak and I was deaf too. I believe I got like it through sleeping in a damp bed. I was never like it before in all my life. I think I shall soon be alright again now. I am glad the Slate Club shared out well and that you are still keeping it on, I see brother Ted was elected Sec. I hope he will do his work well and get plenty of new members. Well I don't think I have much more to say I hope to see you shortly so I will close.

I remain yours sincerely

Pte A. C. Reed

May God grant you a Happy and Prosperous New Year

34.

Pte A. C. Reed
B Company,
8th Batt Beds
Shoreham, Sussex

Dear Rev Sir

Just a letter to let you know I am in the best of health. We have just started training in earnest again after being road-making and doing fatigues etc ever since I was on leave. Our battalion came from Brighton on Wednesday afternoon they find it different to billets, we who have been here all the time are used to it. It comes strange to us to drill again after not doing any for a long time. Well it is better here than it was a month back, we have made all the paths so it is a lot cleaner getting about, but it is rather dull and miserable now and they don't give us enough food we get four loaves for tea for twenty eight men it is rather too bad I spend about all my money buying some food, Arthur Armishaw tells me they are living well at his place, and they have done about all their training, we have got all our firing to do yet. Well we are gradually becoming soldiers they gave us our khaki the other day but it will cost me 1/6 to get the trousers to fit me the waist is to small and the legs are twice as baggy as they ought to be. I must call and see you next time I come home I didn't have time last time I was home. I found our people getting on as well as can be expected. I shall be glad when the war is over so I can get back with them, but we must go though it now, it will be quite a month before we shall be fit. Well I cant say much more this time so I will close wishing the Norton people the best of luck.

I remain yours sincerely

Pte A. C. Reed

Dear Sir I am not needing any clothing just now but a few cigarettes or tobacco would be very acceptable.

35.

Aneats (?) Hospital

1/11/16

Dear Sir

I am writing a few lines to thank you very much for the 2/6 which you gave the Mrs Armishaw to send to me. Please thank the lady very much. Well I have just had Arthur Armishaw in to see me he's looking well and his arm is nearly well. I don't know when I shall be coming to Norton again mine is a very slow job and I get a lot of pain still. Well I hope all the Norton people will have a very Happy Xmas although I am afraid a good many will not be as happy as usual. Well I must close with best respect.

Yours sincerely

A. C. Reed

36.

Dec 12th 14

No 14891

No 6 Double Company,
24 Platoon, 3rd Batt Bed
Landguard, Felixstowe

Dear Mr Bailey

Just a line in answer to your letter and to thank you for the belts and cuffs and also the book.

I am very glad to say that our spiritual welfare is well looked after, as the Duke of Bedfords Recreation Tent is run by a minister. We have church parades every Sunday morning I am very sorry to hear that Will Johnson has been killed it must be a severe blow to his parents but he has died like an Englishman and he has given his life for a just cause. I hope to be at the front myself in the spring but I shall have to go to Aldershot to finish my training as a signaller.

I keep in touch with Archie Reed and he is having a rough time of it and he worry's about his mother. But I am glad to say that we are not having such a rough time as we did at first.

I am hoping to be home at Christmas but we are sure of it, as only a limited number of passes will be given and married men will get the preference which is only right.

I find the parish magazine very interesting as we get news of home in it. Will Jackson wishes to thank you for the book and magazine also the other lads but they thank you themselves but most of them are on guard.

I am glad to say that the lads are in the best of health and spirits.

I must close now hoping you are in the best of health as it leaves me the same.

I remain your sincerely

A. A. Armishaw

37.

Pte S. W. Harrison

No 2476 E Company, 1st Herts Regiment

British Expeditionary Force

Tuesday 8/12/14

Rev Bailey

Dear Sir

Just a few lines in answer to your kind and most welcomed I must also thank you for the Monthly Journal and Book I shall read them with great interest we still continue our little Services we had a Church parade last Monday week it was a fine Service it was also a splendid Church I cannot the name of it or place as you know we are not allowed to tell were we are I shall be able to tell you when the war is over and I get safely back to Letchworth which I hope and trust in our Lord our Saviour I shall do Dear Sir no doubt you have heard that we have been in action in the last lot of trench we were in our Company was rather unfortunate as we lost a few of our comrades but I must say our Officers are jolly good to us they do all they can to cheer us up, the weather out here is very cold and the roads are very bad to march on it is up to your knees in mud and water Well Dear Sir I don't think I have anything more to say this time as I want to catch the post so I must close by wishing you a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year.

From Sidney Harrison

P.S. Dear Sir, I hope I shall hear from you again will you call on my Mother and cheer her up from me.

38.

From a newspaper

Letchworth Territorial Returns Wounded.

Interesting Interview with Private A. Garner

On Tuesday night Private A. Garner of Gernon Road who is a member of E Company, 1st Herts. Territorials, returned to Garden City, having been wounded in the fighting in France. The same evening he gave a "Citizen" representative the following account of his experiences.

When we reached Havre we were in tents for two days. Then we went to, and after two or three days were taken within a mile and a half of the firing line in motor 'buses. We passed through, The town was in ruins, houses lying across the road, and several places burning. I have never imagined anything like it in my life. I should say that own is about the size of Luton. The Germans were still shelling the Town Hall.

IN DUGOUTS

First we went into some dug outs in the woods. These were pits, covered with tree trunks and earth. We were reserves, and were about a mile and a half from the firing line. We staying there some time, and were then sent to relieve the Oxfords in the trenches. We went into the trenches on Saturday night, not all the regiment, however, two or three companies stayed in the dug-outs. On the Sunday night we were relieved in the trenches, and went back of the wood.

On Tuesday afternoon we had orders to relieve some of the Guards and again went into the trenches. There we stayed Tuesday night, Wednesday, and Wednesday night. It now began to snow, and in the morning there were three inches of snow on the ground.

There was not much fighting where we were from the Monday till the Wednesday ?.

TERRIBLY COLD

It was terribly cold in the trenches. At night we scooped out a sort of shelf in the side of the trench and slept on that ledge. We had no blanket, only a waterproof sheet.

There was a bit of rifle fire on the Wednesday night. On the Thursday the Germans started shelling us in earnest. Some of the German trenches were only as far from us as Leys Avenue is from Gernon Road, but neither Germans for British showed themselves. We could hear them singing at night. It was an artillery duel, and the German big guns were far away out of sight.

We had to stay there, holding the position against possible attacks by infantry, while the German artillery kept shelling our trenches. We could not hit back; only "stick it." One shell burst within three yards of me. They come with a loud whistle, but you can't see them and have no idea where they will fall. Everybody bobs down when they hear the whistle or scream of a shell coming close. This one burst close to me and I was half buried in the dirt it threw up. The noise they make as they explode is terrific; some of the fellows are practically deafened. I myself have just got the singing out of my ears. When a shell burst near —(end)

39.
41436 Pte. A.J. Pickett
Room 104 E. Company
R.A.M.C. Aldershot
12.12.1914

Dear Sir

I am writing to thank you for your kindness to me in sending me the body belt, and also for your kindness in cancelling my debt to you. I hope that when all this turmoil of war is over I may be able to return your favours in some way, for I feel my indebtedness to you keenly.

You will be glad to know that I attend St George's Church, Aldershot on Sundays, and there is a week's mission being held there commencing Sunday the 13th December. We feel quite at home here and it so happens that the eleven men who occupy the barracks that I am in are all staunch Church people and we have some happy times together. We are being allowed leave of seven days and free pass for xmas, which is very acceptable as you may suppose.

I sincerely hope that things are going on alright at Norton and that your prayers for us may be answered, as they surely will be if we ask in faith, nothing wavering.

I beg to remain Yours Faithfully
Arthur J. Pickett

40.
3029 Corpl. L.W. Tansley, No. 4 Coy.
1st Herts Regt. Btsh. Ex. Free
16.2.15

Dear Sir

I am writing you a few lines, being a citizen of dear old Letchworth and also a parishioner of Norton Church. You may know the name, as my two sisters are teachers in your Sunday School.

We have been having a hard time lately and are looking forward to our next well-earned rest. We are doing spells in the trenches of 24 hours each, that is not so bad now as the weather improves greatly day by day. The condition of the trenches is rather muddy, but not as bad as some we have been in, especially where once we were waist deep in water. Everything is done to make the trenches comfortable and at times our dugouts are quite cosy. We have a Chaplain from the Guards' Brigade and whenever possible a short bright service is held, usually in a barn. The chief feature, I think, in these services is the way the men sing the hymns and we do enjoy that. Our favourite is "O God, Our Help in Ages Past" and we need no accompanist I can assure you. It seems to bring us nearer home, those well known words and tune.

It may interest you to know that we have the Bishop of Khartoum as a Chaplain to one of the brigades, it being the first time it is possible to hold a Confirmation on the Battlefield, a fitting place surely to offer oneself to God's service. I heard from home that we soldiers are remembered in Church, for which I sincerely thank you.

I remember a text printed on the wall of my school at Cambridge, it ran: "Who fears, where God is?" I think that was how the wording ran, and very appropriate out here I think.

Well I must draw to a close now, if you could find time to write me a few lines I should be very grateful. Well, wishing you every success in your work.

Yours sincerely
Leslie W. Tansley

41.
76806 Sapper
G.4 Motor Airline Section
Scottish Sig. Sce. R.E.
Bancroft House
Hitchin
18.5.15

Dear Rev. Bailey

I am just taking the opportunity of thanking you for the book "Happy Warrior" which you so kindly sent for me. I consider it the very thing for "Jack and Tommy" on active service. I feel sure I shall find it very useful. Again thanking you,

I remain
Yours sincerely
A.E. Ridley

42.
February 18th 1915
M P...

Dear Sir

As I was with you in thought very much yesterday (Ash Wednesday), I will give you a few lines to let you know that I am very well indeed and very fit. I am billeted "somewhere in France" and very comfortable so far, and should you at any time wish to visit me, the following address will find me – 41436 Pte A.J. Pickett, R.A.M.C., 23rd Ambulance 7th Division, British Expeditionary Force, France.

I was exceedingly sorry that circumstances would not allow me to pay you a visit when I was on furlough, but when I get back again will do so. I thank you very much for your very helpful little booklet entitled "The Happy Warrior" which is indeed splendid and I have more than once found it to be a true friend.

I sometimes feel depressed and a sense of loneliness at times here, after the busy life I used to lead when I was with you at Norton, but when I look back the memory is very gratifying. I should have plenty to occupy my mind and time and my duties are to the accompaniment of the sound of the distant booming of the guns.

I trust that you are well and that all is going well at Norton.

I beg to remain
Yours sincerely
Arthur J. Pickett

43.
25.3.15
The Elms
Bedhampton
Havant

Dear Rev Bailey

I was much interested in reading the account sent me of the laying of the foundation stone of your Hall and am glad to send a small donation of 10/-.

Yours truly
LG Hawkes.

You will be interested to hear that I am "called up" to instruct classes of young officers of the new army. I have now a class of 100.

I should be glad of your prayers sometimes that, as I have opportunity, I may be able to speak to them of the love of Christ that they may give their hearts and lives to Him before they go out to the front.

44.
The Croft, Baldock Road
Letchworth
March 30/15

Dear Mr Bailey

I have today been given a commission and I go to France to a Depot on Tuesday next. I should like to have a word with you before I go. I am going to London tomorrow, Thursday, but shall be back in the evening. I think Mr Gates would take on my post as Treasurer and I will speak to him about it.

I am leaving everything at the Bank in connection with the money for you all in order, but I think it would be as well for you to obtain a further guarantor for £100 in case of emergencies.

Kindest regards and all the best of good wishes for the success of your scheme, from

Yours sincerely
A.....

45.
MEMORANDUM From L/C G.P. Hurran 7227
No. 4 Coy. 4th Bn. East Surrey Regiment
Ernesettle Camp, St Budeaux, Devon
Sunday April 4th 1915.

Dear Mr Bailey

I duly received "Thoughts and Prayers for Soldiers at the Front", together with a leaflet of Norton Parish Magazine. I wish to tender you my best thanks for same. Sir, I have thought and talked of you many times since I was in your company. I have come across several North Staffords who know your Dad.

I have had many little escapades since I have been back. I have been warned and passed for five different drafts and not gone yet. I have seen a good many Letchworth and Hitchin boys fixed up and depart. As a matter of fact I have helped to fix matters up. I have been appointed Coy. (Asst) Accountant and, despite my volunteering to go abroad, the Adjutant told the Captain he has to use discretion before releasing me. I am entirely in their hands and it is useless of my protesting, for the Regimental Sergeant Major placed me under arrest for insolence.

Almost the whole of the Contingent who came up at the same time as myself are now at the Front, some dead I am sorry to state. Others wounded (loss of limbs) and others quite restored and ready to be drafted out again. Personally I feel very keenly on the subject of young (especially single) men who refrain from joining up, and to my humble mind The Most Pleasing Feature of this week's Citizen was the rejection of that young fellow Pateman from the list of Parish Councillors. I honestly believe if he is not fit to join the ranks, he is certainly not a fit person to represent anybody's interest at this juncture. He was the last Letchworth fellow whom I spoke to before entering the train to link up at Hitchin early in September. I then told him his place was with me. He said NO. I said "henceforth I wipe my hands on you". He replied "Never mind I shall still live". Yes, apparently he is still living, but Public Opinion will be against him in his future endeavours. I have no doubt, despite a few of his kind writing letters to The Citizen, it will only result in bringing the True facts to light.

Mrs Hurran has told me you have at all times enquired after me. Well Sir I am pleased to report I am quite fit and, come what may, I have no doubt many morewill yet be required. I do not really believe the people yet realise the seriousness of this war. At last I have come across a good Church of England Minister who takes an interest in the troops. The first I have yet seen mingled with troops. The Wesleyans seems to have a good number of Chaplains prepared to proceed to the front, surely it needs someone to occasionally speak to the troops. I am sure it has some effect from preventing them running wild and even the youngest are anxious to proceed to the Front.

Well Sir, once again thanking you for remembering me. It all helps to cheer one up.
S. Hurran.

46.
20 Randall St
Maidstone
5.1.15

Dear Mr Bailey

I am sending you herewith six penny stamps for five magazines.

This is the money for the December Magazine. As I shall be at Maidstone for some time on account of my mother not being well you will want to make arrangements for the future delivery to my District.

My three brothers are now in the trenches I heard from them on Sunday last that they well, well clothed and well fed, Mr Gibson writes me he is very well.

Yours very sincerely
H. F. Gibson

47.
War Office
London, S. W.

A/253/Z
Accounts 3a.

14th January 1915

Sir,

With reference to your letter of the 6th January I am directed to inform you that the Secretary of the Territorial Forces Association, for Hertfordshire, reports that payment at the rate of 16/- a week (with arrears) was made to Mrs. Ashwell, on the 13th inst.

This payment is in respect of her two sons:-

No. 1809 Pte H. Ashwell, 1st Batt. Hertfordshire Reg;

No. 2526 Pte W. Ashwell, 1st Batt. Hertfordshire Reg;

With reference to your statement that she has seven sons serving in the Army, I am directed to ask if you would be good enough to state the Regimental number, name, rank, and Regiment of each of the other five sons.

I am, Sir
Your obedient servant

A. B. C.....

For the Assistant Financial Secretary

48.

The Vicar would be grateful if each parent or wife would write the address of their relative. He wishes to send them to Dr Macfadyen for a Christmas gift.

Frank Bywaters, Common View	No 2505, E Company, 1 st Herts. Regt British Expeditionary Force, France
Arthur Burnet, 18 North Fork	Stoker, Mess 49, H. M. S. Victorious c/o G. P. O. London
William Claydon, South Fork	No. 183350, Mess 31, H. M. S. Excellent, Portsmouth
William Richardson c/o Mrs Crowe,	10 Cromwell Green Gunner W Richardson, 44 Company, R. G. At North Hook Fort, Milford Haven, South Wales
George Berry, Green Lane	
Arthur Chares Reid, Green Lane	
Alfred Wilkinson, 90 Common View,	2525 Pte A Wilkinson, B Ward, Northward House, Coweb
Charles Hayward, Swiss Cottages, Green Lane	
A. A. Field	H. M. S. St George, c/o G. P. O. London
George Field, Green Lane (next door to G. Taylor's)	
Arthur John Pickett, c/o S. V. Smith, Glebe Rd.	41436, Pte A. J. Pickett, Room 104, E Company, R. A. M. C. Depot Aldershott
Sidney Cox, Green Lane	
Horace Goodwin, Common View	Not at home
Horace Reeve, 94 Glebe Road	Not at home
Herbert Hudson, Green Lane	
Walter Mervin, South Fork	Royal Field Artillery Colchester
Archibald Mervin, South Fork	Beds Yeo. B Squadron
Pte Hudson	13 th Hussars attached 8 (7 th) Hussars, 3 rd Indian Cavalry Brigade c/o War Office
Pte G A Berry	No. 10628, C Company, 6 th Battn. Beds Regiment, South Camp Aldershott
Pte G. H Field (Next to Taylors)	4 th Batt. East Surrey Regt., C Company, 10 Platoon Star Temperance Hotel, Saltash, Cornwall
Pte A. C. Reed	Section 1, No 7 Platoon, B Company, 8 th Beds Regt. Shoreham, Sussex
Pte H Cooper	8268, 3 rd Battn. Beds Regt.

49.
No. 2476, 1st Herts. Reg.
C 2 Ward
4th Southern General Hospital,
Salisbury Road,
Plymouth
?/1/15

Dear Sir

Just a few lines in answer to your kind and most welcomed letter and I am pleased to say I am getting on fairly well my wounds are healing up nicely the Doctor says I can get up a little on Saturday I have prayed for my health to be restored to me and I know my prayer is being answered I must also thank you for praying for me I am pleased to say I had a little service on my own on Christmas and as I lay in the Hospital at Rouen I read the morning and evening service through.

Well Dear Sir I cant say much time but if it is my luck to get a furlough I shall certainly come round and see you I have handed the Parish Magazine round to the patients in the Hospital the Doctor has come to dress my let so I shall have to close my letter with kindest regards

I remain your faithfully
Sidney Harrison

P.S. Please convey my best wishes for a Happy and Prosperous New Year to the Parish of Norton

50.
Mess 31
H. M. S. Excellent
Portsmouth
8/12/14

Dear Mr Bailey

Many thanks for your kind and thoughtful present which I received quite safely.

I can assure you I appreciate it very much and I have no doubt that I shall appreciate it the more through the coming winter.

Hoping you are keeping well with great respect

I am yours faithfully
W Claydon

Please remember me to Mr Chamberlain

51.
6/8/18
France

Dear Sir

I have much pleasure in acknowledging receipt of coupon from the Letchworth war comfort fund. It is a great pleasure to me to know that there is plenty of friends in Letchworth who are thinking of the local boys out here, and I can safely say that anything that is sent out here is appreciated to the full. Although I am in a village a little way behind the line where there are a few civilians necessary things are extremely difficult to get except at exorbitant prices and the canteens wont always be relied upon. We have another fellow in this company that come from Hitchin with whom I am very chummy with and we often have a chat about old times. The life out here suits me very well not being a soldier although we are well treated in every way but the open air life and roughing it which I have pretty well got accustomed to by now after 2¼ years out here. I have every hopes of being home on leave within the next 3 months. Of course leave is very uncertain owing to transport difficulties so they have started a new scheme to enable anyone who wishes to have 10 days at some French holiday resort. Several of our fellows have been to various places and I have hopes of going to Paris before long. I suppose mother has mentioned to you that I have never been able to see father it is now 3½ years since I saw him last. I am only 30 miles away from where he is stationed but I have been unable to get down to see him as yet. I still have hopes of being able to see him in the near future. I saw one of my brothers a few weeks ago. From all appearance I think we can expect to see the war finished before so very long as we can be well satisfied with the state of affairs as they are going on now. Well I must close now. Please excuse this awful scrawl as I have to write according to circumstances.

Yours sincerely
W. Field

52.
From 'The Citizen' Newspaper

With the British Heavy Guns
LETTERS FROM A LETCHWORTH SOLDIER

Mr. And Mrs. Thomas Carnew, of 'Trefusis' Glebe Road, have received the following letter, dated October 25th from their son, Gunner Reginald Carnew, who has been with a battery of heavy British guns at the front since the commencement of the war.

Very pleased to receive your parcel and letter; thank you all very much. The tin box comes in very handy for writing paper. I am also dropping a line to John. Our battery is doing very well. The Germans do not like the khaki shell. During the time we have been out we could not have wished for better weather' it has been lovely, and where we are now it is not so cold of a morning.

We have been in four engagements and I dont's expect this one will last long according to the news we get read out every evening.

When we were marching along the road a few days ago the people in the villages gave us any amount of walnuts, apples, and pears. As soon as the Germans get driven back the people return to their homes (if they have any left). During the time we are in action we fire very few shrapnel, it is nearly all lyddite, so as to give the Germans a helping hand out of the trenches; and it does too.

The shells are 120 lbs., and there are plenty of them. They go singing through the air, finding the right spot.

GERMANS POISON WELLS

Some places we get to the water is poisoned, and all water is tested. They put an enteric germ into it also. We happen to be pretty fortunate, and nearly always take position where we can get water from the pump. There are plenty of cattle walking about loose.

We are getting a pipe a man, or some cigarettes presented to us from an officer whom we do not know.

There are not half so many German aeroplanes flying about as we have seen before. We say a French aeroplane looping the loop a few days ago.

In one day at our last position we fired something like 260 shells. Our battery consists of howitzers with a team of eight heavy horses to each gun. I have never seen such a long train in all my life, and don't ever expect to see one so long again. We could not see the end till we were rounding a very large curve.

GERMANS SHELL WORSHIPPERS

As we are sitting by the fire at night we often say: "Well to-morrow is Sunday; I wonder if we shall get a shelling." Sunday is reckoned the worst shelling day. As we were at an open-air service the German's "Coal-box" or "Jack Johnson" gun sent two shells singing over our heads. They entered the ground, and did not burst.

Tea is now up but no tables or chairs! I am going to sit on the grass. Thanking you very much for pipe, scarf, sweets, cigarettes, and pencils.

GETTING ABOUT

To his brother-in-law, the Assistant Editor of "The Citizen", the same soldier wrote on 25th October as follows:-

"Pleased to receive your letter yesterday. We have not had the other mails delivered yet, but expect them to-night. It is a fortnight since we had a mail. The reason is that we have been shifted about such a lot by rail and on foot. We travelled over 100 miles by foot, and I don't know how many by rail. I have a couple of rounds of French and German bullets, and shall let you have one if I arrive home safe. It is very hard to get a curio of any kind, as we are not able to get even a German helmet. Shall let you know when the other parcels and letters arrive, as I have only received your one by parcel post. Tell them at home that I shall drop them a line as soon as I get some writing paper. Just lately we know no more about the naval battles than you do – in fact, not so much – but I expect we shall be getting the "Daily Mail" regularly again as they are beginning to find out where we are. We get a bit of news read out to us now and again. We are doing very well, and are in the best of health.

WELCOME TOBACCO

The same writer (who appears to have received in one bunch all the correspondence sent to him during a month) writes again on October 27th as follows:-

Pleased to receive your muffler, etc. Thank you very much. There does not seem to be so many German guns firing here now; perhaps they have shifted, or been silenced. A battery of the Royal Field Artillery did fine work, and the German casualties numbered 1,000 odd.

The British aeroplanes have a Union Jack on each wing, and can be easily distinguished from a German one; the shape is also different.

The dogs here follow the troops all right and each regiment generally picks up a stray dog or two.

We had some had tobacco served out to us last week, so I gave the old pipe a rest and have started the new one you sent. The flags come in just right for the march, as when we run out of matches, I can generally get a light for a cigarette from someone who is also smoking a fag. When we anchor down we light our pipes from the fire, and all have a yarn to spin. Sometimes we get a box of matches, and they are very precious. We never think of striking a match when there is a fire alight.

The weather is still keeping fine, and I am in the best of health.

“The Citizen” in the Trenches

The following letter, which we have received from the fighting line, shows that copies of “The Citizen” have penetrated the trenches:-

British Expeditionary Force
10th Brigade,
4th Division. Oct. 22nd

Dears Sirs – Just a line from the front in appreciation of your paper through the columns of which I am able to follow all home notes, and learn the admirable work the residents of Letchworth are doing for the sake of their King and Country.

We are just warming to our work now and the Kaiser knows the value of England’s contemptible little army. My whereabouts and doings I am not allowed to disclose, but my regiment if needed for publication will be given from 11 Ridge Road. Hoping your indefatigable work will be met with every success – Yours etc.
C Topham

Brave Letchworth Soldier

DIED IN ACTION

News has reached Letchworth of the death in action of Private Percy Reeve of the 1st Bedfordshire Regiment. Expeditionary Force. His mother, a widow, lives at 94 Glebe Road, and her lot has been a very hard one. Her husband was coachman for Sir George Fordham and he had an accident which caused a tumour, and this led to his death. During this summer a son of Mrs Reeve’s, Albert Reeve, a platelayer, was killed on the railway line. He was 24 years of age, and a sergeant of Royston E Company of the Territorial Force, and the principal support of his mother. He was buried at Royston with military honours. He was a born soldier and would have been in the Army but for some slight difficulties with regard to his teeth. Another brother has answered Lord Kitchener’s appeal, and he is now at Harwich.

Private Percy Reeve, news of whose death has reached Letchworth, was 19 years of age, and it happens that his character has been drawn very clearly in the following letter sent to Mrs Reeve from the front by a comrade. Private Percy Reeve’s last visit to Letchworth was on the occasion of his brother Albert’s funeral.

THE LETTER

1st Bedfordshire Regiment
Expeditionary Force, 27 Oct., 1914

Dear Mrs Reeve, - I feel I must write a few lines to say how terribly I and his section miss your son. His was a soldier’s death, killed in action while repulsing the Germans. He was the bravest of the brave and always volunteered for dangerous work. There was no one like him. He would take any risk to help the cause and his comrades. He ought to have had the V.C. several times over. He was always cheerful and seemed to glory in fighting. There were few like him in the army for pluck and audacity. There was nothing he would not attempt. I am taking the liberty of writing this because we have been the greatest of chums since we enlisted, and he used to say I was his greatest friend as he was mine. He was a soldier through and through, and although still a boy would put most men to shame for fearlessness. I miss him terribly and many others will also. If we had an army composed of men like him we should go through the Germans in a week, he was so exceptionally brave. Others say the same as myself. I hope someday if I live through the war to come and see you. I should like to meet you because you are the mother of a man who was out of the ordinary for daring. He had every quality of a soldier. I offer my deepest sympathy. His death has cut me up more than anything and left a vacant feeling in my heart. I know that you have had more than your share of troubles, but please bear up as I know he would wish. His comrades in the Company join with me in offering their deepest sympathy. – I am, yours sincerely,

R Sandilands
1st Bedford Regiment

53.
No 92898
Bdr Bde RFA
Head Quarters Staff
BEF
20.12.15

Dear Mr Baily

Received your most Welcome letter last night, and I can tell you I very much apesate them as it is very good of you to write to me, because I am thinking while I write this I was not the best of lads while I was with you but I often wish I could have that time over again, I had a letter from my old mate yesterday Arthur Berry and I hear is his getting on fine, he gave me A Deans address and I am going to write to him later, you say it is cold at home now well it is very cold here but we must put up with that.

Glad you liked the cards but I think they ought to have put (Mon's) on it because this Brigade stood the brunt of the German advance, We were giving them stick again yesterday all day, you ought to see our planes have a game with them he flying so low that they shoot at him with maxims, they are very active on our front with them now.

Millie told me the bricklayers were on strike again that is very bad for you in Letchworth now but I suppose wont last long lets hope not. We had some pudding yesterday for dinner which some little girls from Staffs sent us. I should think you would know the Schools well being as you come from Staffs Rugby School we have some every month from there, different things very good of the little youngsters ad they tell us in their letters who they pray for us every night very nice indeed. I had my Xmas parcel from mother today, and a large one to she always sends me one every week.

Well Dear Mr Baily I wish you a Merry Xmas and a Happy New Year.

Can you remember 2 Christmas's ago when we where all together enjoying ourselves how little we thought of this terrible conflict then but we must keep good spirits and we shall pull through with gods help.

So I must close now
From yours ever
H Reed x

I cant forget that little saying on the lid of my altar book

In the midst of life we are in death.

54.
Dec 1st

Dear Mr Bailey

Just a few lines in answer to your welcome letter which I received about a week ago. Im sorry I haven't answered it before but this is my first opportunity. Im glad you have looked up Athur its hard luck for him having that foot but perhaps he will get used to it in time. I am keeping pretty fit out here but shall be jolly glad to get home again. This is Sunday night and its snowing hard I wish I was in the old Church it makes one think out here about their religion. I think we shall all be wiser and better when we get back if god spares us which trust he will do. I must close now. Hoping you will have a Happy Xmas.

Yours sincerely

R Taylor

My address is 265862 No 1 Platoon No 1 Coy 1st Herts Regt

55.
Pte A Bussey
5306
1st Herts Regt
No 17 J..D.
S17.APO
BEF France
De 8th 1916

Dear Sir

I am writing you a few lines hoping you are quite well as I am pleased to say it leaves one fairly well at present but for a cold. I have been in hospital sick. I dare say you have heard of our success recently. I mean of the Batt they have done very well , so I will not say any more about it. Will tell you more when I see you. The weather has been very cold and it has now turned to rain. I met C Miles who used to live next door to me in Common View. It seemed like old times we were delighted to see each other I can tell you. I told him I thought of sending you a few lines, and he wishes to be kindly remembered to you. I don't quite know if you remember but I expect you do but Miles and myself were at Norton Church when Len Laggett was married to Martha Miles, but I sorry to say Laggett is killed now but I dare say you heard all about it. He was killed Sept 25th. I think I will close these few lines I thought would like to hear from me. I should be pleased to have a few lines from you at anytime.

So will close now

Wishing you a Merry Xmas

I remain yours sincerely

A Bussey

56.
F Clements Sergt
D Coy 1st Garr Batt Essex Regt
8.1.17
British Barracks
Khartoum
(Sudan)

Dear Sir

Please excuse the liberty I am taking in writing to you but I felt that I should like to thank you for writing on behalf of my wife. Owing to the wife being in indifferent health for some time now I thought I should be justified in making an application for furlough. These are termed compassionate furloughs and are only granted to us in cases of illness at home. My CO received your letter quite safe Sir and I was sent for but unfortunately it came when we were on the point of moving up into the Sudan where we are now are. Then a few days afterwards an order came here to the effect that all furloughs were stopped but my CO has promised to give it his attention when they are started again. I should very much like to see my wife and children again. I have been away since August 1915. We are not so fortunate as the men in France. Leave does not come our way. I shall be ever gratefull to you Sir if your letter does take effect. Hoping you are quite well Sir and thanking you again for your kindness. I am your obedient servant
F Clements Sgt, 1st GB Essex Rgt.

57

Church Army Recreation Hut or Tent
From FGB No 234095
Signals Section
RFA
Biscot Camp

5.11.17

My Dear Vicar

I came as rather a sudden shock to me to open the Magazine and find that your beloved father had passed to his rest. I knew that he had been ill but did not know that things were as serious. I wish to convey on behalf of Mrs Barber and myself our sincerest sympathy to you and your family in your bereavement and trust that they are healing as well as can be expected what is always a serious blow.

I am very grateful indeed for the magazine as it is the link between my civilian life and the state that I am in at present. I am glad to say that we are all well and our boy progressing favourably.

Yours sincerely
F G Barber

58.
July 8 – 18

My dear Vicar

Your note of the 21st of June to hand last evening and I was indeed very pleased to hear from you and of course the idea that you had forgotten me was furthest from my thoughts as I know full well that my name is mentioned by you many times a month and that you are always writing to someone or other, still the letter came as a refresher. Thank you about the magazine but some kind unknown person always sends me a copy & I have never known who to thank for it so you see I am always in touch with you & think a lot of the old times and sincerely wish that I was back in my place in the choir & my Coy of the CLB. It is the greatest regret of all to me in the way my Sundays are wasted out here and in fact one does not realize one day from another the name of the day signifies nothing of course now & then when we are out of action we get a Church parade & I have had the privilege of attending 3 HC services in my 7 months in France and Belgium the last was in Padres billet and I was thoroughly at home. Of course it would be impossible for me to tell you of all our various doings and adventures but suffice it to say that our Battery has been most fortunate in all these difficult days and has done good work. I hear from W Rock occasionally and he gives me scraps of news. My wife and sonnie are at Scarborough for some time she having taken a small cottage in conjunction with her sister so I hope the idea will be successful as it will do them a lot of good being there in the pure Yorkshire air. I had the photos of the Coy sent me by Baker and by the way he owes me a letter if you would kindly remind him. I am glad to hear the choir is doing well under his direction and as I said before I long for the old days when I was in the midst of my favourite work. Well, Vicar, I must close trusting you are well and with kindest regards to yourself and all old friends.

I remain
Yours faithfully
Fred G Barber

59.
11 Common View
Letchworth
Herts

Dear Sir

Will you please accept this photo of my dear boys as I know he would be pleased if he had been alive to you to have had one I have had a letter from Dick asking me to tell you that he hopes you will take it for granted that he never saw you at Peterborough or he would have only been to pleased to have come to you of course I wrote to him about it as I do like things straight forward if I can but I must tell you sir that you have been very much liked by all my family more than you are aware of perhaps it is no rot it is the truth and I thank you very much for putting that nice bit in the magazine I do think it was good of you truly

E Taylor

60.
Pte L. O'Dell
19307
54 Division, Base Depot
Sidi Bishi
Alexandria, Egypt.

Dear Sir

Just of few lines hoping these will find you quite well as I am please to say that I am the same. I arrived hear safe on the 1st Feb and it took 14 days to come and I had two days sea sickness but I got over that. I came by the boat cauled the Engorma. Well Sir the ground we are camping on is the ground where our Lord Jesus Christ walk on so they say we are not allowed to say much so I cannot tell you much this time so I must close now hoping to hear from you soon so good ... I remain your ever loving Fend Leonard O'Dell

61.
Driver F. G. B 234095
Luton
Beds

Dear Vicar

I expect you think its time I wrote you a few lines but I have only just been able to give a proper address and doubtless you have heard from Mrs Barber (?) as to my doings. I am glad to tell you that I am well and making the best of the very trying conditions prevailing in barrack and camp life, which I assure you is a great strain on my spiritual life and I again ask you to remember me often in your prayers. I am at the provisional depot at Bisoot camp just out of Luton and there are hundreds of men here in various stages of training and drafts are leaving daily for various stations abroad. We are at present on squad drill (cavalry) and physical exercises and we sleep under canvas which is a new experience to many of us. While waiting at Woolwich to be drafted there I was fortunate to be able to get to see my wife and parents a good few times for which I was thankful. I now hope to be able to get a Sunday off soon and come over to see you but passes are very scarce and hard to get. I trust you are all well and should be glad if you would commend me to the chaplain in charge here at this hut and also send me a magazine (parish) please convey my best wishes to the lads of the C.L.B. and tell them I often think of them and with kind regards to yourself.

Yours faithfully
F. G. Barber

62.
Nov 28. 1916
Rev J. H. Bailey

Dear Sir

War Shrines

I wish to offer one or two suggestions as to the next was Shrines you intend putting up in the first place several people has remarked that the writing on the Norton one is bad and too indistinct. I suggest that you print the next one in roman capitals :- JOHN BROWN something like that next the cross at the apex is very common and will not last long gilt, I would suggest a lighter wood or if enough funds some metal that will not tarnish. The wires for the flower vases would be better at the sides as large flowers block the vision of the names.

I also thought that as some of the C.L.B. coy at Letchworth would be on the next list it would be a compliment to ask them to come but of course that is again only a list (?)

I trust you will consider these few ideas.

Yours faithfully

J. Barber

63.
June 14th 1918
Same Address

To the Rev J. H. Bailey

Dear Mr Bailey

I was very pleased to receive your welcome letter (?)/June 9th 1918. I assure you it is very pleasing to myself to know that you think of me every night! Of course I am far from being perfect and each and every one of us need some one to think of us. I must admit I have much to be thankful for, being still intact when many of my comrades have been killed, wounded or captured. Of course it is not altogether a life of pleasure but it greatly rests with the men themselves and naturally you will agree make the best of it./ The weather continues "Glorious" and we are enjoying "A Welcome Rest" and in A Village in which greatly resembles Norton and really In think more of Norton each day! Yes I often hear from dear old George Crickton. I hope to visit him once again when I eventually get leave. I am glad you made mention of Mr Parfitt I have been wondering how he his progressing I wrote him about a couple of weeks ago and up to now I have not yet received an answer but still I believe his time is very well occupied. I am pleased to hear that from time to time you see Mrs Hurren and Irene. Mrs H sent me a photo Miss Bracey took at School by jove She does grow. Well we must not get despondent and we must keep smiling for the Silver Lining is bound to show itself in the near future and that will be a grand sight, far better than two dinners on one plate eh? Well Bye Bye. Thanks Cheero, Best of Luck

I remain your fraternally

G. Percy Hurren

64.

Jan 15th 1918

Dear Mr Bailey,

I am sure you will be surprised to hear from me, but I feel it my duty to send you a few lines now I have a few minutes to spare.

Well I am sorry I cannot write you a long letter as I have very little to write about, we are not allowed to tell you very much, I must tell you I am just getting over an attack of trench feet, I spent Xmas in the Batt Medical hut and was unable to walk for a fortnight, my feet are not well yet but I am able to get about so am carrying on as before; for there is plenty of work to be done out here yet, and I believe the sooner we get on the job the sooner it will finish, when I hope to get back and visit good old Norton Church more frequently than I did before I enlisted. On Xmas day I was lying in a shed close to a little French village and I listened to the bell in the church ringing which reminded me more than anything of the Xmas Days of old when I should have been going to church. I am pleased to tell you I am keeping well, and have been lucky enough to come through without a scratch so far. My address is No. 4 Platoon, 10th D.L.Z, B. E. F., France.

I must close now. Hope you are keeping quite well and that I may be able to visit you in a few months time when I get a leave.

I am yours truly
Pte H. A. Stapleton

65.

J. R. Foster
Company A, Batt 26th
Training Range Batt
Dovercourt, Essex.

20th February 1917

Dear Vicar

Just a few lines to let you know that I have at last got settled to the above address. I was sorry that I was out when you called at 'Briar Cottage' last week, it was very kind of you. Dad gave me to understand that he explained, about my journey to London. I called twice at the Churchmans' Batt; but each time found the clergyman out that you addressed the letter to. I was drafted to Bedford on Saturday afternoon, and moved on to Dovercourt Monday evening 8 o'clock. We are billeted in Huts which are rather rough but cannot complain. I expect it is much better than being under canvas. I hope you will find the Sunday School books in order. I am afraid I did not mark very form in register for the last week.

We went out for our first drills this afternoon instruction in saluting etc. I have not seen the Army Chaplain yet, but shall see him I expect on Sunday. Shall have to close now as they are calling the roll.

Hoping you are quite well
From your affectionate Friend
J. R. Foster

P.S. Will write a longer letter next time also excuse scribble as I am writing this on a stool.

66.

Church Army Recreation Hut
On active service with the Mediterranean Expeditionary Force

16/2/16

Rev. J. H. Bailey

Dear Sir,

I hope you will forgive me for taking the liberty of writing to you but I have been anxiously waiting for an answer to my last letter I wrote to you but I have come to the conclusion that you couldn't have received it. I don't no as I have any news to tell you I am sorry to say I have been ill and in Hospital for a month but am feeling much better now and I hope and trust that you and all the friends at Letchworth and Norton are quite well. I see in the Citizen that my wife sent to me that you are holding a National Mission and I do pray that God's Blessing may rest on all your labours and also hope that it will prove a blessing and success to all the people at Letchworth and Norton, I shall be so pleased when I have the opportunity of seeing the dear old place again, I ask my wife if she ever saw you but I see by the paper that you are very busy just now. I kept that little book you sent me right up till just lately as of course that is getting on for 2 years more then but I found many a helpful word in it since I have been out here. I don't no as I can say any more this time I shall be so pleased to have a line from you at any time; this is my address. Pt H. Mehew, 3/4/059957, 21st Corps Field Battery, Salonica Forces. I must close now with the Seasons Greetings to you and all

Believe me,

Yours Sincerely

H Mehew

67.

220 Company A2 Bat MGC Regt.
Hut No 51, No 3 Section
Minden Bks
Deep Cut
Farnborough, Hants
March 2 1917

Dear mr Bailey

I arraived back safely last evening (Thursday) after leaving Letchworth at 5.45 p.m. and arrived at Finsbury Park at 7.10 about and paid several visits in London and arrived at Camp at 11.45 p.m.

I enclose herewith a photo of our Section it is not very good as we were facing the sun and we were not prepared for having our photo taken I am sorry I did not have my Barr and Stroud with me (the Range find Instrument)

I wish to thank you for your kindness towards me and my wife at this time.

I am now going over again to see our Quartermaster about is and wake them up to the fact.

I will now close with kindest regards

Yours very sincerely

Arthur S Comley

P.S. Please excuse scribbling pens here are awful.

68.
Cpl G. Follis 500530
3rd Mounted Divisional
Signals Squadron E. E. F.

8th/6/1917

Dear Vicar

Just a line to say that I have now been in Egypt about a fortnight and I must say the climate agrees with me very well indeed up to now. I am writing this in a fairly large house, with about 6 rooms for the convenience of the Troops; a Miss Kerney of the G.E.M.S. mission is in charge.

I gave an address in a C.A. "Hut" last Sunday evening which I shall never forget, for the men were so attentive and infact a number came and spoke to me afterwards, what a splendid field for some winning.

I trust you are keeping well, Kindest regards to all the people at the Hall
Yours in Christ
G. Follis

69.
First Garden City Limited
Estate Office
Letchworth
Hertfordshire

Trees

2nd May, 1916

Revd. J. H. Bailey,
Norton Vicarage,
Letchworth

Dear Sir,

We are obliged by your favour of the 29th instant, which we will attend to if on inspection the tree is found to be our responsibility.

At the present time we have all the men we can find attending to trees fallen across roads or footpaths.

We have asked for exemption for our foreman forester as we must have one skilled man in charge and he is 39 and not of value as a military man. If you can express the need for the public safety being norne in mind where there are so many large trees, the Local Tribunal might be glad of some confirmation of our application, which was held over till next week.

Yours faithfully
For, FIRST GARDEN CITY LIMITED.

70.
Christ Church Vicarage,
Luton

Sept 7. 1916.

Dear Mr Bailey

Thank you very much for your very kind letter which reached me this morning. I shall be returning to Luton on Wednesday next all being well. I am pleased to place my services at your disposal but, to be quite frank I don't know exactly what the Bishop really requires his messengers to do.

We are called to attend a meeting, messengers on Friday week at which Dr Robinson will speak to us. After that meeting I will communicate with you at once. In the meanwhile I shall like to know what programme of services it is suggesting itself to you.

Canon Hicks and the Vicar of Cheshunt are coming to me and they are deciding upon a one day programme – with the addition of a preparation service for the “faithful” on

71.
2th A/M
A. B. Payne 42735
Room No. 4
Coley Park Factory
R.F.C. Dept. Reading, Berks.

Sept 7. 1916
The Rev J. H. Bailey

Dear Sir

I was very pleased to have a P. C. From you this evening it is very nice to have letters and cards come it helps to pass the time away when you are a bit down hearted. I am please to tell you that I am getting on now I have passed through the worst I hope as it as been a very rough time for me but I do not mind that as now I am hear I have to put up with all that sort of thing. The wife as told me that you have been to see her and Raymond and very pleased I am to think that somebody will have a look at them as it is very hard to leave home I can tell you. I think I shall be hear about 3 more weeks it is the very best training School the R. F. C as but it is very hard work what with drill and lectures and other work as well. I was road making on Wenesday and today scrubbing paint all today. The first Sunday I went to the Church Parade and then I went to the Parish Church at Aldershot at night and the next Sunday I went to Farnborough Church. Now this last Sunday I went to a Mens Meeting about 300 altogether and I was the only one in Karkie, but we had a very good service. Well dear Mr Bailey I will try to find the one you have sent me the name of this week end if I get out into the town as we work Sunday in the Army as well as other days. Remember me to all kind friends that ask after me but I would sooner be with all of you I can assure you but at the same time I think in a few years time it will be the very best Corps in the British Army so I shall have something to remember in years to come, if ever I come over Norton in the aur I shall want to cojme down to have a look at home sweet home as we do not get any leaf from hear so I do not know where I shall go from hear. So now I think this is all and thank you very much for the little book which you gave to me before I left home and excuse pencil as I have no pen with me.

I am Sir yours truly
A. B. Payne

P.S. When sending don't forget to put the number on.

72.
Pte A. Bussey, No 5306
B Company
3/1st Herts. Regt.
Halton Park Camp North
Nr Tring, Herts.

Dec 20/15

Dear Sir

Just a line hoping you are quite well as it leaves me at present and to let you know I am getting along nicely. I was home last week for a few days, but I was sorry I was not able to come and see you, but hope to next time if I am lucky enough to get leave. We have got to remain here for Xmas so I must make the best of it, we have our services in the Y.M.C.A. Hut now as the conditions are against us in the open now. I should be pleased to receive that soldiers hymn book you promised me. Trusting you will excuse pencil. Will write to you again after Xmas and wishing you a merry Xmas.

I remain yours Sincerely
A. Bussey

73.

Joint War Roll

C.E.M.S. Offices,
Church House,
Westminster, S.W.1.

My dear Sir,

A strong and united religious movement, known as the War Roll, has existed for some time under the direction of a Joint Committee representative of all denominations. In connection with this scheme men and women who are serving with H. M. Forces are invited to sign the following promise:-

“I hereby pledge my allegiance to the Lord Jesus Christ as my Saviour and King,
And by God’s help will fight His battles for the Victory of His Kingdom.”

The religious significance of the pledges varies to a considerable extent. In many cases the signatures are those of communicants and full Church members, who in the midst of strange surroundings have re-affirmed their belief, or have signed as an act of encouragement to others. In most cases, however, the cards have been signed by men whose knowledge of the Faith is elementary, and who will require careful teaching before their personal allegiance can be developed into active service.

In sending you the enclosed cards we should be grateful if you would endeavour to keep in touch with those who have signed and help them to persevere. It is felt by the Joint Committee that if clergy and ministers throughout the country will use this opportunity of writing to these War Roll members, and also visit their homes, they may be able to induce people not at present Church-goers to attend Church, and to pray for the moral and spiritual welfare of those on Active Service.

We have already forwarded a letter of welcome and a copy of “The Comrade,” which is an occasional paper issued by the Church Army, with whom we are associated in this matter. If you have a Branch of the Men’s Society in your Parish we hope that you will encourage any soldier who signs the War Roll to join it upon his return, and that in the Branch he will find that comradeship which will strengthen him in keeping the resolve that he has made.

Should the address on the card not be in your Parish, the Committee will be greatly obliged if you will send it to the Incumbent concerned.

Yours Sincerely,
E. GORDON SAVILE,
On behalf of the C. Of E. War Roll Committee

74.

A few notes as to what the Parish Of Norton, Herts. did during the Great War.

The Holy Communion was celebrated almost daily and the names of those serving from the Parish were remembered at the altar.

Open Air Intercession Services were held from time to time and on Sundays on occasions on the plot where we hope eventually a Church will stand at the corner of Common View and Norton Way North.

A memorable Service was held here on the 1st August 1914 or the Sunday nearest that date when an address was given by Mr. W O. Turner of Hitchin. I think this was the day.

War Shrines were erected at the corner of the School House Garden facing towards Letchworth. Near the Church Hall, and about halfway down Common View.

Dedication Services were held when these were erected.

Social Evenings were held in the Church Hall weekly or thereabouts for the Wives of the Soldiers serving.

These are just some of the activities

John H. Bailey
Vicar of Norton
April 29 / 31

75.

Belgian Sporting Club
(B.S.C.)
Fonde to 3 juin 1916 par les Belges en exil travaillant aux Usines a Munitions
Kryn et Lahy

LETCHWORTH, HERTS.
"KOSI-KOR!
104 Pixmore Way

August 9th, 1916.

John H. Bailey Esq.,
Vicar of Norton,
Norton Vicarage
Letchworth.

Sir,

It is only today that we are able to answer your letter dated July 20th, and we must say that its contents very much surprised the members of our Committee.

We cannot in any way accept your protest on our playing matches on Sundays. Our men are working a fortnight per month eleven hours per day on daywork; the other fortnight when on night-duty they work 10 hours $\frac{3}{4}$ per night. They have not the same privilege of the British workers of having half day off on Saturdays and a great deal of our men are even working on Sundays until 12, 1, sometimes till 5 & 7 oclock!!

Do you think these men need no fresh air, no recreation at all? – Most of these men are discharged soldiers or soldiers on leave, some of them were on the field since Liege, or Louvain or Haelen or Aeroschot Do you not think that these fellows, at least, after helping the Allies with all the remainder of their power, may do some sport during the 4 or 5 hours they do not work in a week. You will every easily find out at the

Ministry of Munitions that the output per head, has not been equalled up to now by any other factory in the United Kingdom!

Furthermore, we beg to point out that in no way we are your visitors. The Belgians of Letchworth are citizens because they pay the same taxes – but higher rents! – as you do. Your argument in this case also is of no value whatever.

For your guidance we enclose copy of a letter sent to the Daily Telegraph on August 2nd by Mr Basil G. Bouchier and giving his opinion on the same subject you put forward in your letter.

Before closing this letter we want to point out also that at every match or meeting we make a collection of money 50% of which is distributed for charity. Appreciating so much all what the heads of Letchworth Hospital are doing for our sick and wounded we have sent some money yet and will be happy to send another cheque after the racing matches of Sunday next.

We are confident that after all these explanations you will agree that a munition worker, working eleven hours a day, or per night, having no holiday whatever (we had not even an hour leave our Great National Day the 21st of July) will hurt the feelings of nobody in taking his rest as he thinks best. Please bear in mind that since their childhood our people are accustomed to do sports on the Continent as, as a rule they have no leave in the week and working 10, 11 & 12 hours a day.

Yours faithfully,

FOR THE BELGIAN SPORTING CLUB

Secretary-Treasurer

President

I agree to this. I should probably not have written this protest today.

John H. Bailey

Ap. 29 / 31

N.B. Please note that the remarks passed in this letters cannot be considered as a personal attack to you, but are made in a general sense.