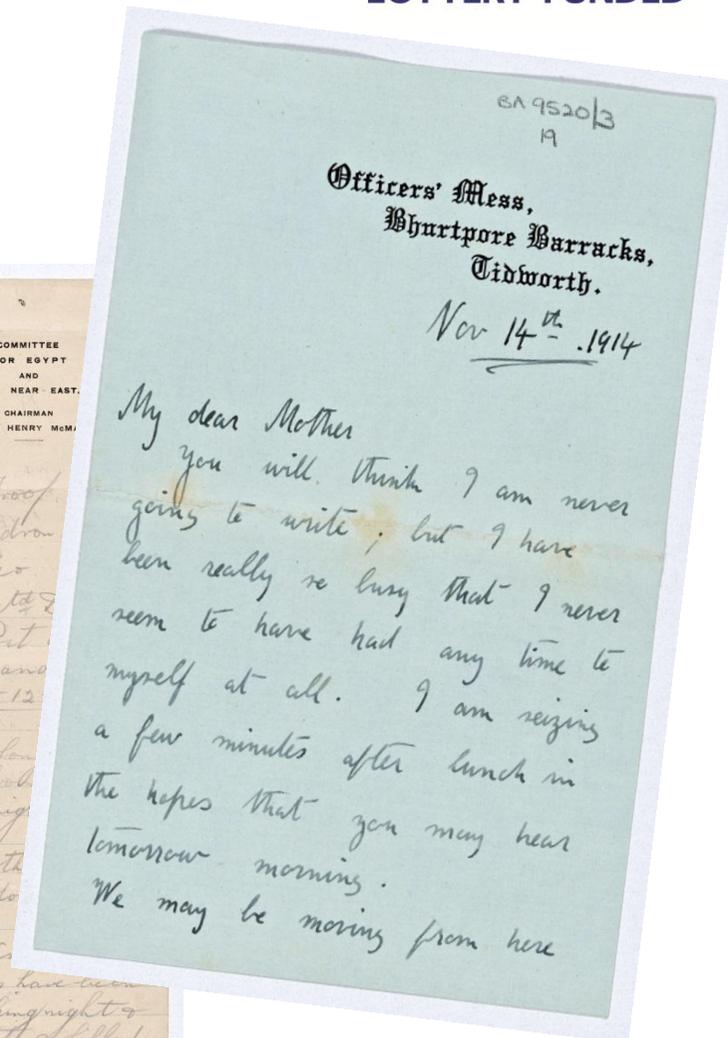
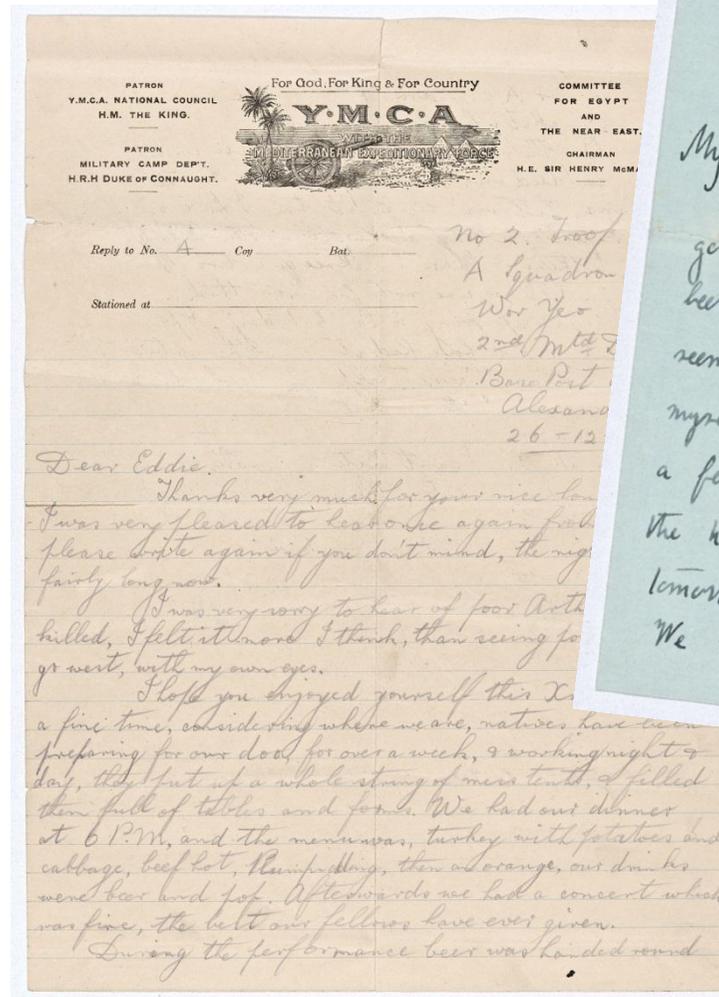


Resource Pack

Letters from the Front



Why use letters?

The use of these sources involves pupils using a skill based approach.

Pupils will:

- Understand the method of historical enquiry thinking critically, asking perceptive questions, evaluating the evidence rigorously and understanding the implication of perspective coming to a synthesis the evidence to answer their own questions
- Understand historical concepts being able to draw contrasts and forming historically valid questions
- Gain historical perspective by placing growing knowledge into different contexts

Who is this pack aimed at?

Due to the fact that letters are handwritten they are not always easy to read.

Much of the content presumes a level knowledge of events. Hence this pack really lends itself to Key stage 4 study. However there is nothing to stop a teacher of any other Key Stage level taking and adapting the material to suit the needs of the children that they teach.

A number of the letter writers are involved in the provision of medical care. It seems sensible therefore to include a specific section on medicine in WWI and help satisfy the GCSE level courses focusing upon the development of British medicine.

How is this organised?

This is primarily a resource pack.

A biography of each correspondent is given to help pupils better appreciate the individual involved in these national events.

To give a representative perspective letters from contributors of varying social backgrounds have been chosen.

A general structure has been provided using the following themes:

- Recruitment/training
- Life on the fronts
- Medicine
- Thoughts of home

Within each theme letters are provided that meet our expectations of WWI but then letters follow that question these. For example some letters outline the boredom involved in waiting to fight. These examples help to extend pupils understanding.

Transcribed excerpts are provided that focus upon the general theme. These make it easier for pupils to read and to help focus solely upon the theme. Letters are however a rich source of social history and so much can be gained from studying the letter in its entirety. Where we can we have produced the whole letter, but this is not always possible as some are faint and difficult to read.

Biographies of the letters' authors

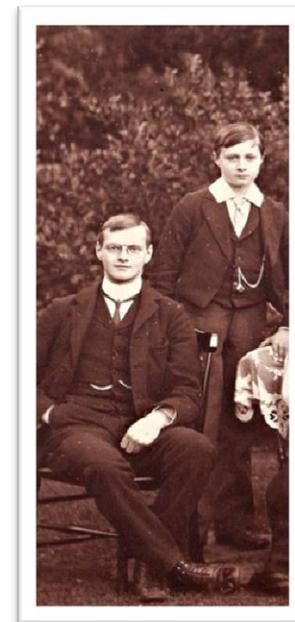
Arthur Sladden was a civil surgeon in the Royal Army Medical Corps and served in France from 1914-1919.

Lt Cyril Sladden, DSO, later Major, 9th Battalion, Worcestershire Regiment. He served abroad with the Battalion in Galipoli, Egypt, Mesopotamia, Persia and Caucasus from 1915-1919. He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order and Military Cross in 1918.

John Stafford (Jack) Preece was born c1895 in Enville, Staffordshire, the son of Jesse and Susan Ann Preece. Jack joined the Worcestershire Yeomanry early in the War and had risen to the rank of Sgt by the time he was demobbed in March 1919.

Gilbert Clements was born in 1894 and was living in Kidderminster when he enlisted in September 1914. Gilbert joined the Royal Field Artillery as a gunner.

Rachel Lyttleton was the third daughter of Charles Lyttleton, Viscount Cobham of Hagley Hall. She became a VAD (Voluntary Aid Detachment) nurse and served in France.



Arthur (seated)
and Cyril Sladden



Rachel Lyttleton

Letter from Cyril Sladden

Nov 14th 1914

My Dear Mother

You will think I am never going to write, but I have been really so busy that I never seem to have had any time to myself at all. I am seizing a few minutes after lunch in the hopes that you may hear tomorrow morning.

We may be moving from here almost at once, but are uncertain. We had orders in the middle of the week to go into billets in Marlborough so as to make room here for Canadian troops. A considerable protest has been lodged, and we are in hopes the order will be changed, as the move would be very disastrous as regards training. Discipline is our chief trouble and is always most difficult in billets. I believe the Canadians are an awful rowdy lot, unfit to be billeted anywhere, and there is difficulty in providing them with huts. If we move at all it will be the whole brigade, and I think another brigade as well; they will go to various small towns in this district, or not far away. Among other reasons for wishing to stay here is the question of range practice. We start our fortnight on Monday, and want to get it done. I don't suppose there would be any decent range accommodation at Marlborough.....

BA 9520/3
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Officers' Mess,
Bhartpore Barracks,
Tidworth.

Nov 14th .1914

My dear Mother
you will think I am never
going to write, but I have
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seem to have had any time to
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all it will be the whole brigade, & I think another brigade as well; they will go to various small towns in this district, or not far away. Among other reasons for wishing to stay here is the question of range practice. We start our fortnight on Monday, and want to get it done. I don't suppose there would be any decent range accommodation at Marlborough. I heard from Arthur two days ago; he had more questions to ask than news to give, & I must try to find time to write to him soon.

It was very richening losing my leave last week. They are giving leave again this week; and I should have missed practically nothing had I been allowed to go. I am glad though that Mela got a short change, and was most pleased to get May's letter giving an account of her visit.

The original scheme of training aims at finishing us by the end of February. If this is carried out I hope for about 4 days at Christmas.

I will try to write again before long. Love from
your affectionate son
Lyt. E. Sladden

Training – Letter from Cyril Sladden

Nov 22nd 1914

My dear Father

I have had about the busiest week I ever remember, so letter writing has been pretty well out of the question. I didn't forget the four family birthdays, but I am afraid I didn't write a word for any of them. I hope May & Ethel will excuse me. We have been on the range every day, sometimes for half the day, but on three occasions for a full day. Firing is possible from 8 till 4, so we have usually marched off from here at 7.0, which means getting up about 5.45. In the evening we have a lot of work to do in connection with checking & entering up all the scores, besides other work which is always cropping up. Often I have had scarcely a minute just to run over the paper & and find out the news. It has been very cold, but we had rain only on Thursday afternoon when it was perfectly beastly, being icy cold as well. Also that day we arrived on the range at 8.00 only to find it too foggy to fire until about 10.0, which was annoying. However I have thoroughly enjoyed the shooting, more so as I am doing well myself, and up to date am equal with one of the platoon sergeants head of the company. The men are keeping up a very decent average; there are four really bad, and several very good among them.

I have heard several times lately that the War Office are regarding very seriously the possibility of an attempted German invasion on the East coast. Some rumours go so far as to say that they are on the look out for it almost at once. Anyhow every battalion in this division had orders yesterday to fit out one company at war strength with full equipment. This has been done, at the expense of depriving the other three companies of much of their regulation equipment.....

BA 9520/3

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Officers' Mess,
Bhurtpore Barracks,
Tidworth.

Nov 22nd 1914

My dear Father.

I have had about the busiest week I ever remember, so letter writing has been pretty well out of the question. I didn't forget the four family birthdays, but I am afraid I didn't write a word for any of them. I hope May & Ethel will excuse me. We have been on the range every

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cold, but we had rain only on Thursday afternoon when it was perfectly bearable, being icy-cold as well. Also that day we arrived on the range at 8.0 only to find it too foggy to fire until about 10.0, which was annoying. However I have thoroughly enjoyed the shooting, more so as I am doing well myself, and up to date am equal with one of the platoon sergeants head of the company. The men are keeping up a very decent average; there are few really bad, and several very good

among them.

I have heard several times lately that the War Office are regarding very seriously the possibility of an attempted German invasion on the East Coast. Some rumours go so far as to say that they are on the look out for it almost at once. Anyhow every battalion in this division had orders yesterday to fit out one company at war strength with full equipment. This has been done, at the expense of depriving the other three companies of much of their regulation equipment. The brigade so fitted out was paraded & inspected this morning; it has

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Officers' Mess,
Bhurtpore Barracks,
Tidworth.

to be ready to move at a few hours notice, but is to remain here unless the Germans actually come.

I have no doubt you read the latter part of the Times' Military Correspondent's article yesterday in reference to this subject.

I think there is no doubt that you are quite right, & that the immediate difficulty is to find arms & equipment for the men who have enlisted; but I don't think that is any reason for slackening the recruiting. It takes a long

time to train a man to be any use, & it is well to start early. A lot of useful training can be done with little equipment, & in mufti. The output of rifles, khaki uniforms etc is sure to increase greatly, as they must at present be putting in new plant for manufacture. A very big reserve supply for all the army serving abroad has to be made & kept up, & that has probably kept us short here.

I expect Mela wrote to let you know that Wilfred has got engaged. Judging from what he wrote to Mela about long engagements

I imagine he will want to set about getting married before long. I believe he is doing quite well now.

If there appears any chance of our finishing our shooting by Friday afternoon I am rather thinking of putting in for leave from there ~~the~~ till Sunday night or morning up to Lydenham. It is possible to return quite late on a Sunday from London; but one has to start at breakfast time to get here from Badsey on a Sunday. I am sure I shall not be able to get Monday or I should want to go & see you. I still hope

to manage that at Christmas time, which is not so far off now.

How is the new beer tax likely to hit your business; I hope it won't enable you to save too much on the income tax.

I am glad Mother keeps so well, & hope this biting north-easter won't try her too much.

Best love to all from
your affectionate son
G. J. Pladden

Life on the fronts

Letter from Bert Clements- The Western Front

27th April 1915

....You said you hoped I was firing straight, I don't do any firing now I am a telephonist and by Jove it is a risky job out here we have got wires running into the trenches and when they get broke we have to mend them under fire. We were mending one the other night right behind the trenches and we did get it hot we layed in a ditch over 20 minutes with the bullets hitting the ground all around us we had got a big wire spool with us and they spotted it when the star shells went up.

I was out with him all day yesterday in the observing station, observing where our shells dropped and I have to telephone back to the battery the reports. I should just like you to see some of the holes the Germans Jack Johnsons make as big as our dining room in the old house. I bet they would give us the headache if they hit us in the back of the neck "eh what!"

Somewhere in Belgium

April 27th 15

Genl. Clements

Dear Dad

I was very pleased to get your parcel yesterday Monday 26th and thank you very much they are very acceptable out here especially some chocolate we have an issue of cigarettes & matches but of course they don't last long. You said you hoped I was firing straight, I don't do any firing now I am a telephonist and by jove it is a risky job out here we have got wires running into

the trenches and when they get broke
we have to mend them ³ under fire.
We were mending one the other night
right behind the trenches and we did
get it hot. we layed in a ditch over
20 minutes with the bullets hitting the
ground all round us we had got a big
wire spool with us and they spotted it
when the star shells went up. I am
going into the trenches to-morrow
wendes day for 4 days on duty. Sgt.
Tolly has just come up to me while
I am writing this and wishes you to
remember him to all the boys, I was
out with him all day yesterday in the

observing station observing where our
shells dropped and I have to telephone
back to the Battery the reports. I
should just like you to see some of
the holes the Germans Jack Johnsons
make as big as our dining room in
the old house I bet they would give
us the headache if they hit us in
the back of the neck "eh what".
Well Dad how are things looking
in Kitchie & Brum I hope you
are doing well at big, and the
new team will be a success. I
shall not be sorry when this lot
is over now but I am afraid the

Germans ^{are} and not finished with yet
by a good bit. I must close now
give my love to the girls and
all at home and hope you are
all in the best of health as it
leaves me at present. I am always
looking out for a line from you
with best wishes from

Yours affectionate Son

Bert Broadhead.

Bert Clements - Western Front

Jan 27th 1916

Dear Dad

I should have wrote to you before now, but we have been on the move again and been unable to post even if I could have found time to write..... Well dad we are having a stiffer winter this time, not in one place more than one week at a time, where as last winter we were settled in one place and could make ourselves a bit comfortable, but its rough moving from place to place. I have never known the cold so intense as it has been this last week, I can hardly hold the pencil now. We woke up one morning and all our boots were frozen hard, had to make a fire and thaw them before we could go on parade, so ever since we have had to have them for a pillow, and the mud and the cold has played hell with my feet this year. Well we have landed up in some out of the way place finest British troops up this part of the line, it's about time they took us out of the line and give us a damn good rest we have not had one since we have been out here yet.....Dear Dad how do you think the war is going now there seems to be a tremendous lot of peace talk just lately, well we are giving them no rest at all this winter bumping them every day.....I was very pleased Syd told you what I needed most, they pay us ten francs a fortnight (sometimes), well that's nothing it only lasts about three days, and if we go on the beer it only lasts one night, the price the stuff is out here is terrible. Well that don't count now as we are fresh here and no canteens about here, so if you want to send me something, send something to eat I can always's do with it, as they don't ever over feed us.....

Your affectionate son,

BertXXXX

France
Jan 27th 16

Dear Dad

I should have wrote to you before now, but we have been on the move again and been unable to post even if I could have found time to write. I saw Syd for the first time about three days ago, I was pleased the way you looked after him, he said he did enjoy himself alright with you. What a pity it was you did not mention about the R- to me, Syd could have brought you some, of course its a hard job for me to get any but Syd is alright, anyhow we will see what we can do for you. Well Dad we are having a stiffer winter this time, not in one place more than a week at a time, where as last winter we were settled in one place and could make ourselves a bit comfortable, but its rough moving from place to place. I have never known the cold so intense as it has been this last week, I can hardly hold the pencil now. We wake up one morning and all our boots were frozen hard, had to make a fire and thaw them before we could go on parade, so ever since we have had to have

12/

them for a pillow, and the mud and cold has played hell with my feet this year. Well we have lunched up in some out of the way place first British troops up this part of the line, its about time they took us out of the line and give us a damn good rest we have not had one since we have been out here yet. Dear Dad I hope you will excuse me not telling you about the allotment, I know each time I wrote I had forgotten something and could not think what it was, and of course Syd reminded me of it. Well I saw to all that when I came out here, and Mother said she would put it up for me. I have been under the impression that you knew, especially as you had not mentioned it before, so I hope you will forgive me for being so forgetful. Dear Dad how do you think the war is going now there seems to be a tremendous lot of peace talk just lately, well we are giving them no rest at all this winter, bumping them every day. I hope you are all in the best of health at the rendezvous (comp) of course Syd told me you were all about the same, remember me to all of them. I was very pleased Syd told you

what I needed most, they pay us ten francs a fortnight (sometimes), well that's nothing it only lasts about three days, and if we go on the beer it only lasts one night, the price the stuff is out here is terrible. Well that don't count now as we are fresh here and no cantions about here, so if you want to send me something, send something to eat I can always do with it, as they don't ever ever feed us. Thanks very much for the half dollar it came at a good send at the time. Well Dad I shall have ~~the~~ to do up now, I am nearly froze, I know you will think I have gone mad writing such a long letter. I have surprised myself. I hope you are all in the very best of health at home, give my best love to Dorothy & Ethel I am in the best of health barring a bad foot, I must close now with love & best wishes. Cheer Oh I hope I shall be home soon

Yours affectionate Son

Bert X X X X X X

Jack Preece— Western Front

27th October 1916

...The weather is wretched, now, cold and wet and I expect has set in for the rainy season. The country here is absolutely desolate all ploughed up in trenches or shell holes. There is hardly a tree living, and it shows the very severe fighting took place perhaps a twelve month ago. Thank God it is not English soil we are on. Rats are here in abundance, all sizes and colour, grey, dark black slate colour; enormous things some. We have great fun in catching them. After all is over, the country will be over-ridden with them.....

Somewhere in France
24/10/16

Dear Mrs Preece,
Just a few lines to let you know that I am still quite well. I am afraid I have not been very active in my letter writing of late, but we have been restricted in regards to the quantity of letters. I hope Jack is quite well. I have not heard from him for such a long time, that I have often wondered whether he has been wounded or not. I sincerely hope not, as I see that the Germans have had a few more engagements. The weather is wretched, now, cold & wet and I expect has set in for the rainy season. The country here is absolutely desolate, all ploughed up in trenches & or shell holes. There is hardly a tree living, & it shows that very severe fighting took place perhaps a twelve-month ago. Thank God it is not English soil we are on. Rats are here in abundance, all sizes & colours, grey, dark, black & slate colour; enormous things some. We have great fun in catching them. After all is over, the country will be over-ridden with them. Have you seen the folders from

home lately. Ralph has had a good
promotion. He is greatly elated. So am I
too. Will close now, as I have nothing more
to tell you, with my kindest regards from

Yours very sincerely,

George

Unexpected Western Front

Arthur Sladden - France

25th November 1914

...Mary arrived safely last Friday and I was able to meet her at the station, all our plans had worked out well and the journey was apparently quite a nice one. I suppose you heard from Dowlais of her safe arrival. I had in view a little appartement about 200 yards from the hospital and on Saturday morning we inspected it and look it over at once: we can hold it by the week, and it has all necessary equipment. Mary wishes great strides with the French and I generally refuse to help her out! She is very well and in excellent spirits, at present my work is light and I'm able to see more of her than I do in London. Of course this won't last very long and I can hardly expect to be here more than another month. Anyway her journey has not been a failure since we have already had nearly a week together.

I draw my rations meat, bread etc., to which I'm entitled and that helps out the housekeeping greatly. The shopping and cooking of course help to fill up time and I don't think Mary will find the days long. Our neighbours are very friendly and a great source of amusement to us. This flat is owned by an old dressmaker and is quite neat and furnished solidly, much as many rooms one might take in London. She said it très très propre. I'd leave out one très!

I don't think there is any danger of Mary becoming "Frenchified", she's quite comfortably insular!.....

EA 9520/B
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Officers Hospital
No 2 Base
B. Field Force
25/1/14.

My dear Mother,

I'll write you a rather early letter for your birthday, perhaps it will reach you before time. Mary arrived safely last Friday & I was able to meet her at the station, all our plans had worked out well & the journey was apparently quite a nice one - I suppose you heard from Dowling of her safe arrival. I had in view a little "appartement" about 200 yards from the hospital, & on Saturday morning we inspected it, & took it over at once: we can hold it by the week, & it has all necessary equipment. Mary makes great shites with the French, & I generally refuse to help her out! She is very well & in excellent spirits, at present my work is light, & I'm able to see more of her than I do in London - of course this won't last very long & I can hardly expect to be here more than another month. Anyway her journey has not been a failure

EA 9520/B
413

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It's been very cold here lately, but is milder today. There must be much suffering up at the front from the cold. I hope recruiting is going on better, I'm afraid Worcestershire doesn't stand very well compared with some districts. I'd like to see the necessary numbers got by voluntary enlistment, altho' perhaps a form of conscription would draw in a bigger population of those who really ought to step forward. Although people in England are quite right to carry on business as much as possible, the popular cry of "Business as usual" is very much resented over here as thoroughly selfish, England holding back her men in order to smother trade, while the men of our allies are nearly all under arms; undoubtedly to finish the war quickly should be the first preoccupation of England, & business should take the second place. Please thank Father for various papers sent; The Observer is always good reading & I don't see it otherwise. I see "Land & Water" generally, it is interesting if not always convincing. I'm so glad to have a good account of you from Mary, you seem to do quite a lot of walking when the

weather permits.

We have had some walks. The country round is not very thrilling, it reminds me a little of Oxfordshire. How long our present happy arrangement will last it's impossible to say, but it's very good while it lasts, quite a second honeymoon.

I'm very glad to hear that the Hodson children are safe, though I can't regard Brussels as safe yet, I should think their father stands a good chance of arrest seeing his nationality.

By the way, our number is 57 Rue de la Barille, I gave 55 by mistake. But officers Hosp. No 2 Base will always reach us. We are on an elevated part of the town, & much healthier here than down by the river. I was wondering a few days ago what part of France the Morilyan family originally came from, was it anywhere out in this region?

With very much love to all from Mary & myself,
from your son Arthur -
Mary has written to Kath. & is asking her to send on the letter to you.

Eastern front

Cyril Sladden - 16th Jan 1916

(The whole transcription is provided and only excerpts from the original which is difficult to read.)

My dear Father

The sun has struggled through today after almost 36 hours continuous rain, such as makes life dreary even when one lives in a good & well pitched tent which keeps the rain out properly. Several officers were not so lucky and either got the floor of the tent flooded or the whole tent collapsed on top of them, the soil being very bad for holding pegs firmly. However as compared with the same weather in the trenches this is nothing so we don't make much ado about it. Fortunately drainage is admirable & the ground soon recovers. We are still in the same place that we came to from the Peninsular, but expecting embarkation orders any day to proceed to some place in the neighbourhood of where I was in September. Of course, as usual what we expect will not necessarily turn out to be correct. Still a period of comparative rest seems probable, when we shall be held in readiness for anything that may be required. We should appreciate the chance to get straight again.

It will be nice to get regular mails once more, & fairly quick ones. At present very little is turning up because all our mail bags have been forwarded to our next destination. I had the other day a packet of old letters that reached the regiment shortly before I rejoined, including one from Mother of Oct 8th from you Oct 13th, from Kath Oct 16th.

Jan 17th. This about the worst place for letter writing I have struck & I got no further yesterday. Since writing some, later mails have come bringing me Mothers letter and the enclosed photo of herself and granddaughter, your long letter written just after Xmas, & the copy of the Red Cross Story Book For all of which many thanks. I

am afraid I cannot honestly claim to see any strong family likeness shown in the photo of my niece, I must wait till I see her to give opinions on that.

The latest news indicates an early departure from here, possibly tomorrow and almost certainly within a few days. The weather has quite recovered, so I hope it will remain so for our journey. I have just been reading in the Observer you sent Garrins? views of the Suvla evacuation it is the first decent appreciation of it that I have yet been able to find. I don't think the general public will ever appreciate it because it was such a brilliant success and they will never understand the risks of disaster that we ran. I know that preparations were made to deal with tremendous casualties – a point I learnt only after we were safely off fortunately! But if Suvla & Anzac was good I think Helles was better, though not quite so effectively carried out in the matter of material. I think it was more difficult, especially from the naval point of view; and the enemy were of course watching us very closely. In fact I think they had got wind of it, but probably were ignorant of the date of departure. It would be a curious thing if it was mere coincidence that they chose the day before we went to give us the worst bombardment we ever suffered during the eight months of the whole campaign. It was the nastiest experience I have had since Aug 10th. From breakfast they were apparently ranging the guns, dropping a fair number of high explosives all the time till just before noon, when they started fairly raining them down; after about an hour they practically stopped high explosive, and gave shrapnel a turn for an hour or so, during which time we got lunch in a dugout that was decently proof against shrapnel, having a sand bag roof. However we had to retire again to our very confined 'funk hole' in a hurry, where we spent a most uncomfortable afternoon. The only decent shelter from high explosives is either a regular deep cave (the entrance of which may get filled up) or else a very deep and narrow trench. In this you are really pretty safe unless a shell pitches right in or hits the very edge of the top, which is really most unlikely. The effect is chiefly moral really and our losses were far lower than I imagined was inevitable at the time. The noise alone is frightfully wearing, & we all went to bed that night with a headache from it. After the first half hour or so one feels little ordinary fear, but simply longs for the bombardment to stop. The

cramp alone that results from packing eight men into about as many square feet for two hours or so, circumstances rendering it desirable to sit or squat down if possible, is sufficiently painful for ordinary purposes. When at a little before four the shrapnel began to get very thick again and considerable rifle fire started we decided we were going to be attacked, and dashed out (with immense relief) to join our companies and be ready for whatever might turn up. I was in support trenches, so got plenty more shelling while we awaited events. So far as we can judge the Turks meant to attack, but they showed nothing more than a few bayonets above their parapets in front of us, and in other places where they did start coming over the attempt was a hopeless fiasco. By degrees after five o'clock everything was quiet again and we were able to carry on in a normal manner again and repair damage done to the parapets etc. When we were expecting an attack almost every man was longing for them to come, so as to give us a chance of getting our own back a bit. It was the natural reaction after being potted at for hours with no chance of doing anything in return.

Of course we had scarcely any guns behind us to reply, until some battleships finally came up and did some good work on our behalf. But the Helles position didn't offer the same facilities as Suvla for naval gunnery, as the ships were open to submarine attack all the time, & had to be protected. In Suvla bay they were safe inside the boom. I was among the early embarking parties on the night of the 8th; the wind got up later and hindered things rather.

It was odd that I spent my time in precisely the same bits of trench I was in before – a fairly easy bit of the line. Helles is a vile spot & I was glad to get away – though it was vastly better than in the hot weather.

I was most interested to hear that Neame had been to see you. He is an excellent fellow, and one of the most capable I know. It is the worst of luck that he wasn't a captain ages ago. We could do well with him out here any time, but I don't doubt that he is invaluable at his present job. I have a long letter from him in my pocket now waiting to be answered, I received it in my capacity at O.C. "C" Coy, Neame being uncertain who was here with

us now. Harold Allsebrooke joined his regiment a few days ago, and I met him for a few minutes. I am sure to see him at intervals as long as we are not out here together with our regiments. He seems to have had a bit of work being in charge of a pretty big draft for some time. I feel very glad that although I have missed a lot of time with the regiment I have been through every-thing of any special interest we have done – all the thick of it in early days, the flood in November, and the two evacuations.

I will try to post this here before leaving, and the next letter will probably be from somewhere else

Best love to all from

Your affectionate son

Cyril E. Sladden

RA 9520/3
146

Jan 16th 1916

My dear Father

The snow has just struggled through today after almost 36 hours continuous rain, such as makes life dreary even when one lives in a good & well pitched tent which keeps the rain out properly. Several officers were not so lucky and either got the floor of the tent flooded or the whole tent collapsed on top of them, the snow being very bad for holding pegs firmly. However as compared with the same weather in the trenches this is nothing so we don't make much ado about it. Fortunately drainage is admirable & the ground soon recovers.

We are still in the same place that we came to from the Peninsula, but

147

Jan 17th: This is about the worst place for letter writing I have struck & I got no further yesterday. Since writing some later mails have come bringing me Mother's letter and the enclosed photo of herself and granddaughter, your long letter written just after Xmas, & the copy of the Red Cross Story Book for all of which many thanks. I am afraid I cannot honestly claim to see any strong family likeness shown in the photo of my niece, I ~~am~~ must wait till I see her to give opinions of on that.

The latest news indicates an early departure from here, possibly tomorrow & almost certainly within a few days. The weather has quite recovered, so I hope it will remain so for our journey. I have just been reading in the Observer you sent Garrison's views of the Suez excavation; it is the first decent

Unexpected Eastern front

Jack Preece - Egypt

26th December 1915

Dear Eddie.

...Thanks very much for your nice long letter, I was very pleased to hear once again from you, please write again if you don't mind, the nights are fairly long now.

I was very sorry to hear of poor Arthur, being killed, I felt it more I think, than seeing poor fellows go west, with my own eyes.

I hope you enjoyed yourself this Xmas, we had a fine time, considering where we are, natives have been preparing for our doo, for over a week, and working night and day, they put up a whole string of mess tents, and filled them full of tables and forms. We had our dinner at 6pm and the menu was, turkey with potatoes and cabbage, beef hot, Plum pudding, then an orange, our drinks were beer and pop. Afterwards we had a concert which was fine, the best our fellows have ever given.

During the performance beer was handed round and one of our A squadron officers gave us a cigar each and a packet of cigs.

In the morning we had a service and after Hal and I saddled our horses up and rode to the Pyramids and sphinx, that was the first time I had seen the, and I can tell they are well worth seeing.

I thought of going to Cairo today, I put in for a pass and should have had it, only the natives we have down the horse lines, to help mix the feeds, muck out , and so on, had the sack today, and so it is all hands to the pump now.

Hope you are quite well and will have a Happy New Year. With love

From your kid Jack

PATRON
Y.M.C.A. NATIONAL COUNCIL
H.M. THE KING.

PATRON
MILITARY CAMP DEPT.
H.R.H DUKE OF CONNAUGHT.



COMMITTEE
FOR EGYPT
AND
THE NEAR EAST.
CHAIRMAN
H.E. SIR HENRY McMAHON.

Reply to No. 4 Coy Bat.

Stationed at

No 2 Troop
A Squadron
War Ye
2nd Mt^d Division
Base Post Office
Alexandria
26-12-15.

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In the morning we had a review and after Hal & I saddled our horses up & rode to the pyramids and sphinx, that was the first time I had seen them, and I can tell you they are well worth seeing. We went there & back in three quarters of an hour so you can tell we are not far from them.

I thought of going to Cairo today, I put in for a pass, and should have had it, only the natives we have down the lower lines, to help make the feeds, mush out, and so on, had the sack to day, and so it is all hands to the pump now.

Am afraid I can't write any more, so must close. Hope you are quite well, and will have a happy New Year. With love.

From your kid

Jack.

Concerns for home outweigh the horrors of war

Arthur Sladden

6th May 1916

My dear Father,

I got your letter of May 3rd today, telling of Mother`s last illness. I had a letter written last Sunday (30th) forenoon by Leslie, on Wednesday, & gathered pretty well the course of events; but your description of her peaceful passing that Sunday evening is that of a death as happy as any could be; even before I had other news than the telegram I penned a few lines which you may care to read, I enclose them.

My telegrams which should have gone in good time on Tuesday were held up by a mistake between the Censor & the French Authorities, I only learnt about it so late on Tuesday, so had to send a fresh one to you Wednesday morning, & it was then too late to wire Mary, From her letters I gather she did not go to the funeral, of course she has Baby to look after & not always help available. I hope the wreath she sent from us arrived nicely. Doubtless in a few days one of the girls will be able to write & tell me of the funeral. I am sure our friends and neighbours will have been full of kind sympathy at this time & of real sorrow at her death. Please keep that gift I sent, to apply to anything you please connected with Mother`s memory. I wish I had sent it a little earlier, but I expect she knew I was helping to buy the chairs. I am glad to hear Uncle Fred was able to come down, & Aunt Lottie I thought would be certain to come.

No doubt you will send me a copy of that photograph: it was a very happy thought to have that memento of her face at rest. You will be tired with trouble & a sense of reaction. Try to get a little change fairly soon if possible, it will be good for you

With my love to you all

Your affectionate son, Arthur

EA 9520/3
573

6/5/16

My dear Father,

I got your letter of May 3^d today, telling of Mother's last illness. I had a letter written ~~the~~ last Sunday (30th) forenoon by Leslie, on Wednesday, & so gathered pretty well the course of events; but your description of her peaceful passing that Sunday evening is that of a death as happy as any could be; even before I had other news than the telegram I penned a few lines which you may care to read, I enclose them.

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BA952013

574

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thought to have that memento of her
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You will be tired with trouble & a sense
of reaction. Try to get a little change
fairly soon if possible, it will be
good for you.

With my love to all

Your affectionate son
Arthur F. Sladden

BA952013

575

E. N. S. April 30th 1916

Her fragile body died, not reached the span
of life though full of years,

Not as a bolt unheeded came Death
nor yet with agony and pain long drawn,

Gently he led her gentle soul
to Heaven.

She died ere Easter-tide was past, one
Sunday eve, such as she loved:

Around, kind Nature made display of flower
and leaf, bursting anew to life,

So, full of faith shall she arise
again.

To God the praise for this good life
well spent.

A. F. S.

A poem sent home by written by Gunner Bert Clements expressing his feelings about the loss of his comrade.

Spotty

Spotty was my chum he was

A Ginger headed bloke

An everlasting gas-bag

And as stubborn as a moke

He gave us all the 'ump he did

A'fore it come to war

by spouting all his bits a French

What no one "arsked~" him for

He says to me "old Son" he says

"Yer wont have 'arf a chance

When I gets in conversation

With those "demerselles" of France"

I says to him "yer close"

yer fice" he says "all right bong swore"

Don't 'urt yourself mon sher amy"

Then "solong! Oh re vore"

When we got our marching orders

You can but we wasn't slow

A singing "Tipperary

It's a long long way to go."

On the transport how he swanked it

With 'is parley vooing airs

Till I nearly knocked his 'ead off

'cos he said I'd "Mal de mares"

When we landed! What a Beano!

How those "frenchies" laught and
cried

And I sees old spotty swelling

Fit to bust himself wif' pride

He was blowing of 'em kisses

And a singing "Vive La France"

Till the Sgt Maj copped him

Then he said "Kel mauvey
chance"

But we didn't get no waiting

Where we went nobody knows

But it warnt the kind of fight

That you sees in Picture shows

We 'ad days of Hell together
Till they told us to retire
And then spotty's flow of language
Set the water-carts on fire.

'Im and me was lucky
For two 'firds of us were dead
With their greasy "Black Marias~"
And their Shrapnel overhead.

And everytime they missed us
When the fire was murderous hot
Old spotty says "Hencore! Hencore!"
That's French for "Rotten Shot"

And then at last there came the time
When we got um on the go,
And 'im we was fighting
In a little place called "Mo"

A'lyinh down together
With a hole dug with our hands
For yer gets it quick and sudden
If yer moves about or stands.

We was sharing 'alf a fag we was
Yus! tearn and tearn about.
When I felt him move towards me
'an' he says "old mate Im out"

'Is eyes they could'nt see me
They never will no more
But 'is twisted mouth it whispered
"So long, matey oh! Re-vore"

There was no'one quite the same to
me
For 'im + me was Palls
And if I had im with me
You could keep your fancy Gells

But whatever place 'e's gone to
I don't ask nothing more
But to line up with 'im later
"So long! Spotty" oh Revore!"

Spotty

Spotty was my chum. he was
A Ginger headed bloke
An everlasting gas-bag
And as stubborn as a moke.

He gave us all the jump he did
Afore it come to war
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And if I had im with me
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I dont- aste nothing more
But- to line up with 'im later
"So long! Spotty! oh Re-vore!"

Medical

Letter from Arthur Sladden - No 9 General Hospital, Rouen, France

13th March 1915

My dear Mother

I've completed the circle, come back to no 9 Rouen; in all probability I'll be here some time. The hospital has just taken possession of huts built for 'M..' on a very large scale. Room for 750 patients and very complete administrative and residential quarters for everyone. It would make an admisable place for 10 years if necessary. We are on a large common south of the town, between the race course and a forest, and about 3 miles from the centre of the town; trams come about half way. Everywhere are camps of wood and of canvas and they seem to extend every day. There are some Indians here and heaps of hospitals, and altogether there's a lot of traffic on the road leading this way. I found more old friends at No 9 than I expected, but two have already gone off to other jobs. Owing to the move from tents to huts there are at this moment no patients in, but we no doubt shall get convoys quite soon.

We have quite a nice officer's mess and have buildings round three sides of a square. The sides contain bedrooms, 12 in all, when full will share between two. In each wing a bathroom is being installed. The centre block has mess room and club room and kitchen behind.

The wards are long buildings to take about 30 beds, and arranged as much as in up to date hospitals at home. There is a pathological lab and dispensary etc. and various rooms for office work. We are on high ground overlooking the town and I should think in summer it will be dry and hot, not to say dusty. In our square we are making a garden, which will be a nice recreation in spare time. Some of the canvas camps which have been here all the winter look very neat and have planted small fir trees about.

I've had no letters since Sunday owing to my move. It was a long journey across country from St. Nazaire, but quite enjoyable. I had a party of men with me, and should have made a quicker journey through Paris. The French people have good arrangements at big stations for helping soldiers passing through and I found their aid very useful for my convalescents.

With much love to all

From your son Arthur

EA 9520/3
449

No 9 General Hospital
Rouen.

13/8/15.

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& Rouen: in all probability I'll be here some time. The
Hospital has just taken possession of huts built for
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450

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look very neat, & have planted small fir trees about.

BA 9520/3
451

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On Sunday last at St. Nazaire two officers from Nantes were over in a car, & took me along the coast to La Baule for lunch. The coast gets quite nice down west of Nazaire, but doesn't come up to Pembrokehire or Cornwall.

I hope when I get more news to hear you are much better, & about again. It was very cold on arrival here, but today has been sunny.

With much love to all
from your son Arthur

P.S. address
No 9 General Hosp.
Rouen
Brit. Exp. Force

Extract from letter sent by Arthur Sladden – Western Front

17th October 1914

.....Wherever we go we ought to be fixed for some time, for a General Hospital is not supposed to run about the country as we have done owing to military outingencies.

We have a fair amount of enteric but not alarming numbers. I hope that sanitary work and inoculation together will prevent any such epidemic as prevailed in S. Africa. Inoculation is voluntary, and as from George's experience, it may produce considerable temporary illness you can imagine that it is not always easy to persuade all the men to have it. I was told off to talk to the men here on the subject, and at first they were rather backward in coming forward, but I've noted most of the men by now. Experience shows that inoculation reduces the incidence of the disease 5 or 6 times, and if inoculated people get it, their chances of recovery are much greater. It is getting steadily colder and damper, we are rather near the river, and for that reason alone I think a move will be good. Rheumatic cases, of which we have many, don't do over well here, and when the sun doesn't come out it is impossible to get the tents dry.....

EA 9520/3
400

17. 10. 14.

My dear Father

I got your missing letter ultimately, with Conan Doyle's article. It has been refreshing to read the very frank admission of their mistake made by many previous "Pro-Germans" & I hope the country at large will not be misled into thinking that all the blame attaches merely to the military set we hear so much about. That is only true if one includes in that set many millions of the German people.

I got Mother's & Mary's letters today, the list of Babsy men is most interesting, & I hope another score of names will soon be added. Probably the War Office have had all they can handle up to date but more will yet be wanted before we have seen this thing through. We are preparing to move from here, where to we don't know. I fancy they must be awaiting the trend of events in N.E. France - conceivably the ports in that region may be too precariously held for base purposes. If not, nothing will please me better than to be stationed somewhere in that region. Wherever we go we ought to be fixed for some time for a general Hospital is not supposed to run about the country as we have done owing to

EA 9520/3
401

military exigencies.

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Mother gives no news of Uncle Fred. Poor man, what a troubled life he's had, & now just at the time he

meant to retire comes this war which cannot fail to affect him very closely in several directions.

The censorship this end is still very strict & in many ways "unequal": From the staff point of view all letters are a nuisance, but I'm quite sure the Germans have means of gathering all the information they want long before our letters reach home.

When we move there may be a bit of a hiatus in the post. Lately I've been able to write regularly & the postal service here has been working smoothly. They have to have quite a large ^{army} post office, no letters come through the French post, which is quite distinct.

I hope the Belgian refugees are being given opportunities of getting work, they'll want that more than anything. Father speaks of my French improving but really it is very bad, I haven't time to study it, & merely fight my way along more or less regardless of grammar. The great thing is to get there.

With much love to you all

your affectionate son
Arthur -

Letter from Arthur Sladden Meerut British General Hospital, France

1st October 1915

My Dear Mother

I moved a short distance last Monday to the above address, just south of No 9 General on the edge of the forest. I have been appointed bacteriologist here so shall have a busy time, as this is the isolation and observation hospital for all infectious diseases. The great part of the work is the investigation of typhoid or suspected typhoid cases all such cases from the Base and the Lines of Communication are sent here. The work is done in the new lab. In No 9 General, as there is no lab here, so I am still in touch with the other place. There are four other officers here, we live in tents, not quite so comfortable as the huts of No 9, however I daresay we'll get along all right. Our tents are in an apple orchard, rather a pretty spot.

I got Fathers letter this morning with news of Cyril and George. Rouen has been frightfully busy since the big fighting began, & every hospital is expanded, but understaffed.

It is too soon to know the net result of the fighting, there are some indications today that things are quieter, I hope all goes well. I think George's reg't must be near a village which we captured in the final day or hour of the battle.

I was interested to hear of Muriel Holmes marriage – it must have come as a great surprise to all her friends at such short notice. Mary seems well & Baby is doing well I gather & begins to take notice of people. I daresay she'll be with you soon, I hope before the weather gets very cold and damp. What a pity Cyril couldn't have come home & got fit there. I expect it is a matter of transport partly.

I enjoy the riding lessons, & have done quite a lot of jumping. Just now it is rather difficult to get off for an afternoon.

We are glad of stoves now in the tents, another month & it will get quite cold up here. The new lab. is very nice to work in, there is a good view of Rouen when one isn't looking down the microscope.

With much love to all, Arthur

BA 9520/3
530

Meerut British General H.P.

Rouen -

1/10/15.

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BA 9520/3

531

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BA 9520/3
532

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What a pity Cyril couldn't have come home & got fit there. I expect it is a matter of transport partly.

Tell Father I will notify my banker about the Loan being completed. I expect soon they'll be issuing

BA 9520/3
533

another one.

I enjoy the riding lessons, & have done quite a lot of jumping. Just now it is rather difficult to get off for an afternoon.

We are glad of stove, now in the tent, another month & it will get quite cold up here.

The new lab. is very nice to work in, there is a good view of Rouen when one isn't looking down the microscope.

I hope you will get news of George often, of course the postal service up the line just now is likely to be delayed.

With much love to all

from your son Arthur

Rachel Littleton VAD - Hospital in London

2nd May 1917

....I haven't been late yet for anything – several have, and can't wake at 6.15 even tho` a bell is rung outside their doors. Today we did housework, polishing & sweeping, bandaging, theoretical nursing & a few little odd jobs like that. It's a continual cram and you can't be too quick, There's one Nurse Allsop (its always "Nurse,") who's a dau of Lady Mildred A, Her brother went down in the Aboutier? & she's supposed to be "unhappy at home" so here she is powdered & bewigged (not a wig but looks like it) up to the eyes so not exactly cut out for war or nurse, Miss Hosking is a very grim dame but an admirable teacher, and it's all very good & my brain is bursting even after 3 days. I wish rather Botham had been slightly nipper with my clothes. None of the aprons really fit & I'm sending all this week's washing back to be washed & marked—I'm afraid clothes will be my curse here.....

*Trimmer's Monistals
I must have a
beathes - v. s. bath
you can get here
clean food &
one is
hungry
also sleep
don't get
The the 2
quietest rooms
we're also No. 1
& 2 so have
to be off
you returning
David's letter
It's a address
Tudragan
Hosking
P. S.
I never
word of the
Hosking
why they
up bring Rachel*

I'm so sorry you were frused about my not
writing. Hope you've got my letter by now. But I
really did have no time on Mon. - you can't imagine what
this sort of life is suddenly to be plunged into. There is
the off duty time 2 hrs every day, but unless you make
a rigid rule to go out some part of that you could spend
the whole time extremely busy writing out lectures or doing
jobs for yourself, which otherwise wouldn't get done, &
yet have plenty to do. You have to be watching the clock
the whole time which tho' doubtless good for the character
is not conducive to letter writing. I did mean to send a p.c.
on Mon. but it didn't get done because everything came
walking on each other's heels - even putting in cuff links
& such like into new things takes off extremely precious minutes.
However it shall not occur again, tho' I can't promise my
letters will be very long. I haven't been late yet for anything
- several have, & can't wake at 6-15 even tho' a bell is
rung outside their doors. Today we did housework, polishing
2/5/125C

weeping bandaging, theoretical nursing & a few little odd jobs like that. It's a continual exam & you can't be too quick. There's one Nurse Allsop (it's always "Nurse") who's a dau. of Lady Mildred A. Her brother went down in the Aboukir & she's supposed to be "unhappy at home" so here she is - quite nice, but powdered & be-wigged (not a wig but looks like it) up to the eyes so not really cut out for it was a nurse. Miss Hosking is a very good dame but an admirable teacher, & it's all very good & my brain is bursting even after 3 days - I wish rather Botham had been slightly happier with my clothes. None of the aprons really fit & I'm sending all this week's washing back to be washed & marked - I'm afraid clothes will be my curse here.

This afternoon Rachel, Margaret A. Smith Nurse Johnson & I walked round about Bow & got some flowers for the dining room table. There would be time to go west but only just - not worth it. But 2-4 Mondays, Wed. Tuesdays is off-duty - 2-4-30 Tues. & Fri. - 4-30 to 7-30 Sat - 10-20 - 3-30 Sundays. Rachel is a great person to have - she's very good at it & we also got the most appalling giggle at dinner today. Here are some

Useful Websites

Worcestershire WW1 <http://www.ww1worcestershire.co.uk/>

Voices of War and Peace: The Great War and its legacy www.voicesofwarandpeace.org

Worcestershire Archives <http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/cms/archive-and-archaeology/search-our-records.aspx>

Imperial War Museum <http://www.iwm.org.uk/learning/resources/learning-resources>

BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/0/ww1/>

British Legion <http://www.britishlegion.org.uk/remembrance/ww1-centenary>

National Archives www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/education/greatwar

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