

THE TRAGEDY OF WAR

A copy of correspondence from 1271 Private Austin Charles Townsend to the parents of 4049 Private David Dixon Marshall and 3783 Private Victor Dixon Marshall regarding their fate following the 1st Battalion's involvement in the Battle for Pozieres in July 1916.



Tragically, Private David Dixon Marshall (left) was killed by shrapnel the day after his brother Victor (right) was seriously wounded - unbeknown to Townsend, Vic would succumb to his wounds a few days later. Austin Townsend would himself suffer serious leg wounds in late August as the action around Pozieres continued.



Their mate, 2005 Private Albert Edward Reeve (left), who buried Dave, would also be killed in August near Mouquet Farm.

Austin Townsend would have his right leg amputated at the thigh.

Four mates - three dead one wounded for life.

Copy of Letter from
1271 P'te A. C. Townsend,
B. Coy.,
1st Battalion.

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Marshall,

I am very sorry to inform you that Dave was killed on Monday, July 24th. You will have read of the Australians taking (censored). Well, we were in that, and both Vic and Dave got safely through the charge and into the German trenches. That was midnight on Saturday, July 22nd. Soon afterwards Vic was wounded by shrapnel. I was not near at the time, and did not find him till next morning, but Dave sat up with him all night. When I saw them next morning, I went to get a stretcher, and Dave and I carried Vic down to the dressing station, where he was attended to, and sent away. I have made inquiries several times at the Battalion Orderly Room, but they have heard nothing further of him. So Vic must still be all right. The Battalion would have been told if he had died. So that is one thing to be thankful for.

Dave was very much troubled when Vic was hit. He took his own shirt off to put on Vic. That was on Sunday morning, the 23rd July. On Sunday night, I was parted from Dave again, and sent to Brigade Head Quarters, and did not know that he had been killed till the Battalion came out of the trenches. He felt no pain. He was killed instantaneously at 9.30 p.m., Monday, July 24th, by Shrapnel, with another of his mates in my section.

I cannot express my sorrow at losing two such good friends. Vic, Dave and I have been together in every place since they joined the Battalion at Tel-el-Kebie. Private A.E. Reeve (nicknamed Hoppy) 200 6 B. Coy., 1st Batt. gave me the particulars about Dave. He buried him. So if you would like to hear from someone who was with him when he died, he is the one. He was in the same section as Dave and Vic.

I have Dave's watch and one or two other things here, which I will send to you as soon as I get a chance.

I am,
Yours Respectfully,
AUSTIN C. TOWNSEND.

Since writing the other part Private Reeve has been killed and I have been wounded. I have had my right leg taken off. I asked a chap named Ward (the only one left in our section) if he would find my pack and send Dave's things on to you. He promised and I gave him your address.
A. C. TOWNSEND.