

BAND of BROTHERS



THEY call it the Great War, and great was its devastation and horror. The most likely reward for courage was death or suffering on the battlefield and stoic grief at home. For the Lucas family of Adelaide and their four brave sons, there was plenty of both - and today their remarkable story is told for the first time in this edited extract from a book on the family being written by **MIKE CALLEN** and **JANE BOLLEN**, grandchildren of Frank Lucas.

In the part of the world I am in, what one sees is better not described." So wrote Lieutenant Arthur Lucas from the bleak, war-torn fields of France in a letter home on December 8, 1916.

Just 84 days later the Adelaide insurance clerk was dead - killed by a German shell shortly before dawn after an all-night, hand-to-hand battle to capture an enemy trench.

Some acts of bravery and sacrifice are split-second, instinctive deeds, with no time to weigh up the consequences. But when the 34-year-old marched to the World War I front line in October 1916, he did so knowing all too well the hell that awaited him.

A fortnight earlier, Arthur had managed a remarkable meeting in London with three of his brothers, Frank, Edgar and Charles, also all Australian soldiers who had already served in Gallipoli or France. Each had left their comfortable lives in Adelaide to enlist at different times, fought different battles and witnessed different horrors.

They had or would each also pay different but heavy tolls for their courage.

The four brave brothers celebrated their unlikely meeting far from home with a cablegram to their parents, William and Mary, and siblings, Oscar, Ida, Doris and Edith.

It was brief and optimistic: "Reunion four boys: all well."

But, the description could hardly have been more of an understatement. Two were seriously wounded, Arthur had just months to live and the fourth was still recovering from disease and would soon return to battle.

Collectively, their's is a story of one Adelaide family's extraordinary sacrifice for Australia. It is told for the first time today.

When Great Britain declared war on Germany on August 4, 1914, Adelaide boasted a population of 250,000, and William Lucas was editor of *The Register* newspaper.

The English immigrant and wife Mary lived in Fisher St, Malvern, and had five sons and three daughters aged from 15 to 32.

FRANK

AT 25, he was the first to enlist, 35 days after war broke out and four weeks after recruitment for the Australian Imperial Force started. He possibly was looking for an adventurous escape from his life as a clerk with the National Bank.

The blue-eyed soldier, described in enlistment records as bearing a "fresh complexion", joined the SA 3rd Australian Light Horse (ALH) Regiment, training at Morphettville and becoming a skilled horseman on the back of his mount "Peter".

The rush to war meant the soldiers did not have uniforms and trained in civilian clothes.

In a telling sign of the optimism in the early days of war, they were nicknamed "six-bob-a-day tourists" - they were paid six shillings

BOND: The Lucas boys (from left) Oscar, Edgar, Arthur, Charles and Frank



a day - with the expectation of a short and triumphant adventure.

But the reality of war would soon unfold in all its horror and terror.

After marching through the streets of Adelaide with his regiment on September 21, 1914, an event which included a review from Parliament House by the Governor, Frank sailed from Adelaide aboard *HMAT Port Lincoln* and at Albany joined the first convoy to leave Australia during the war.

He completed training in Egypt, where his regiment left their horses and a quarter of the men, and arrived in Gallipoli just weeks after the Australians had made their historic, and bloody, first landing.

Frank and his regiment landed in Turkey under the cover of darkness to avoid torrents of Turkish gunfire still sweeping the beach.

Once ashore, Frank was promoted to corporal and led his men through epic battles to hold the front line, and particularly their precarious position at Quinn's Post, one of the most advanced posts of the Anzac line.

But after three months of ceaseless fighting and a horrendous life in the trenches of Turkey, Frank fell seriously ill with dysentery and had to be evacuated to Greece, then Egypt - where he also caught typhoid - and then, finally, to England. He spent many months recuperating in England and was eventually posted to the Australian Headquarters in London.

EDGAR

NINE months after Frank enlisted, sobering casualty reports were making Australians well aware of the reality of WWI. But the news did not deter the youngest of the Lucas boys, Edgar, 21, from enlisting.

Serving in France in the notorious Somme, Edgar, known for his fitness, was promoted lance-sergeant in the field with the South Australian 10th Infantry Battalion.

His duties were among the most dangerous, including leading patrols into no-man's-land by night to gather intelligence.

After one such perilous mission he and fellow soldier, Corporal Walter Frank Chapman, from Mt Barker, were blown into the air by an artillery shell.

Edgar was left with head, neck, skull and jaw wounds and was classified as "dangerously wounded".

In fact, his injuries were so horrific he was consigned to the "lost cause" group and left for dead.

But in a life-saving twist of fate, Army Medical Officer Captain Dean Dawson, who was also from Adelaide, recognised his name and decided to "have a go".

Edgar was eventually stabilised and repatriated to the 1st Auxiliary Hospital in London on June 15, 1916. Back home, his parents were sent the cable that the life of their blue-eyed, dark-haired son was hanging by a thread.

It would be the first in a series of communications of tragedy for the Lucas family.

CHARLES

EDGAR'S elder brother Charles, 29, enlisted a few months after him, and landed in Marseille, France, on March 27, 1916, about a week ahead of Edgar.

Private Charles, also a clerk, joined the 7th reinforcements for the South Australian 27th Battalion, also deployed to the Somme.

Amid the rising casualties, Charles was promoted to lance corporal on July 21, 1916.

At Pozieres, just two months after Edgar was wounded, Charles was speared by shrapnel through his left thigh and right hand, leaving him severely injured, and at the same time his throat and lungs were damaged from inhaled gas.

He was repatriated to England a week later and eventually admitted to the 1st Auxiliary Hospital in London - where his brother Edgar was also being treated.

But the family's sacrifice for king and country was not over.

ARTHUR

WHILE it was usually the eldest son who was expected to stay at home in case the others died, Arthur Lucas had become the fourth and last of the five Lucas boys to enlist, signing up on September 6, 1915, aged 33.

A prominent teenage footballer and a cricketer at Malvern College, Arthur had everything going for him. School Captain and dux of College at just 15, he had gone on to become chief clerk for the United Insurance Company.

Once in the army, he was quickly promoted to company sergeant-major during training and then selected for officer school.

Promoted to second lieutenant he embarked on *HMAT Ballarat* - the same ship young brother Edgar had left on a year earlier - as part of the 4th reinforcements for the South Australian 50th Battalion. He landed at Devonport, England.

It was during his two weeks in London, between September 30, 1916, and October 14, 1916, that the four brothers conjured an unlikely meeting, a brief respite from the hell of war.

With Charles and Edgar gravely wounded in the same London hospital, Frank posted to London and Arthur newly arrived, the brothers met at least once in these two weeks.

Their reunion was most likely at the hospital, but it remains a mystery what transpired when the four - three already traumatised by war and one on his way to the front line - were all together for the last time.

Arthur set off for battle after the meeting with his brothers, arriving in Etaples, France, on October 15, 1916, soon joining the 50th Battalion in the field.

In the bleak winter of 1916-17, he alternated between front-line duty, and training and labouring behind the lines.

By December a hint of his experiences was evident in a letter to sister Dossie (Doris). "There has been nothing of a pleasure tour in my movements up to now [and] so have no records of travels and sightseeing to give you," he wrote.

"There was work for me to do almost immediately, and in the part of the world I am in, what one sees is better not described. I was glad to get busy right away for, after all, that is what I left Australia for."

Arthur was transferred to the 27th Bat-