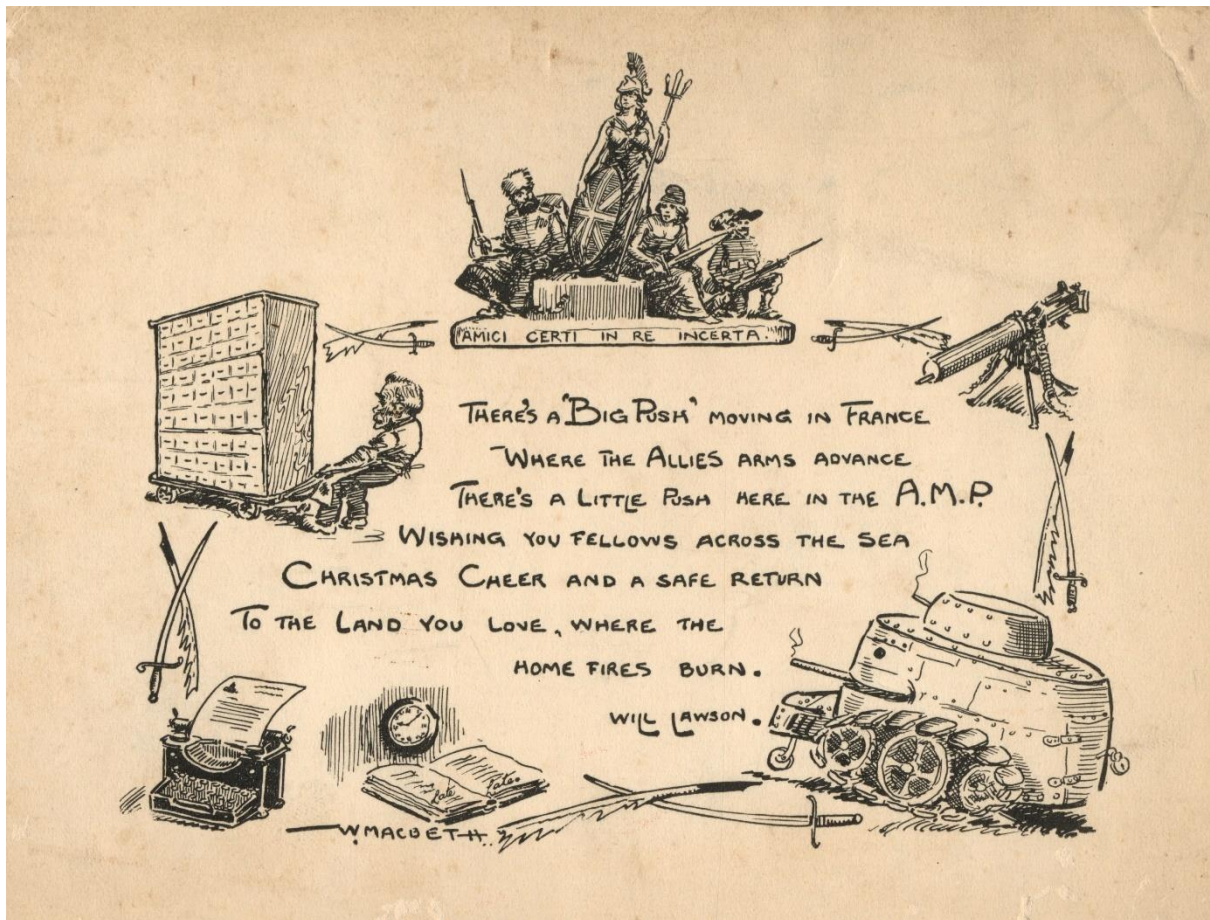


# From the AMP to the AIF



A Christmas card for AMP staff serving in the Great War, designed by two NZ employees of the firm.

**The wartime letters of Lieutenant Hector Roy McLarty MM,  
8<sup>th</sup> Battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> DAC & 5<sup>th</sup> DAHQ.**



## Introduction and acknowledgements

This complimentary e-publication was produced for members of the **Families and Friends of the First AIF Inc** as an extra benefit of membership. It is based on letters and diary entries written by **Corporal 1857, later lieutenant, Hector Roy McLarty**, which were later typed into a manuscript by a family member before 1930.

Use has been made of Roy's service record and the unit war diary for the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade to provide a linking narrative between the letters and to establish where Roy was at various times. Notes in square brackets have been added by the Editor.

Thanks to **Alice** from AMP Head Office in Sydney for her assistance in locating archival material on the AMP staff who volunteered for the AIF. **Abbey Turrell**, archivist at the Noel Butlin Archives Centre, was kind enough to search the AMP archival material on display at the Menzies Library at ANU and scan images for inclusion in this e-book.

Roy McLarty's typed manuscript is held in the AWM Collection as File 1DRL/0452. The copyright has expired and permission for reproduction was not required [AWM website].

**Cover image:** A Christmas card designed by two NZ employees of the AMP (W Macbeth and Will Lawson) and sent to staff serving overseas in the AIF (and presumably the NZEF). From the AMP Archives Collection held by Noel Butlin Archives Centre, RG Menzies Library, ANU, Canberra. Courtesy of Abbey Turrell.

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## Extracts from letters of Lieutenant Hector Roy McLarty MM, 8<sup>th</sup> Battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, 5<sup>th</sup> DAC & 5<sup>th</sup> DAHQ.

*Graeme Hosken.*

**H**ector Roy McLarty (known as Roy) was born on 3 March, 1887, in Fremantle, WA, to Hector Neil McLarty<sup>1</sup> and Elizabeth McLarty (nee Campbell). Roy was one of six children<sup>2</sup>. He began working as a clerk for the Australian Mutual Provident Society (AMP) in 1903, then a major assurance company in the Australian market<sup>3</sup>. Roy was living with his widowed mother at 3 Mount Street, Perth<sup>4</sup>, prior to joining the AIF.

On 15 August, 1914, Roy underwent a medical examination in Perth to determine his fitness for active service. He was aged 27 years and five months, with a height of 5'6¾" and a weight of just 124 lb (8st 12lb). His chest measurement of 34-36½" indicates he had a nuggety build. Roy had fair complexion, brown eyes and fair hair. He was Church of England denomination and nominated his mother, Elizabeth McLarty, as his next of kin.

Having been passed as fit for active service, Roy entered Blackboy Hill Camp on 17 August. With the rush of enlistments and the lack of an orderly enlistment process in the early days of the war<sup>5</sup>, it would not be until 27 August that Roy was attested and took the Oath<sup>6</sup>.

Despite admitting to having no prior military training, Roy was allocated to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery of the Field Artillery. However, it is believed that he did have had some years of training with the 38<sup>th</sup> Australian Field Artillery (militia), as he entered camp on 17 August, 1914, with many friends who had artillery service in that unit. Roy's good mathematical and administrative skills (expected of an insurance clerk) would certainly suit the art of gunnery.

Roy embarked from Fremantle onboard HMAT A7 *Medic* on 31 October, 1914<sup>7</sup>, with the rank of corporal and the regimental number 1857.

Roy wrote several letters during the voyage, which were posted to his family soon after disembarking at Alexandria.

### *'At Sea'*

*18/11/14.*

*I suppose you were not surprised to hear we left on Saturday, 31 October. We lay outside Fremantle until Monday, and at 4.30 am, began our long journey. On Tuesday we approached the Fleet. It was an inspiring sight – 40 ships in line, flanked by battleships.*

*On the 9<sup>th</sup>, the news came that one of our convoy – the 'Sydney' – had sunk the Emden in pitched battle off the Cocos Islands; later the prisoners were transferred to the 'Orvioto.' We were all greatly excited and exhilarated over these happenings.*

*The next day we buried a soldier who died of pneumonia<sup>8</sup> – alas! For his hopes and aspirations.*

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<sup>1</sup> Roy's father was a respected WA police officer and customs detective. He died on 24 November, 1912.

<sup>2</sup> Roy's siblings were Robert Campbell (b.1876), Ethel Jane (b.1877), Grace Emily (b.1879), Duncan Keith (b.1890), and Muriel Eileen (b.1894).

<sup>3</sup> Some family information from AWM website.

<sup>4</sup> The site of the McLarty residence is now occupied by The Terrace, a modern four-star hotel.

<sup>5</sup> One source of delay was the insufficient supply of forms, such as the attestation papers.

<sup>6</sup> Roy's enlistment date was backdated until 17 August.

<sup>7</sup> The ADFA database has the date of embarkation as 3 November, which was the day that the *Medic* joined up at sea with the convoy that had left Albany, WA, on 30 October.

<sup>8</sup> **Pte 21 Frederick Courtney**, 11<sup>th</sup> Bn, 21-year-old teacher of Manjimup, WA, enl 27/8/14, DOD on HMAT *Medic* on 10/11/14, buried at sea, remembered on Chatby Memorial, Alexandria, Egypt. Probably the only member of the AIF to be born in Bridgetown, Barbados, West Indies.

*After a delightful trip we reached Colombo on the 11<sup>th</sup>. The town looks pretty from the bay. It is tantalising to be kept on the boat, and no-one is allowed to land.*

*After a two-day stay we sailed for Aden, and reached there on the 25<sup>th</sup>. On the way we saw some inexpressibly grand sunsets.*

***'At Sea'***

***29/11/14.***

*We entered the Bay at Aden in the waning light of the day, and joined the rest of our fleet, who lay snugly at anchor under the shadow of an immense rock, and protected by men-of-war.*

*As the evening darkened, the place appeared strange and beautiful. The thousands of lights, twinkling from the fleet; behind, looming to an immense height, the sombre rocks; and at the side, Aden, lone, sandy and desolate.*

*At daybreak, it was up anchor and away, and that afternoon we entered the Red Sea. The entrance is very suitably called 'Hell's Gates,' for it is as hot as Hell there.*

*The following wireless came along today: "Troops will complete their training at Cairo after which they will proceed to the Front."*

*We are not to see England after all – not for a while at any rate – but I like the idea of two or three months in Egypt, only I wish the Egyptian ladies would wear more clothes.*

After arriving in Alexandria, Egypt, on 9 December, 1914, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery became part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade (3<sup>rd</sup> FAB) of the 1<sup>st</sup> Division Artillery. The 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB was comprised of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> Batteries, each of which consisted of four 18-pounder guns.

The artillery continued its training at Mena Camp, near the Great Pyramids. Roy's next letter indicates that much of the artillerymen's time was taken up with getting their horses fit again after the sea voyage. Roy was also using his clerical skills in the orderly room.

As with all the Australians, Roy was fascinated by the sights of Cairo.

***Mena, Egypt.***

***16/12/1914.***

*We have been in camp for two days, and this is the first opportunity I have had to write.*

*I had two days off in Alexandria, so saw most of that most interesting City. The town has four distinct quarters, English, French, Arabic, and Egyptian, and although they all adjoin, the life and customs in each are quite different.*

*The Arabic portion is the oldest, the buildings are those of an old city built hundreds of years ago – now they stand in ruins. The Egyptian portion is comprised of Old World houses, such as one sees in pictures of Naples, and each street is a public market.*

*The French and English Quarters have fine open streets and high houses. The buildings are modern and immense. In the whole city, I did not see one house less than three storeys high, but you will understand hordes of Arabs and Egyptians live in one house.*

*The city is a sleepy place during the day, but at night the whole place is alive. The streets are thronged with people of all races and tongues, and the strange Eastern noises tend to daze one.*

*I arrived at Cairo on the 13<sup>th</sup> and went straight out to Mena. Mena is built just on the outskirts of the fertile bank of the Nile and near the Pyramids. It is a squalid*

*little village with a large fashionable Hotel.*

*The Military Camp is on a clean sandy plain where 'tis said Napoleon fought his last despairing battle in his attempt to capture Northern Africa. At any rate, the Sphinx still bears the imprint of his hand.*

*The Pyramids are disappointing at first sight, but one realises their grandeur and immensity on a close view. This camp of twenty-odd thousand men is fine to see, with its myriad of tents and thousands of horses. We rise at 5.45 am and are with the horses all day. Afterwards, I work until 11 pm on official correspondence and am very tired by the time I roll into bed.*

*Goodbye, I am going up to the Pyramids to play handies with an Egyptian Princess who died four or five thousand years ago – none of your common or garden species for me!*

**Mena,**  
**7/1/15.**

*Now we have settled down, camp life is very similar to that at Blackboy Hill. The only interests in our busy lives are those little incidents which happen in all military camps. We were caught in a dust storm yesterday about five miles from camp. I could not even see my horse's head. We groped our way back to camp, choking and exhausted, and have been trying to get clean ever since.*

One of Roy's administration tasks within the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery was to prepare the pay sheets for the officers and men. With his accounting skills Roy was a good choice for this role.

**Mena Camp,**  
**7<sup>th</sup> January, 1915.**

*I wish you would send me Saturday's 'West Australian' every week. I have asked Jim to send me 'The Sunday Times.' We have been 70 days away from Australia and I have received no letters. All the mails seem to have been delayed somewhere.*

*I lead a very strenuous life. We go about 10 miles from the pyramids each day, and at night I work until midnight almost every night, and then get up at 5.45 am next morning, so I am always busy and tired, and have little time to write.*

*I am keeping well and getting very fat with all this exercise. I bought a small camera, so will probably be able to send you a few photos at odd times.*

*We were caught in a dust storm yesterday, and it is hard to express the appalling way the sand flies about. We had five miles to come into camp, and all the way I could not even see my horse's head, let alone the horses in front of me. Breathing was very hard, and by the time we arrived in camp we were all exhausted.*

*It is still blowing hard today, but I am missing it because I am preparing the salary sheet for the Battery. I have not seen **Reilly** or **Hoskens**<sup>9</sup> since we arrived in Egypt, and although they are camped near us, we are all so busy and there are so many men that it is quite possible I will not see them again until we return to Australia.*

*One gets used to the natives very quickly and the quaint customs of the country. We seem to have been in Egypt for years.*

*I do not think we will leave here until about March, and then we are almost sure to go straight to France, but the war may be ended by then.*

By the end of January the men were getting bored with the repetition of training exercises. At least Roy's battery was now able to practise firing live artillery shells. Around

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<sup>9</sup> Reilly and Hoskens are unidentified. Correct spelling probably 'Hoskins' – see later footnote.

this time rumours began to circulate that the Australians might soon see action, but the question was where that would be? Some thought they would be off to France, while others considered a shorter move to the Suez Canal to ward off an attack by the Turks was more likely.

*Mena, Egypt.*

*25<sup>th</sup> Jan., 1915.*

*9.30 pm.*

*There are persistent rumours that we will move out of camp at Mena within the next three days, and be stationed on the Suez Canal, and there await the arrival of the Turkish Army which is moving on Egypt. We all hope this is true, because we are very sick of being here at Mena.*

*They work us hard (we will be the better soldiers for that) but the work is the same day after day, and is very monotonous. We long for something exciting to happen.*

*We have been firing live shells lately and it certainly makes things more realistic. The battery did very well, and was congratulated over its performance by the officer commanding.*

*We already have a tremendous army on the Canal, made up principally of Indians, British Regulars and Egyptians. They in themselves are more than a match for the Turks.*

*Harry Hocking<sup>10</sup> is getting along alright, but is suffering with bad eyes through the dust and also a touch of influenza.*

*Mena,*

*12<sup>th</sup> March, 1915.*

*At sundown, Cairo is a bewitching city. It is certainly at its best then. I happened to be going in yesterday at that time, and the passing scenes were remarkable.*

*Darkness comes down suddenly, but just before a beautiful blue haze settles over everything – a sort of herald of the night – and gives the otherwise sordid surroundings a strange mystic appearance, as of some Eastern Fairyland.*

*I remember as we were running along the bank of the Nile passing a scene of this description. First a series of deep green fields, in which picturesque Arabs (picturesque only in this dim twilight) were leading their flocks of sheep home – typical of the old Bible stories.*

*Beyond, an Arab village, quaint and very, very old, surrounded by a group of swaying Palm trees, which to an Australian seem like elongated Blackboys, but incomparably more graceful.*

*Beyond that again and in the far distance, the hills of the desert gleam red in the dying light of the setting sun. The sky a deep crimson, and over all is a blue haze enshrouding the squalor and filth of the villages, and turning the scene into a soft and peaceful loveliness.*

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battery suffered a blow when their commanding officer, **Major Francis Parker**, died of disease<sup>11</sup>. His death took place as the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB was getting closer to going into action, and the loss of their leader would have no doubt unsettled the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery.

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<sup>10</sup> **Bdr 1824, later Gnr, Henry Pascoe Hocking**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 20-year-old clerk of North Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 7/11/15, died 17/2/76.

<sup>11</sup> **Capt (Brevet Maj) Francis Maitland Wyborn Parker**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 1<sup>st</sup> Div Arty, 38-year-old married crown prosecutor of Perth, WA, enl 18/8/14, DOD 18/3/15, buried Cairo War Memorial Cemetery, B.187. Parents: Hon. Sir Henry Parker KCMG and Lady Parker.

**Mena,  
20<sup>th</sup> March, 1915.**

*This will only be a short note and in future you will be fortunate if you get a letter at all, as we are almost on the move.*

*You will doubtless have heard of the regrettable death of **Major Parker**. It occurred with tragic suddenness. He was only ill about two days, and even now it is almost unbelievable that he is dead. He was, of all the men I know, the most cheerful and happy, and his loss is a great one for this Battery. His funeral was solemn and imposing.*

*We had a firing party of three hundred (of which I was one) to fire three volleys over his grave. We marched with arms reversed through Cairo, the band playing the Dead March. The other troops there were the WA Light Horse.*

*Everything of his had to be burnt as the malady he died from (cerebro-spinal meningitis) is very fatal and very contagious.*

*After today the censorship is going to be very strict, so no details of any sort can be given. I was awfully glad to receive your letter last mail. Do not be worried or surprised if you do not get any letters or post cards from me; it will be almost impossible to send them when we once start, and always remember that no news is good news.*

*I am exceedingly well, and I hope you all are.*

**Mena,  
27/3/15.**

*Yesterday I saw a field of poppies in bloom, pure white and dark crimson, they were lovely. At Heliopolis on Wednesday I encountered a swarm of locusts. A locust is about the size of a 'Horse Stinger.' In the distance they look like a cloud, and when close they are beautiful, glistening in the sunlight. Then they descend to the fields, the grass and every vestige of green is eaten, as if by magic. They even strip the bark from the trees.*

*The natives, as far as possible, keep them on the move by striking tins and kicking up the devil's own noise.*

*I was walking over to the pyramids one afternoon when I happened across a clump of Australian trees – those big blue-leaved gum trees. You can imagine how it thrilled me. I went up to one and talked safely to it of Australia, and my imagination let me think I brought some solace to this poor homeless wanderer.*

*The trees made a little glade – an exquisite resting place in this lifeless desert – and being there, I felt intensely at home, and the faint sweet odour of the Australian bush once again seemed to be sinking into the depths of my being.*

On 8 April the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB left Mena to join the **Mediterranean Expeditionary Force** as it prepared for the landing on the Gallipoli Peninsula. Though he couldn't say so in his correspondence, Roy was now on the Greek island of **Lemnos**.

**20<sup>th</sup> April, 1915.**

*I have just found a chance of writing you a note. It is to be strictly censored.*

*We have seen some very interesting sights lately, are having a real good time, and playing the old game of waiting – the calm before the storm.*

*The place we are in is, in a quiet sort of way, very pretty. The land is grassed right to the water's edge and slopes gently into small hills. Although treeless, it is all green, and at sunset is an unforgettable sight. The villages are numerous, picturesque*

*and old-fashioned, and are plentifully supplied with quaint windmills, which remind one of pictures of Holland.*

*We have had some good go-as-you-please concerts lately. It certainly brightens one up to have a singsong. **Peter** is getting on well, is very fat and the general favourite at our mess. **Tim**<sup>12</sup> is the same old mixture of good nature and bluff and talks unceasingly day and night.*

*I am as good as gold.*

When Roy wrote his next letter he was on the shores of **Gallipoli**. He had been too busy to write, so his next letter was diary-like, covering the period from 12 April to the evening of 25 April, the day of the Landing.

**4<sup>th</sup> May, 1915.**

*I am writing in the hope that by some chance I may get this letter away, but should you receive it, consider it very lucky. I am going to copy a bit of a diary I have been keeping. You will notice that the entries grow smaller each day.*

**12 April.** *We left Mena on 8 April and as usual travelled at night. We embarked on 9<sup>th</sup>, and I had another glimpse at Alexandria. We left the Wharf at 9 pm (leaving nine fellows behind who had sneaked up-town).*

*After two and a half days' lovely sea trip without incident, we arrived at the island of Lemnos. This island is apparently a No-man's land, as Turkey and Greece are still quarrelling about it. Great Britain has now taken it, and using it for a base for the Dardanelles Army.*

*It is admirably suited for this purpose. The entrance to the Southern Harbour is well-guarded by forts and mines. Inside the bay widens out and forms, I should think, one of the best harbours in the world. The water is very deep right up to the shore, and sheltered and hidden by the encircling hills.*

*There are about ninety transports now anchored here, twelve Men-of-War and hundreds of odd craft, such as submarines, destroyers, mine-sweepers, etc.*

*The island is very pretty, the land is grassed to the water's edge, and slopes gently into small hills. Although treeless, it is all green, and at sunset is an unforgettable sight.*

*The task in front of us is admitted to be a hard one. We have to land under the fire of forts and resist about 111 000 Turks<sup>13</sup>. I understand the Navy is to make a general attack simultaneously along forty miles of coast. We are told that it will be a unique undertaking, and nothing like it has been attempted since the Norman Invasion of England (1066).*

*The 'Karoo' is a small but comfortable boat and the food is now excellent.*

**20<sup>th</sup> April.** *Transports and Men-of-War have been coming in in twos and threes, and the harbour is gradually filling.*

*The time for action must be very close. We hear all sorts of rumours about the War, but can verify nothing.*

**24<sup>th</sup> April.** *We were the first to leave the harbour, and looking back as we turned the*

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<sup>12</sup> **Gnr 1774 Victor Garnet ('Peter') Benson**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 27-year-old AMP clerk of Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 28/7/15; **Dvr 1839 Roy Monteith ('Tim') Timbury**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 26-year-old AMP insurance clerk of Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 1/11/17.

<sup>13</sup> This description best fits the early landing plan, which was to have the infantry land near the Turkish artillery forts along The Narrows and disable the guns, allowing the British and French fleet access to the Sea of Marmara. Instead, on 25 April the Anzacs were to land on the west coast of the Peninsula where they hoped to meet only a small number of Turkish troops. However, on Cape Helles the British landing faced more organised defences.

*bend, I saw a sight worth coming ten thousand miles to see. The harbour was completely filled with ships, from the stately 'Queen Elizabeth,' graduating in a hundred degrees to small craft of all kinds. Totals were something like this:— 250 ships, 28 large Men-of-War, and 50 to 60 smaller craft.*

*The big Men-of-War usually go out on patrol work all day and it is amusing (and pathetic too) to watch how, as each ship returns, the little torpedo boats form a ring round her, and thus they sleep – the mother with her children gathered round her.*

*Of all the craft, I love the torpedo-destroyer best. Only from 60 to 80 feet long (I should say) carrying numerous small guns. Their speed is marvellous, and I delight to watch them fussing about all day as if they were the most important creatures in the world.*

*We also have a hydroplane. At sunset she flies out of the water, and like a beautiful butterfly, soars away into space, diving and twisting in an incomparable way.*

*We are anchored just outside the harbour awaiting our last orders to move. They will come tonight and before morning we will be under fire. I sit and watch the crowd tonight – the night before our battle. There is certainly no excitement, some are reading, some talking in groups – not of tomorrow, strange to say, but of the usual trivial affairs of life. Most of them are gambling; one would never dream that we were even at war, and so I am sure they will go to it, brave, composed, and with that reckless dare-devilry that is so conspicuous in Australian soldiers.*

**25<sup>th</sup> April.** *We left Lemnos about 1.30 am for Gallipoli and I awoke at 4 am to the sound of booming guns. I got up and looked about. How can I describe the beautiful, yet appalling scene?*

*It is Sunday, a beautiful sunny day. The clouds have just been dispelled by the rosy sun. The coast is about twenty miles ahead, and as we approach we see dozens of Men-of-War bombarding the coast in groups of eight. They pour their terrible fire into the Turkish forts. The infantry (11<sup>th</sup> Battalion first) started to land about 5 am and were met with a determined and terrible resistance.*

*The country is very precipitous and hilly, with a dense undergrowth. They landed in open boats against machine guns and entrenched troops, and with superb courage and irresistible vigour, rushed a hill, and after two hours of terrible hand-to-hand fighting gained the crest.*

*We, who saw it dimly, thought it a wonderful feat that day, but now after ten days continuous fighting, and after our first enthusiastic ardour is cooled, it is regarded as one of the most wonderful charges of English history. It was doing the impossible.*

*We are told that disciplined English troops could not have done it. If you talk to a Navy man now about Australian soldiers, he will take his hat off. I heard one say, "They're not soldiers, but God Almighty can't they fight."*

*I praise them because I know it is their due, and as I was only a spectator in that first day of war, you will understand I do not wish to imply that we, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery, deserve any praise.*

*All through that awful day the ceaseless crackle of the rifles and the 'spit-spit' of machine guns has mingled with the booming of the big guns. The country is too difficult for artillery to land there while the enemy is so close.*

**6 pm.** *There is a lull in the firing which is ominous in its dreadful quietness. Yet ever the spit of the rifles is to be heard. The evening is beautiful in all its natural charms of tropical softness. What a day to live! I must now cease for tonight.*

The Australian artillery landed and fired one gun of the 4<sup>th</sup> Battery (2<sup>nd</sup> FAB) on 25 April, but when no suitable firing positions could be found in the beachhead, and fearing possible capture if overrun by the Turks, the gun was withdrawn back to the ship, and no more guns were landed on the first day. By the end of 26 April, 14 guns were ashore, but the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery didn't land its guns until 1 May.

**12<sup>th</sup> May, 1915.**

**Anzac.**

*This tremendous battle has been going 17 days now, and is still proceeding with unabated fury. The infantry landed on 25 April and after a superb charge gained the crest of a precipitous and rugged hill. There were about thirty to forty thousand Turks, who put up a terrible and determined resistance. The 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> were amongst the first to land.*

*We (the artillery) landed about the 1<sup>st</sup> May, and have had twenty-two casualties to date in the Battery. Poor **Alf Benson**<sup>14</sup> was killed on 6<sup>th</sup> by bursting shrapnel. **Peter Benson** was wounded in the neck and arm on the night of the 8<sup>th</sup>, while we were digging gun pits. He has gone to hospital, but it is not serious.*

*The same night I was carrying sand bags across a crest, and to escape fire, dropped to the ground and found myself beside a dead Turk. I lay there for about ten minutes, and as he had been dead about ten days you can imagine how I enjoyed myself.*

*We dig pits all night under rifle fire and all day are subject to shell fire, and I can assure you I can dodge into a hole as good as any rabbit by this. I am dirty, lousy and unshaven.*

*One sees some awful sights and views them with indifference. Things that would haunt a man for a month in private life are passed by unnoticed here. I can assure you WA will always do me after this, but it is fine to see how the fine inbred qualities of our race show out in this trying situation. Deeds of gallantry almost incredible are performed daily.*

*You remember **Charlie Barnes** of the WA Trustee Co.<sup>15</sup>? He was killed. **Reilly** from the Boarding House is missing.*

*Turks are bad enough when alive, but when dead create a most unholy smell. Hundreds of them are lying about in these hills unburied, wasting their sweetness on the desert air.*

*I am enjoying this wonderful experience in a way, and it is fine to see how the danger draws the good as well as the bad out of men, and brings them to a greater knowledge of each other. I have made many everlasting friendships amongst the fellows in the Battery.*

*I am in excellent health.*

Roy's letter of 18 May provides a great glimpse into conditions on the Peninsula three weeks after the Landing.

**18<sup>th</sup> May, 1915**

*I am the happiest man alive today because I have received seven letters, a 'Sunday Times' and a 'West,' and have spent the afternoon in filling myself with their wished-*

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<sup>14</sup> **Dvr 3046 Alfred Ernest Benson**, 1<sup>st</sup> DAC & 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 28-year-old civil servant of Mt Lawley, WA, enl 20/8/14, tfd to 8<sup>th</sup> Bty 5/4/15, KIA 7/5/15 [sic, not 6<sup>th</sup>], buried Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli, II.K.29.

<sup>15</sup> Believed to be **Capt Charles Albert Barnes**, 'C' Coy/11<sup>th</sup> Bn, 34-year-old chief clerk of Guildford, WA, enl 17/8/14, KIA 28/4/15, no known grave.

for news.

*Today has been quiet as days here go, but the fun is yet to come. It usually starts about 5 pm and ends at 7 pm. Can you imagine me here? I am sitting in a 'dug-out' some four feet deep. I have not had a wash for seven days – a bath for 21 days. I am very brown, my clothes are in rags, my boots gone in the soles. I am residing on the side of a steep hill which overlooks the sea and is a very beautiful scene at sunset.*

*I boil my own billy and cook my own luxurious repast. I use a pick and shovel all day. I retire to my downy couch at 11 pm. (I have not undressed – not even taken my clothes off, for a fortnight.) I rise at 4.30 am every morning.*

*I am still happy and in a way contented, and I don't care much whether the cow calves or breaks its blooming neck.*

*Yesterday was a 'snorter.' They ranged shells on us, ranging from 8 inch to 12 inch-pounders from every conceivable direction for two solid hours, and I lay in my little dug-out waiting for one to catch me at any moment.*

*Honestly, it is dreadful while it lasts, a perfect hell of shrieking, hissing, whistling lead, which bursts with a clap like thunder and spreads like a handful of wheat thrown. It is simply astounding how few are killed and how many marvellous escapes one has even in one day.*

*As soon as the shower is over, we come out of our little holes and cook tea.*

*My first day ashore was a sore trial to me, and I can honestly say I was scared out of my life. Two nights afterwards – the night **Pete** was wounded – we got in a pretty tight corner; we had to go out on the sky line and pass sandbags along about one hundred yards, and then dig a gun pit.*

*Well, it was simply raining rifle bullets (all the rifle firing is done at night) and why we were not all killed I don't know. Pete was shot in the arm – just grazing the bone and just scraped along the back of the head. He ran to me and said, "I am shot in the arm," so I grabbed him on the arm where the blood was rushing away and ran him to safety. He went to the hospital straight away and is doing well – quite safe.*

*The whole night was one of dreadful hazard and hair-breadth escapes. A bullet burst right in my face and just snicked my nose. As the night wore on we became so tired with work that our feelings were dulled and we took no notice of the fire. I do not wish to go through it again.*

*I should say that an average of three hundred to four hundred shells burst over us per day, and we are subject to rifle fire at night, so the 'quiet day' I mentioned means only about sixty shells to date.*

*The Second Infantry Brigade were sent down to help the English and French some days ago, and after a very gallant charge<sup>16</sup>, and suffering heavy losses, they returned to our base today.*

*The English and French say we are mad, and the Navy men take off their hats when one speaks of Australians. It is amusing to see – (a damned shell just burst over my head) – how eager they are to aid us. I tell you these things, not meaning to boast, but to let you know how proud we should all be of the gallantry and unselfish devotion of our own men.*

*My own little escapades are hardly worth relating. I counted two hundred and fifty dead Turks within a hundred yards of our firing lines yesterday. Lovely objects, but Gawd! the smell. A shell struck a group of dead-uns yesterday and pitched pieces of 'em right into our trench. 'A' Gun fellows were just having dinner – up came the dinner.*

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<sup>16</sup> This was an attempt to capture the village of Krithia on Cape Helles.

*I go hunting occasionally; yesterday I caught twenty-five greybacks on my singlet and thirteen on my shirt – by the way I've only got one singlet, and it hasn't had a wash since I fell into a pool at Mena a month or so ago. It's good sport and adds to the pleasure of life.*

*Smithy<sup>17</sup> almost got pinked yesterday, a 4.7" shell took a fancy to him and missed by 6 inches. Tim is still aboard ship with the horses, so Smithy and I are the only AMPs at present.*

On 19 May, the Turks staged multiple attacks on the Anzac positions, with the intentions of pushing them back to the sea. The attacks failed, and many hundreds (if not thousands) of Turkish dead littered No-man's land in front of the Australian trenches.

**20/5/15.**

*Since writing you two days ago, we have had a pitched battle for about thirty hours. The Turks were strongly reinforced, and made four desperate charges, but were repulsed with terrible losses each time. Our losses were slight.*

*As they charge, they cry 'Allah! Allah!' and the bugles blow all sorts of weird sounds. This noise at 2 am in the morning is very disconcerting. They came on us until the terrible fire of our machine guns turned them.*

*Dawn came about 3.45 am, just as they were retreating from their fourth charge. Our infantry could be seen standing up heads and shoulders above the trenches, pouring a deadly deliberate fire into them; the attack continued through the day and fizzled out about sunset. The Turkish dead are to be seen in thousands.*

*Today has been beautifully calm, and I have been having a clean-up. Seven of us are sitting in a dug-out; Warren<sup>18</sup> and I writing, the others telling yarns and showing Turkish curios.*

*Yours, still very much alive.*

**22/5/15.**

*Nothing much doing except rain and mud – this has been a red-letter day – fresh meat first time since 8 April and a lovely swim.*

Letters from Gallipoli from May-June often make reference to the armistice of 19 May, when many of the dead (of both sides) found between the opposing trenches were buried, and the sinking of HMS *Triumph*, which was witnessed by most of the soldiers from their hill-top viewpoints at Anzac.

**Turkey,  
2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1915.**

*I have now been ashore for about a month. We have taken a series of hills near the sea coast, and a battle has been raging on and off all the time. One is practically under fire the whole 24 hours.*

*I wrote Longie<sup>19</sup> a fairly long letter a few days ago, and have asked him to show it to you. You will get most of the news from those letters. On the 19<sup>th</sup> the Turks made a very desperate attempt to force us back. After making four charges at us, they*

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<sup>17</sup> Gnr 1884 Willwood Thompson Smith, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 27-year-old AMP clerk of South Peth, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA.

<sup>18</sup> Dvr 1899, later Bdr, Harry Collier Warren, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & AFC, 20-year-old law clerk of Perth, WA, DOA 4/4/17 when attached to AFC, buried Lincoln (Newport) Cemetery, England, D.453.

<sup>19</sup> Roy wrote often to 'Longie' in WA before Longie enlisted. See Footnote 86.

were driven back with terrible losses; our losses were very slight.

On the 24<sup>th</sup> an armistice was allowed for them to bury their dead. Can you imagine the scene? About 4 000 dead Turks lying between our trenches and theirs, a matter of a few hundred yards. The whole four thousand were buried in the one da.

Several hundred of our fellows went sent out to help them, and it seemed strange to see them all mixing together and talking. At 4.30 pm the truce was ended.

On the 25<sup>th</sup> a German aeroplane flying over our lines dropped a large bomb – one killed. Our aeroplanes, of course, do the same to them.

Yesterday also, the *Triumph* was sunk by a torpedo right inshore. I saw the whole spectacle. She heeled over and sank in 12 minutes – a few lives were lost. It was a pathetic sight to see this bonny warship sinking, and it is one more score to settle.

We are progressing slowly but very surely, and are certain of success, and I would not be surprised to hear of Turkey talking Peace any day.

I am very pleased to say that **Reilly** is all right. He is at present in hospital with bad fingers. I was talking to **Hoskins**<sup>20</sup> yesterday, so he is also good-o.

I have heard of many friends who have been killed, I have heard of noble deeds performed; deeds that will live in the history of Australia forever; acts of gallantry and devotion to wounded comrades that bring tears to the eyes.

I had no idea that the ordinary man was such a hero, such a determined resolute, brave, reckless fellow. I thank God it has been my privilege to be one of this band of brilliant soldiers.

I am still very much fatter than when I left. The food is coarse and simple, yet wholesome. I arise every morning at 3 am and go to bed at about 10 pm. We sleep about 70 yards behind the firing line, and one gets so used to the rattles of the rifle and machine guns, that the noise serves as a lullaby. It is easy to sleep through the noise when one is so tired. Of course, we always sleep fully dressed because of expected attacks.

We were overjoyed to hear that Italy has declared war, and may it shorten the whole business.

McLarty penned his next letter from 'The Pimple,' a bulge or salient in the trenches on 400 Plateau. Nearby was a location known as 'Gun Lane,' which is likely to be where the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB were positioned.

**Brown's Battery,  
On 'The Pimple'  
2<sup>nd</sup> June, 1915.**

I was very glad to get Mother's letter of 25<sup>th</sup> April – that was the great day of our enterprise. It is nearly eight months since we left Australia – how time flies. Events have been very quiet lately, and it is generally believed that the Turks are so disheartened that Peace negotiations may be expected any day.

We have been having a fairly lazy time. I have to go to the beach each day – a walk of about three miles over hilly country – and always enjoy a delightful swim. I usually linger in the water for an hour or so.

**Peter** is still in hospital and is, I hear, getting along well. Poor old **Tim** got a nasty kick from a horse, and is now in hospital in Alexandria.

Last Sunday a Church service was held near our dug-out (about 50 yards from

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<sup>20</sup> Probably an alternative form of spelling of the earlier 'Hoskens.' Only likely person is **Gnr 2059 James Hoskins Clennett MM**, 9<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 20-year-old draughtsman of Bellerive, Tas, enl 12/9/14, RTA 31/3/19.

the main firing line), and all through the service, the parson was interrupted by the rattle of the rifles and machine guns. It looked very strange to see them all sitting there, guns beside them, and bayonets glistening in the sun. After the service, they walked straight into the firing line. The service sounded very beautiful.

In the evening I happened to be descending a very precipitous hill, and when in the valley could see right at the top a group of men at service, and above the crack of the bullets, I could hear the tune of 'Onward Christian Soldiers.'

I had a letter from **Wal** which had travelled all round the military camps in England and has ultimately reached me. It contained a photo of **Ethel** and her kiddy – the youngster is a fine-looking kid. I also got a letter from **Keith** dated 2<sup>nd</sup> May<sup>21</sup>. He was still in England. He said that he thought they were coming out to the Dardanelles. It will be strange if I meet him here.

**Turkey,**  
**10<sup>th</sup> June, 1915.**

Things are quiet still, with just an occasional attack, and we are having a rather lazy time. Of course one never knows when the fun will begin again in real earnest.

I have heard that **Pete** was in Alexandria and progressing well, but the news turned out to be false, as no one recently arrived from there has seen him. I suppose he was taken to Malta where a lot of the wounded are, but I am sure he will soon recover.

We have received no mail for a fortnight and the last letter I received was dated 25<sup>th</sup> April, so a lot must be hung up somewhere.

We are very much in need of reading matter, as we get no news. Longie always sends me the 'Sunday Times' and you the 'West Australian,' but I would very greatly appreciate it if you would arrange to send me the following periodicals regularly in one bundle and packed very securely:

*The Bulletin*  
*Scribner's Magazine*  
*The English Magazine (if possible)*  
*Harper's Magazine (be sure of this one)*

and any of the following three:

*XIX Century Magazine*  
*Fortnightly Review*  
*Coinhill Review.*

We have received a few English papers giving accounts of our landing, but no Australian papers yet. The English papers wrote very generously of the exploit and announced it as one of the great accomplishments of the war.

We are all very anxious to see what the Australian papers have to say of their 'Six bob a day Tourists.' I met **Dr F**<sup>22</sup> a few days ago on the beach and he was very affable. He got me a dozen eggs, thirty oranges, some chocolate and milk. These are very great luxuries after bully beef, and I thought it very generous of him,

**Anzac,**  
**19<sup>th</sup> June, 1915.**

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<sup>21</sup> Wal, Ethel and Keith are believed to be relatives of Roy.

<sup>22</sup> Possibly **Capt, later Lieut Col, Piero Francis Fiaschi MID**, AAMC, 35-year-old medical practitioner of Sydney, NSW, enl 20/8/14, allocated to 1<sup>st</sup> LHR, RTA 3/11/18. Against this identification is that Fiaschi was from Sydney and Roy from Perth, and it sounds as though Roy knew 'Dr F' pre-war.

*My evening trip is now right out on our right flank. About halfway I pass through a cultivated field, nestling between the valleys. At present the grass has grown wild and neglected, but like all the fields of Turkey, it is filled with beautiful red poppies.*

*Away on the right, looking down from our hills is a large plain of cultivated fields, strewn with little red houses and olive trees and looks exceedingly beautiful. At present it is out of range of our guns, but some day in the near future it will not be – then the little houses will be gone and the fields scenes of desolation – such is war.*

*I've got a couple of yarns to tell you.*

*1. General Walker and another general took refuge from the burst of a large Turkish shell in a dug-out they happened to be passing. The chap next door was just preparing tea and missed his 'billy,' so dodging out and putting his head in the dug-out next door he said, "Which of you bloody thieves pinched my bloody billy?"*

*2. During all this trench-digging, a lot of the soil has to be wheeled out, so impromptu barrows of all kinds and sizes have been made. Well, one very hot day about midday, I noticed a chap wheeling barrow loads out past our dug-out. He was resting for a moment, sweating like blazes, and just about done, when a dapper little English Officer came along and spotted the barrow. "Bai jove," he said, "That's a bally fine i-dee-ah. Did you make it?" The soldier looked at him and one could see the rising anger in his face – "NO!" he said, "I didn't, but I wish I could find the bastard who did!"*

*I managed to get hold of a tin of pineapple yesterday and it was good-oh!*

**Anzac,  
30<sup>th</sup> June, 1915.**

*You think **Keith**<sup>23</sup> is in France? I think he is here with the British as I heard that the Black Watch was here. They are about ten miles from us, and from our hills we can see them fighting. We have had a great dose of 'Hurry up' lately, and there is little time for writing. Something doing at last.*

*The Navy, combined with the British, made a tremendous attack yesterday, but we have not heard how they got on yet. We also attacked and gained all we were asked to do. You remember **Billy Telford**? He was killed yesterday, also **Lieutenant Parry** (son of Bishop Parry)<sup>24</sup>.*

*One of our guns did splendid work during yesterday's attack, fired eighty-five rounds into large Turkish reinforcements, and stopped 'em. For hours afterwards they could be seen collecting their dead and wounded.*

*By the way, all this bunkum about Turkish atrocities is wrong. They are very fair fighters and very brave. Of course, in isolated instances there is often dirty work done.*

Roy has had little to say about the work of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery to this point, but in his next letter he described how their guns did some accurate shooting on Turkish reinforcements.

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<sup>23</sup> Research indicates that Keith was **Piper 5/5061 Duncan Keith McLarty**, who served with the Black Watch (Royal Highlanders), 9<sup>th</sup> Bn, 15<sup>th</sup> British Division. He was killed on 25 September, 1915, and is remembered on the Loos Memorial at Dud Corner Cemetery, Loos-en-Gohelle, France. Keith was the son of Elizabeth McLarty of Perth, and the late Hector Neil McLarty. This made him Roy's brother.

<sup>24</sup> **Sgt 1648 William Alfred Telford**, 3<sup>rd</sup> Rfts/11<sup>th</sup> Bn, 22-year-old pearler of East Fremantle, WA, enl 23/11/14, KIA 28/6/15, buried in Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli, II.G.14; **Sgt 215, later 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut, Harold Leslie Parry**, 'B' Coy/11<sup>th</sup> Bn, 21-year-old civil servant of Midland Junction, WA, enl 17/8/14, KIA 28/6/15, buried Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli, II.G.7. Note was grandson, not son, of the late Bishop Parry of WA, and Sir Malcolm Fraser, Colonial Secretary of WA.

**7<sup>th</sup> July, 1915.**

*I notice that it is not yet published that we are at the Dardanelles. It seems to me an extraordinary thing, because we were here from the first day. All our drivers were sent back to Alexandria with the horses, and out of the men of the Battery who landed here, about [censored] so you will see we are doing our share.*

*On the 5<sup>th</sup> instant, **Corporal Buchanan**<sup>25</sup> of North Perth was killed and three men wounded – **Hayes, Costello, and Baldwin**<sup>26</sup>. I have since heard rumours from the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion that I was killed, and as this silly rumour may get to you, I hasten to correct it.*

*Lately, I have been doing my own cooking and have made a fireplace out of a kerosene tin; two holes on the top for billies; it works alright. I usually have boiled onions and potatoes with a bit of bacon for breakfast, cold tin-meat for lunch and jam, and for tea make a hash out of vegetables and tinned dog. We also get an issue of bread and dates every second day, so there is not much to growl about.*

*One of our fellows – **Tommy Cusack**<sup>27</sup> – is going home owing to the death of his brother and father at home. He is a fine generous lad, only about twenty, and is a good friend of mine. I have asked him to call and give you first-hand information about us all. He should arrive about a week after this letter.*

*We have now made very comfortable dug-outs with corrugated iron for roofs, and but for the flies and lice (they are worse than the Turks), living would be very comfortable. It is impossible to get rid of the lice, and the flies are awful beyond words.*

*I still think **Major Browne**<sup>28</sup> a very charming man and a splendid soldier, and he treats me splendidly.*

*The Turks have taken to throwing bombs over on our quarters lately, and. It is amusing to watch the fellows diving into their dug-outs as these bombs come over. They are not very effective, and one can usually dodge them. Our own bombs are much superior.*

Even though the fighting at Anzac had reached a stalemate by July, Roy was still confident that the Turks would admit defeat in the near future.

**10<sup>th</sup> July, 1915.**

*The long weary months of the war still drag on, and one can still not see where it is going to finish. Things here, I believe, will soon come to a climax, and after a bit of terrific fighting I think the Turks will turn it up.*

*Never a day goes by that we do not have our little exchange of 'greetings' with our friends up yonder on the hill. We, or they, start an artillery duel about 6 am to 8 am and then 5 pm to 7 pm, and that is on the quiet days. Of course, on the special days (about once a week there is an attack) then the little pop guns go all day long. This continued shrapnel is certainly making us all very nervy.*

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<sup>25</sup> **Cpl 1769 Frank Cuthbert Buchanan**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old motor mechanic of North Perth, WA, KIA 6/7/15 [sic], buried Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli, II.K.28.

<sup>26</sup> **Gnr 1826 William Hayes**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & Provost Corps, 21-year-old civil servant of West Leederville, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 8/5/16; **Gnr 1820 Thomas Costello**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 28-year-old police constable of Perth, WA, enl 21/9/14, RTA 3/12/18; **Gnr 1771, later 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut, Frederick Hardman Baldwin**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 27-year-old striker of Bury, England, and WA, enl 17/8/15, RTA 11.5.19.

<sup>27</sup> **Gnr 1783, later Sgt, Thomas Donald Cusack**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old farmer of Midland Junction, WA. Enl 23/9/14, RTA 8/10/18 and did not return in 1915 as Roy mentioned.

<sup>28</sup> **Maj, later Col, Alfred Joseph Bessell-Browne CB, CMG, DSM(US), White Eagle(4<sup>th</sup> Class), MID(4)**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & 5<sup>th</sup> Div Arty, 37-year-old married merchant of Guildford, WA, enl 18/8/14, RTA 19/4/19.

*I am enclosing copy of a letter found on a dead Turk near our lines, which I think is rather interesting. It is very simple and sincere, and shows one a little of the other side. Also it brings out one of the good traits of the Turkish character, which in Australia we hear so little of. We people here who have come into contact with the 'unspeakable Turk' find him at least a brave and fair soldier.*

*It seems an extraordinary thing that up to 25<sup>th</sup> May no mention of the artillery has been made in the papers. As a matter of fact our casualties have been heavy in this battery. **Corporal Buchanan** of North Perth was killed yesterday while in command of one of our guns in action; **Costello, Hayes and Baldwin** were wounded<sup>29</sup>.*

*I had a bit of luck yesterday. While standing at the entrance of **Captain Rogers'** dug-out<sup>30</sup>, a shell burst just above us, and a piece shot past my face and buried itself in the wall. It could not have been more than an inch off my phiz [face]. During the afternoon I was at 'A' Gunpit when a shell struck the bank and completely buried us.*

*Since I started this blooming history of the world, at least thirty shells have dropped around us (the evening's greetings are on), so forgive me if I spell some of those 'orrible big words rightly [sic].*

*The mail service is dead. The least they could do, I think, would be to see that our mails are delivered promptly and quickly, but no, the cold-footed gentlemen who run the Post Office Corps and bask all day in the smiles of the ladies of Cairo have no time to think of the poor devils who are doing the fighting. I apologise, they do us the honour of pinching all our parcels.*

*I have had an 'At home' today. My dug-out has been filled with fellows all day and we have been discussing everything under the sun. They have all gone now except one dear little fellow named **Bauny Castilla**<sup>31</sup> (the Battery Mascot we call him). He is only about 16½ years old, and we all thought it a shame that he should come, and all prophesied that he would turn tail when the fighting began.*

*As a matter of fact, he has proved to be absolutely fearless and is a very gallant little soldier. He was for a long time doing very fatiguing work under very dangerous circumstances, and came through with shining colors.*

*I'll just give you one instance – he was bringing a string of mules up a steep gully loaded with provisions one day when the Turks started a heavy bombardment. A shell burst among them, killing several [mules] and he was knocked down. Did he desert them? Not he – he led the remainder to shelter and then had the cheek to go back and sneak a ham from the packs of the dead mules. This mind you under shell fire.*

*He came into camp dirty, disreputable, but smiling like blazes with his ham over his shoulder. The youngster is often an inspiration to me. Amongst a lot of growling devils he is a bright, cheerful lump of enthusiasm, and honestly it takes a lot to be cheerful these days. I grow fonder of him every day, and I hope to God he pulls through.*

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<sup>29</sup> **Cpl 1769 Frank Cuthbert Buchanan**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old motor mechanic of North Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, KIA 6/7/15, buried Shell Green Cemetery, Gallipoli, II.K.28; **Gnr 1820 Thomas Costello**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & Anzac Provost Corps, 28-year-old police constable of Perth, WA, enl 21/9/14, RTA 3/12/18; **Gnr 1826 William Hayes**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old civil servant of West Leederville, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 8/5/16.

<sup>30</sup> **Lieut, later Capt, David Thomson Rogers DSO, MID**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 29-year-old married bank official of Perth, WA, enl 18/8/14, DOW in Belgium 16/9/17, buried Reninghelst New Military Cemetery, IV.F.7.

<sup>31</sup> **Dvr 3057, later Bdr, Frederick Slade Castilla**, 1<sup>st</sup> DAC & 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, '18'-year-old student of Claremont, WA, enl 21/9/14, RTA 23/10/18.

**Right:** Frederick ('Bauny') Castilla was born on 29/12/1896 [stated 29/9/1896, he enlisted at 17 years, 8 months, 22 days]. He was educated at Perth Modern School. Bauny died at Safety Bay, WA, on 1 August, 1976, aged 79 years. He was buried in Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth (now infamous for removing the headstones of WWI soldiers) in Anglican Section ZB, Gravesite 0088. His name appears on the Subiaco Perth Modern School WWI Honour Board.

**Source:** vcwma.org.au.



At some time, Roy had the dead Turkish soldier's letters [sic] translated into English. They appear below. The name of the Turk was **Hussein Aga**.

#### **Letters discovered on a Turkish Soldier at Gallipoli.**

*To my dear Son-in-law, Hussein Aga,*

*First I send my best salaams and I kiss your eyes. Your Mother Alif also kisses your eyes. Mustafa also kisses your eyes and Mrs Kerim also sends her salaams. Your daughter Ayesha kisses your eyes.*

*Should you enquire after our health, thank God I can tell you we are all in health, and I pray God we continue to be so.*

*Your mother kisses your eyes and Abdullah kisses both your hands.*

*Your brother Bairham's wife has died – may your own life be long – but before dying she brought into the world a child. The child also has died.*

*What can I say about the decrees of God? Your brother Bairham has also been taken as a soldier. We pray God that his health may be preserved. The money you sent has arrived. Thank God for it, for money is scarce these days.*

*Everybody sends salaams, everybody kisses your hands and your feet. God keep you from danger.*

*Your father,*

*Faik.*

*To my dear husband, Hussein Aga,*

*I humbly beg to inquire after your blessed health. Your daughter sends her special salaams and kisses your hands. Since you left I have seen no one. Since your departure I have had no peace. Your mother has not ceased to weep since you left. We are all in a bad way. Your wife says to herself, "While my husband was here we had some means" – since your departure I have received nothing at all. Please write quickly and send what money you can. All your friends kiss your hands and your feet.*

*May God keep you and save you from the disasters of the war.*

*Your wife,*

*Fatima.*



**Left:** A group of Turkish soldiers photographed after the Evacuation from Anzac Cove. The gun barrel appears to be the one that has been on display in the AWM for many years. It was destroyed by the AIF gunners before they left the Peninsula. It is likely that the barrel was retrieved during the 'Bean Mission' to Gallipoli of late 1918. **Source:** militaryimages.net.

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battery suffered a blow to its morale on 17 May, 1915, when a Turkish shell burst in a gun pit. In his letter written four days later, Roy describes the tragic events. (This letter was the only one of Roy's which was published in a WA newspaper during the war.)

**21<sup>st</sup> July, 1915.**

*We had a disastrous day on the 17<sup>th</sup> instant. Two of our Battery guns engaged four of the enemy's guns in an artillery duel. One of our guns was silenced early in the fight, and our boys behaved very gallantly indeed. A shell burst right in the gun pit, killing two men, and a third who I think will die.*

*The two men killed were **Stan Carter** of Fremantle and **Douglas Barrett-Lennard** of Guildford. **Sergeant Taylor** was the man wounded<sup>32</sup>.*

*This is how the men in this Battery die:—*

*When the smoke from the bursting shell had cleared away, **Wallis**<sup>33</sup> ran up to see the damage. He found **Mick Taylor** crawling about on the ground covered in blood, and dazed. Bill said, "Are you badly hit, Mick?" "No, Bill," he said, "I am only scratched, look after Doug and Stan." (We found subsequently that he was wounded in fourteen places.)*

*Bill then picked Doug Lennard up. The poor lad had one arm off, one leg shattered at the thigh, and internal wounds. He said, "I'm done, Bill, look after Mick and Stan. Don't mind me."*

*Stan Carter had a fearful wound in the side. He said, "I'm sorry I'm moaning, I know it will upset Mick and Doug, but I can't help it, I can't help it." He died, poor lad, almost immediately. His last words were, "Did they get the gun?"*

*Doug was in fearful agony. He kept saying "I'm dying, but by God I'll die hard." He lingered for two hours, and it was pitiful to watch. He wanted an overdose*

<sup>32</sup> **Gnr 1793 Stanley Carter**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 25-year-old draper of Fremantle, WA, enl 17/8/14, KIA 17/7/15, buried Shell Green Cemetery, II.K.26; **Dvr 1879, later Gnr, Douglas Barrett-Lennard**, 20-year-old farmer of Guildford, WA, enl 23/9/14, KIA 17/7/15, buried Shell Green Cemetery, II.K.27; **Sgt 1891 Sydney Arnold ('Mick') Taylor**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 22-year-old single clerk of North Perth, WA, enl 17/8/15, RTA 12/4/16, died 2/2/66.

<sup>33</sup> **Sgt 1898, later Maj, William Dane Wallis MM, MC & Bar, MID**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & 5<sup>th</sup> Div Arty, 32-year-old commercial traveller of Dumbleyung, via Wagin, WA, enl 17/8/14, 18/10/19, d.28/3/55.

of morphia to stop his pain and in the end he begged his pal (**Tommy Cusack**) to shoot him. His last words were “I died at the gun, didn’t I?”, and so he went, dear lad, the most gallant, the most unselfish little soldier God ever made. His monument will be the sacred thoughts of his comrades. He has taught us all how to die.

*Mick may pull through. We all hope to God he will.*

*I do not think in the whole history of the war there is anything to eclipse this incident for gallantry and unselfish devotion to comrades. I cannot imagine anything grander.*

*The General was very cut up about it. He spoke to us all. He said, “Lads, I have heard of nothing grander than the way your comrades died. I am proud of your Battery. I would be proud to be a gunner in your Battery. I only hope that when you return you will be appreciated as you should be.”*

*We buried the dear lads at midnight side by side. It was a real soldiers’ burial. The parson’s voice was drowned in the crack of the bullets whistling overhead – and thus we left them.*

*I believe I can see the end of this Turkish war in sight. I know I have said this before, but I am pretty sure this time. The English are still storming Achi Baba. From our hills we can see them dimly over the intervening country. They are fighting harder than we are at present and showing a brave, determined front.*

*In a curious way a big battle resembles a ‘Prize Fight.’ You can see them going like Hell; the fight gradually rising in intensity until it attains its crisis, and it is just then that the strain is greatest, one can feel it in one’s blood. Then it gradually dies and in the quiet lull, one can almost hear the panting of the men as they await the next round of hell.*

*Yesterday – to cheer us up a bit – the Turks fired 38 8.2” shells at us. These shells are enormous. The diameter at the base being almost 8½ inches and the length about 3 feet. The burst is terrifying, but the charm of them is that one can see them coming and dodge. Fortunately, they killed nobody, although wounding about twelve infantrymen.*

*This is rather a doleful letter, but things are very bright here and I am in excellent health.*



**Right:** Three unidentified gun crew of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery in action, using an 18-pounder Mk 1 field gun. An empty shell is lying on sandbags and hessian (used for camouflage) in the foreground. AWM A01049.

Roy’s next letter was written on the evening of 6 August *according to the transcriber*, but this may be in error, as at 5.30 pm the 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade launched its attack on the Turkish trenches at Lone Pine, close by to where Roy was stationed. Roy remarks that the ‘sun is setting on blood-red clouds’ and ‘it was hard to imagine that we are at war.’ Given that sunset at Gallipoli on 6 August is at 8.20 pm, three hours after the time of the attack on Lone Pine, my belief is that the transcriber misread Roy’s hand-written ‘5<sup>th</sup>’ as being the ‘6<sup>th</sup>’ of August.

**6<sup>th</sup> August, 1915.**

*It is now 14 weeks since we landed here, fighting continually day and night. I understand we are to be relieved soon and sent either to Egypt or England to reorganise. I only hope it is England. What a time we will have!*

*You would be amused if you could see the rig we go about in. Boots and socks, no leggings, pants are cut short (only about 4 inches long) and the sleeves out of our shirts.*

*I have managed to get a few swims at night lately. It is too dangerous in the day. It is very refreshing and is the only pleasure we have.*

*One of the most exciting things I have seen to date was an aeroplane fight last week. A German plane high up in the air came over our lines and made for one of our planes which was flying low. Of course, being on top, the German had a great advantage; also his aeroplane was stronger and much faster than ours.*

*As they came together, my heart stood in my mouth, as I thought our aeroplane was done, but he made a beautiful volplane up into the air, and escaping the German flew to earth.*

*I write this scribble at the end of a glorious day, the sun is setting on a nest of blood-red clouds. The land is green and beautiful with brown fields and it is hard to imagine that we are at war, except for the continually bursting shells.*

Five days later, Roy was certainly aware of the Battle of Lone Pine. As he describes, the Turkish dead from the trenches were dragged past his dug-out on their way to being buried.

Indeed, Roy himself came close to death twice in this period – once on the night of 7/8 August, and the second time while writing this next letter.

**11<sup>th</sup> August, 1915.**

*Our evenings just now are filled with horror, and night is one long dreadful nightmare. The attacking is always left until dark and the sounds and cries of the wounded are quite indescribable. We are at this moment in the midst of a large battle which has been raging four days.*

*I have snatched a few moments for rest and so am writing to you. A very large force of English recently landed here and I think that the result of our present attack is likely to prove decisive.*

*In the last few days I have seen enough to keep me talking for weeks when I see you again. The longer I am with these Australians the more forcibly am I impressed with their truly wonderful pluck and doggedness and the cheerful way in which they bear their discomforts and hardships.*

*I am still apparently in the care of the Gods, for I am still untouched, although three nights ago a shell passed within eighteen inches of me (so close that the force knocked me over) and burst ten yards behind me, a very narrow escape. I was dead scared for about twelve hours afterwards.*

*I saw today [sic – it would have been 6 August] perhaps the most gallant thing it is permitted any man to see. In the daylight, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalion charged a Turkish trench (it was practically a fortress), and after a most bloody and terrible fight, took it. All I can say is that it is almost unbelievable that men can do such things. It was simply superb.*

*For four days they have been dragging Turkish dead out of the captured trenches and burying them in large holes. Each body is dragged past my dug-out, so I am having a most enjoyable time. They are four to five days old, and they do buzz.*

*We are now in the sixteenth week of continuous fighting, and you will not*

wonder at a man letting his thoughts stray back to home and the delightful peaceful life that used to be. We are dead sick of the continuity of it – if they would only give us a rest.

*Just as I finished that last word, a large Howitzer shell (5-inch) struck the sides of my dug-out, within, I suppose, two feet of me, and by all the laws of war should certainly have killed me, but you see it didn't.*

*I have cleared up the mess, and incidentally found this writing pad again and will continue, as I have never seen a shell hit exactly the same place twice.*

*Smithy was wounded yesterday – a finger smashed by shrapnel. **Fender** [sic] also got a nasty hit on the head<sup>34</sup>. Yesterday [sic] also one of our poor boys was killed – **Barber** by name, from Pinjarra<sup>35</sup>. An 8.2" shell struck our No. 4 Gun and literally blew it to pieces, killing Barber and wounding **Chris Ewing** and **Belcher**<sup>36</sup>.*

*I am on most interesting work – observing. All day I watch for targets for the guns and thus not only pick up stray lots of Turks on the run, but also see the whole operations.*

*I had a rather ticklish job yesterday. One of the enemy's guns was firing from the open on to our trenches – a most vicious little gun called a 'Pip Squeaker.' I had to go and 'spot' her for the Howitzer Battery. She fired shells into the bank where I was observing her, and I can assure you I was never more scared in my life. Our Howitzer eventually got her.*

*I have heard bad news of the Light Horse. 'A' & 'B' Squadrons charged an almost untakeable trench and suffered badly<sup>37</sup>.*

*I have been observing all the morning. The country is somewhat after the type of Cottesloe, but far more rugged and precipitous; yet it reminds me of Cottesloe, and thus brings back to me thoughts of many a delightful day spent there.*

In his next letter, Roy gives a wonderful description of his dug-out. When not at the guns or observation station, Roy would have spent much of time in his dug-out, sheltering from enemy fire and the summer sun.

#### **14<sup>th</sup> August, 1915.**

*The battle I was telling you of has ended, although not decisive. It finished very much to our advantage and 'Jacko' the Turk is now in a very desperate position. He is like a dying donkey, his last kick always the hardest.*

*The day is ending beautifully in a glory of golden-tinged clouds. It is very quiet and still after the recent strife. The evening reminds me of our evenings at Cottesloe and of many happy days.*

*8 pm. Can you picture me here in "My little Dug-out in the East." I have one small piece of candle which I pinched today. The doorway is covered with a blanket to hide the light, as lights are not allowed after dark. I have laid out my bed, one oil-*

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<sup>34</sup> No 'Fender' served in the 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB. I believe this is a transcription error and the soldier is instead **Dvr 1809, later Sgt 21, Walter Colville Fincher DCM**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & 6<sup>th</sup> Bn, 25-year-old butcher of Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, tfd to Ordnance Corps, 30/6/15, tfd to 6<sup>th</sup> Bn 28/5/17, RTA 3/12/17.

<sup>35</sup> **Gnr 3045 Charles Victor Barber**, 1<sup>st</sup> DAC & 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 20-year-old apprentice surveyor of Pinjarra, WA, enl 20/10/14, KIA 8/8/15, buried Shell Green Cemetery, II.K.23.

<sup>36</sup> **Gnr 1804 Thomas Parker Christopher Ewing**, 9<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 22-year-old law clerk of Perth, WA, enl 17.8/14, RTA 24/6/16; **Dvr 1780, later Sgt, Harry Charles Belcher**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 20-year-old farmer of Waterloo, WA, enl 18/8/14, DOW 31/1/17, buried Etaples, France. Unit diary confirms wounded on 8<sup>th</sup>, not 10<sup>th</sup>, as Roy implies.

<sup>37</sup> Roy is referring to the charge of the WA 10<sup>th</sup> LHR at **The Nek** on 7/8/15. It is likely that he knew some of the men in the regiment from his pre-war or Blackboy Hill Camp days.

sheet, two blankets, and an overcoat for pillow, on which I am sprawling and writing this serial story – not an ideal posture for writing though.

I haven't many oil paintings on the walls, but I'll tell you what there is. First, a dirty towel – dinkum dirty – none of your half-and-half business about it, then a haversack containing two razors, three toothbrushes (toothpaste nil, use salt instead), a housewife – I think they call it but it's certainly not the kind of housewife I sometimes dream of (break here a moment) – a terrific burst of rifle fire just broke out and I went up to see what was doing – a Turkish attack (slight) which has now been driven off.

As a matter of fact it is a pretty awful noise, about 20 000 rifles speaking besides a few dozen machine guns, and a pitch-dark night.

It has now quietened down, so let us continue – a hairbrush which I'll soon be able to use, as my hair is growing wonderfully, tin of dog, packet of biscuits (God save the word), gas respirator, all of which are held in case of emergency.

Further round is an old mail bag which contains all my worldly goods as far as clothes are concerned, and they would make a tailor blush if he could see them. Next is a row of knives, forks, spoons, empty shell cases, Turkish bullets, fuse caps, etc.

Above my head, like a beautiful chandelier, hang a pair of boots, the nails in the soles are more fitted for a 6-inch plank than these dainty beetle crushers. Near me is a tin of good cigarettes which **Warren** gave me. What a luxury! and that best of good friends, my pipe.

I am dressed (let's see if I am dressed first). Yes, from the bottom upwards is a dainty pair of foot sloggers that wouldn't disgrace a Fremantle Lumper, a pair of grey socks, army socks, which are the chief delight of those pleasant creatures called 'greybacks.' Next, a good bit of bare leg, then a dirty pair of knickers, a shirt without sleeves, me inside, including the bare legs, and there you have me.

Beside me, in the mug, is my modest issue of rum – one tablespoonful per man per day (perhaps) which I haven't drunk yet, as you can see by the prudent way I am writing.

Rum is a godsend, the throb of a man's life runs so low just now, it is essential to give him some artificial stimulant to keep his heart cut of his boots and somewhere above his stomach. There is a picture for you.

Roy maintained a sense of humour despite the dangers and privations of life on Gallipoli. 'Big Bob' must have been a character, and was surely mourned when he was killed so close to the end of the war.

### **25<sup>th</sup> August, 1915.**

By the way, up to date I have some rather decent curios – a Turkish rifle and bayonet, several Turkish shell cases, fuse caps, etc., a dinkum bomb which fell on top of my dug-out but forgot to explode, the base caps of our Japanese bombs (terrible things) and other odd trinkets, including numerals which I took off a wounded Turk – a desperate old buck, who yelled like a stuck pig because he thought I was going to kill him. It will be rather hard to get 'em back to Australia.

War is a terrible thing, isn't it? – especially in the daily papers. It makes my blood creep when I read 'em.

The late attack has now given place to a few quiet days. I will tell you some of the terrible things which have happened to me – yesterday, I arose at 4.30 am, swore like a North Perth bowler, performed my toilet in half a cup of water, that is cleaned my teeth, shaved, and then had a damned good wash.

*I then decided I was in a merry mood and sauntered up to the observation station, put the good old telescope in position (by the way I tried hard to lose this damned instrument all the way from Egypt, because it's such an awkward thing to carry), had a look over the country, but devil a Turk I could see.*

*Thereupon I came out and sang ditties to the men on telephone duty, in my usual sympathetic way (they were fast asleep but that didn't matter). This woke the telephonist. He said, "For goodness sake, shut up!" turned over and went to sleep again – I shut up.*

*I was observing all day, but it was deadly slow. In the evening, **Wallis** (who has just received his commission), **Sergeant 'Ducky' Day**<sup>38</sup> and myself had a cup of tea about 10 pm and yarned until about midnight. I then took to my virtuous couch and slept the dreamless sleep of the good and innocent.*

***Big Bob**<sup>39</sup> has just been in to see me. He is about 6'6" and, as far as I can see, the biggest man in the army. He is a regular character. On 19<sup>th</sup> May – during the big attack – Bob sneaked off from the guns and got into the infantry firing line. He is a deadly shot and got a good 'pozzy' from which he shot about 73 Turks before he got one back. He was shot through the back from side to side.*

*Then they brought him out he said, "Is there a hole in my shirt?" "Yes," they told him. "Well, sure then there must be a hole in me," said he. When the medical attendant went to attend him, he said, "Wait a minute, me bhoy, till I clean me rifle," and he wouldn't let 'em touch him until he had finished.*

*When coming back from hospital he heard a big fellow slinging off at the old South African soldiers, saying they had cold feet. Bob strolled up and hit him a beauty on the nose, and knocked him about seven feet away. "Sure, me bhoy," he said. "I'm an old African soldier and me feet are as good as me hands. What do you think of 'em?"*

### **29<sup>th</sup> August, 1915.**

*It will sadden you to hear of poor **Dave Jackson**'s death<sup>40</sup>. It came during a very big attack on our part, which was crowned with a great deal of success, but also with a big loss of lives; success and death are inseparable in war – as Woolf put it 100 years ago. "Not once or twice in our Island's story, the path of duty leads but to the grave." It is ever more so in these strenuous days.*

*The one consolation of Dave's death is that he died in that one wild mad rush on the enemy trench in the glory of a charge, and is it not a splendid way to die? It leaves his name imperishable, something to tell little children of in the years to come. He was a fine generous, chivalrous fellow, and I, for one, will greatly miss him.*

*I'm sure you would smile if you could see me at present in my new knickers, turned up at the bottom in the latest style mind you, and a nice crease down each leg.*

*It is Sunday, and I'm loafing on the strength of it. **Fincher** has just left me; he is still suffering a good deal from a crack on the head but otherwise OK. He usually brings me a supply of magazines, and after telling me a string of most amazing lies,*

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<sup>38</sup> **Gnr 1787, later 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut, George Day MID**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 2<sup>nd</sup> FAB & RBAA, 33-year-old soldier of Perth, WA, enl 22/9/14, RTA 22/9/19. Made an MBE in 1920.

<sup>39</sup> **Artificer 1893, later Sgt, Robert Williamson MSM**, 44-year-old wheelwright and Boer War veteran from Wickepin, WA, and Shetland Islands, Scotland, enl 17/8/15, KIA 2/9/18, buried Hem Farm Military Cemetery, France, II.J.13.

<sup>40</sup> **Lieutenant David Alexander Jackson**, 'C' Sqn/10<sup>th</sup> LHR, 22-year-old draughtsman of Mount Lawley, Perth, WA, enl 23/12/14, KIA 7/8/15 at The Nek, no known grave. Jackson had been given permission to move to the artillery just before he was killed, Roy and David were friends from their pre-war service with the 38<sup>th</sup> AFA.

*moves on.*

*It is a glorious day, clear and soft, like a Spring day at home. The islands in the distance are distinct and covered with that glamour which always enhances distant mountains. The highest points are capped with snow. The sea is sprinkled with Men-of-War, torpedoes, and other odd small craft and I have a longing to get out there and sail and sail away forever. Since leaving Australia I have taken to love the sea, I wonder will I grow restless when I go back?*

*Viv Ogilvie<sup>41</sup> has just seen this letter addressed to you and sends all sorts of kind regards. He is a big hefty devil now, weighing about 15 stone. He tells me he has known you for years, and we talked for hours about you. He is a splendid type of fellow.*

*Jimmy Kierath<sup>42</sup> also knows you well and he and I have spent the night swapping reminiscences. He is a rare card and a fine fellow.*

At the beginning of September, Roy's thoughts were turning to how the Anzacs might survive a winter on the Peninsula. Like many comments sent home from the soldiers, the beauty of the natural Gallipoli Peninsula environment was something that caught their eye.

**Anzac,  
4/9/15.**

*Indications go to show this campaign is likely to last through the winter. If so, we will suffer severely from exposure. It is quite time we were relieved, for I believe five months continuous fighting to be something like a record. Please God, rumour has it that relief is nigh.*

*We have lately made Winter quarters, and my dug-out is a veritable Paradise. I live on the crest of a hill, and from here a jumble of smaller hills run down to the sea. The twining pathways over them are used by the patient mules carrying the daily supply of food and ammunition. Theirs is a precarious existence, for many a mule has already died from 'wounds in action.'*

*To the left is a green field – a bright spot in this desolate place – which in the early summer is strewn with blood-red poppies. At the foot of the hills, the clean white beach and. then the sea.*

*The day is most glorious, soft and. clear, like a spring day at home. The islands in the distance are distinct and enticing, their highest points capped with snow, and surrounded with the glamour which always clings to distant mountains.*

*At eventide, our world takes a beautiful ethereal appearance in the reflection of the setting sun. At this hour the sea always seems to be a-calling me and I long to get out there and sail away.*

*I have, come to love the sea, and maybe when I try to settle down again in the West the wanderlust will charm me away.*

*The little torpedo boats are scattered round the outskirts of the bay beyond us, keeping their ceaseless vigil.*

*Si-ee-dah<sup>43</sup>.*

**Anzac,  
22/9/15.**

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<sup>41</sup> **Gnr 1829, later Bdr, Stewart Vyv Ogilvie MM**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old clerk of Fremantle, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 8/10/15.

<sup>42</sup> **Gnr 1841, later Lieut, James Alexander Kierath MID**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 24-year-old warehouseman of Perth, WA, enl 17/4/14, RTA 30/4/19.

<sup>43</sup> Arabic term meaning happiness and good fortune ('Saida').

*We have just returned from the beach, each carrying four gallons of water. After humping this uphill for half mile or so, one begins to feel like a camel with an overloaded waterbag.*

***Kierath** has a hobby – he keeps a tally of the prisoners taken by the Germans, Austrians and Russians. He is up to page 69, and every time they have a battle he lends each respective nation two or three million men back. Otherwise, the Russian Army would be all Germans and vice versa. He also lends 'em a few thousand buckets of blood to make it look 'fair dinkum.'*

*After a long spell of quiet, we are said to be making another big attack soon and (as usual) it is to be decisive. Reinforcements are arriving in large batches. It is black-dark and a gale is blowing. The vigilant little gun boats on either flank are firing – the Turkish rifle fire grows intense and then dies away.*

Very occasionally, alcohol (besides rum) would find its way to the other ranks at Anzac. Roy explained how this was done once, and what happened as a result, in his next letter home.

### **27<sup>th</sup> September, 1915.**

*Your letter of 15<sup>th</sup> August was very welcome. It is wonderful how a letter bucks a man up. Only last week I was telling Longie that I had not tasted beer for six months and now lo! I have to tell of a banquet which would have excited the fancy of Caesar.*

*Our cook – **Wilson**<sup>44</sup> – (a real gem, he was chef at the Palace Hotel before joining this forlorn hope) got on to a hospital ship and brought up two dozen beer, six bottles of whisky, and odds and ends in the sweets line. Lord Bill, what a wild woolly night it was!*

*I remember **Kierath** (who, by the way wishes to be remembered to you) trying to eat blanc mange with a fork. I was explaining to **Tim** what a fine fellow he was, but what a pity he drank (so much). **Procter**<sup>45</sup> had come up for rations and I set him on his way home with his rations tied all over him.*

*I don't think he got home that night, because he came back about two hours afterwards and wanted to know if he had left us yet. We assured him no – certainly not – that he must have been dreaming. I have felt better ever since.*

*We have had very quiet times of late, but in addition to the odd shells which stray over, we get at least one visit from a German aeroplane (a Taube) a day, which usually drops a few 100 lb bombs which cause an 'ell of a stir.*

*These Taubes are beautiful machines, fast and agile, and it is in vain that the air guns try and get them.*

*The last few days there has been very heavy cannonading down near the entrance to the Dardanelles. So we suppose they are beginning a new attack on The Narrows and making another effort to get through. It is certain that we here will have to co-operate in a large way, so in a few days I suppose we will be living again in Hell.*

*The bursting of the large shells, away south (about 8 to 10 miles), is clear and distinct, yet terribly ominous. The sullen rumbling sound is not nice to hear.*

*I saw a lark in the sky the other day and could faintly hear its song. What remembrances of Wordsworth and Keats it brought to me, and how incongruous it seemed for such a bird to be in such surroundings.*

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<sup>44</sup> Wilson is unidentified.

<sup>45</sup> **Dvr 1872 Theophilus Hunn Procter**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 27-year-old bank clerk of Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 11/4/16.

*Yesterday also, I saw two quaint owls sitting on a telephone wire. I am also reminded of a few mornings ago, while standing on the side of a hill. A hare rushed past me, followed by about 600 half-clad Australians in full chase. The hare beat 'em easily.*<sup>46</sup>

McLarty was saddened when one of his favourite comrades died of wounds.

**5<sup>th</sup> October, 1915.**

*I have to tell you of yet another of our boys who has gone on 'the long journey.' **Driver Lionel Churchill**<sup>47</sup> was shot in the abdomen two nights ago while on duty in 'Shrapnel Gully.' He lingered for eight hours in great pain – then died.*

*'Churchy' was another of those fine gallant men you read so much of, full of enthusiasm and grit. I wish I could adequately describe his truly lovable qualities – generous to a fault, so unselfish that he would give his very soul if you asked it of him.*

*I was only one of his many friends, and in his eagerness to please me he searched the Peninsula for a bit of canvas I happened to mention I wanted one day. (This is just one incident.)*

*I have known him to sit up all night on the beach, on the off-chance of getting a few eggs (they occasionally filter through) for someone who was perhaps a bit ill. You could guarantee they were not for himself.*

*Generosity is not a rare virtue here, but with Churchy it was the manner in which he gave that counted, it was such a pleasure to him. Now, after nearly six months of good and ceaseless work, he lies dead – aged 23 – and all his fine aspirations and bonny hopes lie with him. Personally, I did not know him much until we came here, now I know him well. Gallant little lad.*

*"There is a Destiny that shapes  
our ends, rough-hew them how we will."<sup>48</sup>*

On 6 October, 1915, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery finally received a chance to rest away from the Anzac beachhead. They were taken by boat to the island of Lemnos, where they marched to Sarpi Camp. Alas, the promise of a 'holiday' and an improved diet didn't meet the reality.

**Lemnos.**

**15<sup>th</sup> October, 1915.**

**Saturday (I think).**

*We left Anzac at midnight last Wednesday week on our holiday trip to Lemnos. We lay in the bay until dawn and after seven hours' sail arrived here. We were 24 hours without food, and but for a dirty stale loaf of bread which I paid 2/- for, I think we would have starved.*

*It is just a typical instance of the way this benighted Army is mismanaged. After arrival, we marched about four miles along the shore of one of the many bays surrounding Mudros (the largest village) and are now camped at a village called Sarpi.*

*We were told at Anzac that we were being sent away to be 'fed up' on good food and an issue of Stout and Beer. As a matter of fact, the paltry food issued is*

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<sup>46</sup> Such was the wish for fresh meat!

<sup>47</sup> **Dvr 1789 Lionel Churchill**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 20-year-old chair frame-maker of Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, DOW 3/10/15, no known grave, listed on the Lone Pine Memorial.

<sup>48</sup> From Shakespeare's 'Hamlet,' Act 5, which references Hamlet's belief in divine intervention and predestination.

*outrageous. No Beer or Stout is issued, or can be bought, as the sale of liquor is prohibited by the Authorities, anywhere on the island. Breakfast is fat bacon and tea; dinner is boiled rice, no tea; and for tea we sometimes get a sickly roast or steak.*

*The few pounds that we had for buying luxuries are now spent solely on ordinary food, such as eggs, butter, tinned fruit, and salmon, so that is not too bad. What I dislike about the whole thing is the pretense of getting a man over here for a holiday, when he is far better off for food at Anzac.*

*The country around is very pretty. The green fields which we saw in April last are now brown and grassless. The villages are picturesque and quaint, but the people are very ignorant. Some of the younger women are pretty and all have fine figures. They are very frightened of the soldiers and will have nothing to do with them whatever, which is just as well, perhaps, for the ladies in question.*

*The people are very religious; a kind of Roman Catholic faith – each little village has its church, which is always the largest and best building in the place, and is an absolute sanctuary. We are not allowed to enter them.*

*As in all countries where Roman Catholicism is rampant, the people, besides being fanatical and ignorant, are absolute rogues, and all are making fortunes out of the soldiers. There are many thousands of troops here – mostly French and English, and a fair number of our own ‘Old Sweats’ from Anzac resting.*

*We have done a good deal of wandering about; our little party consisting of **Archer, Allen**<sup>49</sup>, **Procter, Kierath**, myself and that broth of a boy – young **Castilla**. The country is rough to travel over. The undulating hills are covered with rocks, and inland the land becomes barren and uninteresting, except in the little valleys where the homesteads nestle in the ever-green rich grass, surrounded with fruit trees and those beautiful English trees, the Poplar and the Elm.*

Six days later Roy had learned to relax more and began to use his free time by visiting warships in the harbour and walking to the nearby villages.

### **21<sup>st</sup> October, 1915.**

*We have now been at Lemnos two weeks and are having a fairly decent time. They are feeding us very badly, but we are able to get fresh fruit in the villages and stores from the ships. The harbour is still filled with ships of all kinds and nationalities, which are forever coming and going to Egypt. I have been on dozens of them, especially boats manned by the Navy and let me say this, the British navyman, whether you meet him here or at the uttermost ends of the earth is the finest man in the world. I have never met one yet who wouldn't give you any damn thing he happened to have.*

*On the battleships all Australians are treated right royally and one cannot visit a ship without coming away loaded with gifts. Had a most interesting day and a bonza dinner on the ‘Lord Nelson,’ saw all over her big 12-inch guns, and her torpedoes; the latter are intensely interesting.*

*We are camped at the base of a hill near a village called Sarpi, a large field running down to the water's edge makes an ideal recreation ground and football and cricket are going all day. A fine New Zealand band plays during the afternoon.*

*The country which we left green in April is now brown and grassless, awaiting the November rains. Inland, it becomes rocky and barren and uninteresting, except*

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<sup>49</sup> **Gnr 1763, later Capt, Clive Anton Archer MC & Bar**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & 1<sup>st</sup> Div Arty, 26-year-old bank clerk of Perth, WA, enl 18/8/14, RTA 21/11/18; **Dvr 1762, later QMS, Robert Leslie Allen**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, enl 17/8/14, RTA 8/10/18.

where one meets little homesteads nestling in the valleys. These little beauty spots are tempting and picturesque, the little white houses surrounded with fruit trees and flowers, the clear little streams running through them, and above all, clumps of those loveliest of all trees, the English poplar and elm.

The villages are numerous and quaint with a maze of twisting lanes, and the houses dumped down anywhere near them. The people are solely Greeks. They are clean, quiet and fairly industrious. The children are lovely kids, bright faces, big eyes, and an open frank way with them, but as shrewd as an AMP canvasser. I can't resist them when they come up and smilingly ask for 'Baksheesh Apple Soldier.'

All the younger men have been called to arms and are in Greece. The old men are arrant rascals, cunning and unscrupulous and beat us right and left. The younger women are rather pretty, with beautiful figures, but after attaining the age of 25, they seem to lose both their good looks and shape. They are very timid, and will have nothing to do with the soldiers, which is certainly just as well for them.

It would be over a month later that Roy penned his next letter. He was now back on Gallipoli, where little seemed to have changed since they left for their rest.

**26<sup>th</sup> November, 1915.**

**Anzac.**

Your letter of the 11<sup>th</sup> October came safely along. We may as well give up hopes of that large parcel you sent me. It has either been stolen or lost at sea. When you send anything again, always send small parcels, they seem to get here alright, but large parcels rarely get this far, as not only are they a temptation to the men in the Post Office, but it is so hard to transport them here. I have heard of such parcels being opened and the contents distributed in the hospitals.

I have no news whatever to tell you except that 'Beachy Bill' still plays hell with the beach, 'Asiatic Ann' spits spitefully at everything she sees, 'Tucker Time Liz' never fails to upset our meal hours, but otherwise things are at a deadlock.

The end of the day always cheers me. Yesterday in the hush of the evening, I sat at the top of our hills and, as the night darkened, it fascinated me to watch the scene. As if by magic a thousand camp fires burst into flame.

Around each one were perhaps six men and one could see their faces clearly in the glow of the fires. They usually sit and yarn, sometimes they are in a singing mood, and then the choruses come, clear and full up the sides of the hills and move one strangely.

**Freddy Price**<sup>50</sup> came round to see me yesterday. We have both been here over six months, and it is the first time we met. I did not know him. He has altered a great deal from the blithe little boy I knew. This experience has aged and sobered him, and made him prematurely old.

It is a great mistake for young boys to come here. It is too much for them. He has been ill, but is now well again. I could see that he has suffered from the poor food and the long hours. I am getting him some chocolate and milk through the canteen shops (I can occasionally get this sort of thing). He wants to be very kindly remembered to you all.

In late November, the weather turned very cold and snow fell on the battlefield. With a lack of warm clothing and blankets, the men struggled to cope with the low temperatures –

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<sup>50</sup> Freddy Price is unidentified.

a portent of what would come in the winter. Nevertheless, the novelty of snow for the Australians raised their spirits as they entered into snowball fights.

**28<sup>th</sup> November, 1915.**

*What do you think I've been doing today? SNOWBALLING. Oh! and isn't it fine.*

*Yesterday it became intensely cold and when it darkened at 4 pm a more wretched day could not be imagined. About 10 pm news came through that the Turks were massing for an attack, and I had to get up and set two lamps on the hillside for our guns to get their direction. It was bitterly cold, and as I went shivering through the bush, an icy driving sleet wet me through and chilled me. It did not occur to me that this foretold snow in the morning.*

*When I woke, my startled eyes looked out on a white world. I almost imagined I had been transported to some beautiful fairyland. This, my first sight of snow, was incomparably beautiful. The bushes were drooping, laden with icicles, and for all the world like a thousand Christmas trees awaiting their toys.*

*I dressed hastily and went out into it. Everyone was in an exalted and bright mood, and we were all soon busily engaged in our first snow fight. I've been like a boy of 12 all day.*

*I went up to the guns and they were like four beautiful toys covered with their white crisp coats. As **Tommy Cusack** came round the corner I let him have one WHANG! – fair in the mug and off we went again.*

*About 9 am a chilling gale sprang up, and the snow began to thaw. The pathway became almost impassable. Every two or three feet one would go head over top and so do a few yards on one's seat. That wasn't a bit funny.*

**3/12/15.**

*The snow has gone, but it is still very cold. My feet have been like ice for three or four days, but at last we have found a cure for that. A tot of rum sends the blood coursing through the body and warms one up. But for that I think many of the fellows would go under. I saw some nasty cases of 'Frostbite' today. I have about seven sweet little chilblains on one foot.*

*Yesterday, the Turks tackled Lone Pine but were repulsed. Our casualties were fairly heavy. I saw about 20 poor fellows put in one grave.*

*In the evenings the sky is black with streams of migrating birds. They come in an endless line, and their graceful flight is always South – away from the cold.*

***Tim** has been definitely transferred to Divisional Artillery Headquarters, and is now a bombardier. He well deserves his stripe.*

*I am sending you a letter I received from Mrs Lennard, which please keep. It is in reference to the letter I wrote about **Doug**.*

*We have had no mail now for three or four weeks, but expect one tomorrow.*

When Roy wrote his next letter, he was no longer on the Gallipoli Peninsula, as the Anzacs evacuated their positions between 15 and 20 December. Roy says he departed from Anzac Cove on the Friday, which would have been the night of 17/18 December. He refers to Saturday as being the final night of the evacuation (18/19 December), but the last day the troops left was on the Sunday night (19/20 December).

Roy reveals his mixed emotions about the abandonment of the Gallipoli Campaign. He was glad to be returning to 'civilisation' but was upset by leaving his dead comrades behind in the graves they had been tending.

### ***Transport 'Hororata'***

***Lemnos.***

***22/12/15.***

*At first sight it looks a dreadful business, this evacuation of Anzac. The giving up of all our hopes and ambitions, all the weary months of labour, the loss of prestige, and not least of all, the surrendering of all our dead comrades, lying in their lonely graves.*

*After nearly eight months in action, the order to evacuate came suddenly; to us it was incredible. For eight days we were secretly withdrawn at night, and towards the last when only a few were left, the suspense was a nasty strain. The Turks had only to get an idea of what was doing, then things would have been all up, and this youth would now be in Heaven.*

*I left on the Friday night, and on Saturday the end came. At midnight the last of the troops embarked, leaving a few to blow up the trenches. One of our guns stayed to the last ('A' Sub) and was actually the last gun to fire from Anzac. At midnight she was destroyed.*

*At 3 am the mines were blown up, scaring hell into the Turks, who offered up a tremendous fusillade of fire. There was NOT ONE casualty in the first and second Australian Divisions during the whole of this enormous operation, which speaks well for the admirable way in which it was carried out. In its way it is as fine a feat as the landing.*

*I suppose the Turks will have it as a great victory, but if you could see these rowdy, happy soldiers, you would sort of smile at the idea of that.*

*Throughout the move, the discipline of our troops has been remarkable. Eight months ago they were a fine enthusiastic lot of men, but very raw. After the dangers, the privations and vicissitudes of the past months, they are now perhaps the finest troops in the world.*

*You can imagine what a glorious prospect it is to us to be returning to that much maligned land of Pharaoh again, to once more see a little of civilisation.*

*You see that "Man proposes and God disposes." Who would have thought on that sombre April morning, eight months later these same troops would be regretfully leaving their hard-won hills and their dead comrades to the Turks.*

*NO! We are not downhearted.*

*No mails have been received for three weeks. I suppose they await us in Egypt. So all your good wishes will not reach me until after Christmas, but I know you are thinking of me, that is comforting.*

After a short stay in Mudros Harbour, Lemnos, the *Hororata* steamed for Egypt. Christmas Day 1915 was spent at sea for the men of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery, and Roy's thoughts turned to Home.

***24<sup>th</sup> December, 1915.***

***At Sea.***

*Christmas Eve! I can imagine you all at home. You have been rushing about all the afternoon buying your last secret gifts for each other, and living in the delightful expectancy of tomorrow. I know I ALWAYS left my buying until Christmas Eve. I have asked Santa Claus to fill up the empty spaces in your stockings with love from me.*

*We left Lemnos yesterday evening, the sky was dull and threatening rain, and the harbour was aglow with the radiance of a thousand lamps from the ships.*

*We are rather dreading submarines, and that may be our Christmas gift tomorrow. Life on a troopship is enjoyable and lazy after Anzac.*

*We have about 2 000 hungry souls aboard. Can you imagine the inner part of the ship as one great series of halls with rows of tables? Men sitting about reading, writing, gambling, yarning, fooling, three pianos going and huge mobs singing and dancing. The lot raising a noise like the babel in hell. The real fun begins when the hammocks are hung.*

***Christmas Day – At Sea.***

*Christmas Dinner has come and gone – soup, a roast and a piece of duff without sauce and nothing to drink, not even tea, that’s all.*

*In the afternoon we buried a cobber<sup>51</sup> who had the misfortune to die yesterday [25<sup>th</sup>], thus you have the day’s doings. Hope to reach Alexandria tomorrow.*

*It is a beautiful day. I have been sitting in the riggings – pipe going – thinking of all you people at home. I can see all your merry faces at dinner and watch in imagination Longie’s marvellous capacity for sinking duff.*



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

P00046.047

**Above:** A service is performed on the deck of the troopship HMS *Hororata* prior to a burial at sea on Christmas Day. Formerly a horse-breaker of Walla Walla, 669 Gunner James Dalton, 1<sup>st</sup> Brigade Field Artillery, died of enteric fever and jaundice. The ship was en route from Lemnos to Alexandria with troops evacuated from Gallipoli. AWM P00046.047. Roy attended this funeral service.

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<sup>51</sup> **Gnr 669 James Dalton**, 1<sup>st</sup> BAC & 1<sup>st</sup> FAB, 22-year-old horse-breaker of Walla Walla, NSW, and Chelsea, London, enl 26/8/14, DOD at sea 25/12/15 (jaundice and enteric fever), buried at sea, name appears on Lone Pine Memorial, Gallipoli.

Up to this time, Roy had no blemishes on his service record, so it was a surprise to find out that he ‘broke ship’ when the *Hororata* docked in Alexandria on 26 December, 1915. The good time he had with a few mates was soon forgotten, as the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade found themselves in the ‘damned desert’ at Tel-el-Kebir.

**29<sup>th</sup> December, 1915.**

***In the Damned Desert.***

*The last five days have been hard going. Reached Alexandria on the 26<sup>th</sup> but no leave was granted. I, with some pals, ‘BROKE SHIP,’ that’s very exciting. We lowered a rope over the side in the dark, slid down, and then went like hell with the sentries after us. It’s exciting, because one never knows whether the sentries will SHOOT.*

*Anyhow they didn’t. Incidentally one of our coves fell into a canal twenty feet deep, but that proved amusing, later as “everywhere that **Clarkey**<sup>52</sup> went the water followed after” to the consternation of the blokes that own the beer joints.*

*The first thing I did (after stowing six beers) was to buy a shirt, change in the shop, and leave him the old ‘un as a curio of a Hostralian Soldier.*

*Had a good rowdy night. lobbed back 2 am – successfully dodged the sentries and climbed on to the ship up the rope. Gawd! it was tough – ever tried it?*

*We were granted leave next day. Had a bonza time. It is just lovely to be back here again. Left Alexandria that night and after a miserable night lobbed in this God-forsaken hole, Tel-el-Kebir. Not far from the Canal. Big battles fought here in 1882, but look up your history books, I’ve no time to tell you about it. We have to get to work straightaway.*

Roy was thrilled to receive a large bundle of letters, parcels and papers sent by his family which had not been delivered to Gallipoli. He was also cheered by spending four days in Cairo.

**9<sup>th</sup> January, 1916.**

***Tel-el-Kebir.***

*This is in answer to about half a dozen letters from you all, and to thank you for the parcels which we received about 3<sup>rd</sup> January, 1916. I got six parcels altogether from different people, and I am sure you would have all been repaid had you seen my face when I opened them.*

*In addition to the gifts from our own friends, we got a host of gifts from different institutions, and have been living like lords ever since. They are fully appreciated, and everyone thinks the people at home very generous.*

*We have had no letters or mail for six weeks, and it all came in a bunch. I got 35 letters and parcels, and about 30 papers. Of course, the two items of interest were the arrival of Eva’s baby and Peter’s wedding<sup>53</sup>.*

*I feel rather flattered at being made a godfather, and having the baby named after me, but it’s rather a dubious compliment to him, isn’t it?*

*I would have loved to have been at Peter’s wedding; I got various accounts of it.*

*I was sent to Cairo on duty the other day and stayed four days, and had a bonza time. **Tim** was with me the first day. Was driving along in a gharri the next day when*

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<sup>52</sup> Probably Gnr 1788 Lawrence Strickland Clarke, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 19-year-old AMP insurance clerk of West Perth, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 4/5/17.

<sup>53</sup> It is likely that Eva was Roy’s sister and Peter his brother.

*I met **Des Gee**<sup>54</sup>. He is a bonza fellow, and was hit in two places on the Peninsula. He is at present a Sergeant in the Pay Office, and is very keen on me transferring there. As a matter of fact, it is a great temptation after the discomforts of active service, but I don't think I'll go.*

*Went out and saw **Hilton Ennis**<sup>55</sup> and his wife at Heliopolis. Hilton is a tremendous size. Heliopolis is a most beautiful city and they are very comfortably housed. Mrs Ennis is enjoying herself. They were very glad to see me. I couldn't find **Charlie Riva**<sup>56</sup>, nor **Frank Mullen**<sup>57</sup>; it's a devil of a place to find anyone.*

*I got about 30 excellent photos out of all my films of Anzac, and think myself very lucky. You will receive a set of them all soon, and **HANG ON TO THEM**.*

*Amongst my parcels was one from Mrs Lennard, containing some very nice things. Very thoughtful of her, wasn't it?*

*What do you think of this? One of our fellows when passing the Field Post Office accidentally discovered a pile of our Home Letters in the **INCINERATOR**. Isn't that a damned shame. Someone will get a Court Martial over it for sure (keep this secret).*

*I wrote you a long letter about the Evacuation that mail. I hope it got through.*

*We are working very hard again reorganising, so probably I will only have time to write short letters for a while.*

*It is Sunday and a most glorious day. Half-day off, so went for a walk along one of the pretty canals nearby.*

*I am very concerned to hear about **Keith**<sup>58</sup>, but absence of news does not necessarily mean that anything has happened to him.*

***Bauny Castilla** is on leave in Cairo today. He got bundles and bundles of letters and parcels at Xmas time, and consequently is very happy. He is a loveable kid.*

Now back in Egypt, McLarty was once more performing clerical duties for the battery. Though he was 'working hard,' the job allowed him to visit Cairo again, this time for a week, of which five of the seven days were a 'holiday.'

### ***Tel-el-Kebir.***

***14<sup>th</sup> February, 1916.***

*I did not get a letter from you this fortnight and am wondering what news you have of Keith.*

*I have just returned from a seven days' trip to Cairo on duty. I did all the work required of me in two days, and spent the other five as a holiday. I was living with **Des Gee** at the Army Pay Corps Mess and had a great time. However, I'm again back in this hole, and working hard.*

*They are breaking up all of the old 1<sup>st</sup> Division and are drafting them into the newer troops coming from Australia to stiffen them up.*

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<sup>54</sup> **Pte 168, later Cpl, Frank Desmond Gee**, 11<sup>th</sup> Bn & Army Postal Corps, 21-year-old clerk of Perth, WA, enl 9/9/14, RTA 30/10/19.

<sup>55</sup> **2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut, later Capt, Hilton Ward Ennis MID**, 16<sup>th</sup> Coy/AASC & 2<sup>nd</sup> Div Train, 28-year-old married quantity surveyor of Gosvells, WA, enl 18/3/15, RTA 4/1/19.

<sup>56</sup> **Staff Sgt 2327 Charles Stanley Riva**, 5<sup>th</sup> Rfts/28<sup>th</sup> Bn, 27-year-old bank clerk of Mount Lawley, WA, enl 22/7/15, RTA 22/9/19.

<sup>57</sup> **Sgt 2328 Francis Sydney Hamilton ('Frank') Mullen**, 5<sup>th</sup> Rfts/28<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23-year-old clerk of Perth, WA, enl 2/8/15, 4/5/17.

<sup>58</sup> Roy's family must not have yet known (at the time they wrote to Roy) that Keith McLarty had been killed on the Western front on 25/9/15.

*They are talking of forming a 3<sup>rd</sup> Division of Artillery here, so we will probably be drafted into it. Of course I do not know definitely yet. I am dead sick of this training again, and long for a trip home, but I suppose we will have another two months here and then go either to Salonika, Albania, or France. However, I'm hopeful that the end of the year will finish the whole business.*

*How are you all? I hope well. I am good-oh – 11 stone 7 lbs<sup>59</sup>.*

Rumours were rife at this time as the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisions were being created from the 1<sup>st</sup> Division and 4<sup>th</sup> Brigade battalions at Tel-el-Kebir. Reinforcements were being reallocated to the new battalions, and the 'old hands' of Gallipoli were concerned that they would be moved on from their original battalion, where their tradition and mateships had been formed on the Peninsula. At the same time, the 'doubling' of the AIF created opportunities for promotions for officers, NCOs and privates.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> Division infantry battalions were formed in Australia, but Roy's thought that the 3<sup>rd</sup> Division's artillery might be formed in Egypt made sense, as that is where the experienced gunners, and their guns, were at the time.

Several days later Roy was advised that his younger brother, **Duncan Keith McLarty**, was missing in action.

Despite being in the orderly room for duty in the evenings, Roy spent much of the day training in the desert with the battery's horses and guns. 'Maneuvering' would have involved rushing the guns to a new firing position, disconnecting the gun and limber from the horses, bringing the 18-pounder gun into a ready-to-fire position, firing, then hooking everything up again, in the shortest possible time.

### ***Tel-el-Kebir.***

***16<sup>th</sup> February, 1916.***

*Your letter of 23<sup>rd</sup> January came along a few days ago, and left me a good deal happier. Jimmy Linton<sup>60</sup> wrote me from Melbourne, and I see he is beginning to realise that army life is one long endless fatigue.*

*I received bad news of Keith this mail. The Army Headquarters report him 'Missing' and I realise what that means. It is as well for us to think of him as having died on the battlefields of Flanders. He promised to be a fine stamp of a man, and was I think, singularly lacking in most of the vices of men of his age. Mother has apparently taken it to heart, and Grace tells me she is looking very old and fretted.*

*I am beginning to take pleasure in my work, and gather a few grains of happiness in the daily round of life.*

*We are out maneuvering all day, and there is something exhilarating and enjoyable in the movements of horses, and the marvellous way they get to know exactly what to do.*

*At midday, we bivouac under the shade of a palm grove and there partake of a frugal meal. The natives stand around yelling "eggs-a-cook," "Oranges," etc. They are a thieving, dirty crew.*

*I believe we stay here until April – this Canal business is just a bluff – and then away to Flanders.*

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<sup>59</sup> The high kilojoule value of the army diet is shown by the fact that Roy had put on 37 lb (2st 9lb) since he enlisted, despite spending eight of those 17 months on Gallipoli.

<sup>60</sup> **Gnr 12302 James Linton, 14<sup>th</sup> Rfts/2<sup>nd</sup> FAB**, 30-year-old AMP clerk and organist of Manly, NSW, and Perth, WA, enl 2/11/15, KIA 21/7/17 at Zillebeke, Belgium, buried Reninghelst New Military Cemetery, Belgium, III.D.10. One of Roy's best friends and fellow AMP work colleague.

**Sunday,**  
**27<sup>th</sup> February, 1916.**

*Six days shalt thou labour, and on the Seventh thou shalt do 'stables' for hours. Hence we have been 'mucking out' all the morning. This afternoon we are free, but a bright sunny day is spoilt by a sand storm. One is expectorating Pyramids all day long.*

On 23 February, 1916, Roy McLarty was promoted to sergeant, and was pleased to know that he would be remaining with 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade and its 8<sup>th</sup> Battery. However, many of his 'old comrades' were moved to some of the new batteries and brigades for the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Divisional Artilleries.

At this time, the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Artillery (in which Roy served) consisted of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigades, plus the new 21<sup>st</sup> Howitzer Brigade. The 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB now comprised the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 24<sup>th</sup> Batteries.

**1<sup>st</sup> March, 1916.**

*After a busy week (both practical and theoretical) for promotion you can now call me a sergeant. I expect to get a sub-section in a few days, and I will then be in charge of forty horses and one gun. Incidentally, I will come in for a good deal of worry and anxiety.*

*They are now forming two new divisions of Australian Artillery here which, with the one now forming in Australia, will total five divisions. They have broken this (1<sup>st</sup>) Division up to pieces, and have drafted about sixty per cent of our men into the new divisions to stiffen them up.*

*Our own division is practically all reinforcements with the exception of the NCOs. I can tell you it was very depressing to lose so many old comrades, the Battery is now practically scattered to the four winds.*

***Captain Rogers** (he will be major any day now) is in charge and is keeping all his best NCOs for this Battery. I hate the thought of having to start training again, but the reinforcements will know practically nothing. It is so very dry and monotonous to us fellows who have to begin with them over again.*

*I am expecting to see **Jim** any day and you can imagine how I look forward to our meeting. By some chance he may be even sent to this Battery.*

*Even with all this reorganising, I think we will be ready for service in a few weeks, and personally I feel sure we will be on service again about April. I shall be very glad too, for it is much to be preferred to this camp life.*

*I suppose one will soon be looking forward to next Christmas and wondering if it will be spent at home. Personally, my dears, I don't think so, unless I happen to get sent home wounded, but if nothing occurs, I reckon I'll be lucky if I see Perth again before October 1917. What do you think about it?*

*Do not fail to let me know when you receive those photographs I sent you of Anzac.*

Early March 1916 saw Roy on patrol of some villages beyond the Tel-el-Kebir base camp. The intention was to not keep the villagers in, but the soldiers out!

**Tel-el-Kebir.**

**7<sup>th</sup> March, 1916.**

*I spent yesterday and last night in the midst of a native village. I was in charge of an armed party of eighteen men, and we had to patrol the native villages away to the back of the camp for about twelve miles, keeping order in the villages, and stopping troops*

from entering them.

*It was a strange experience wandering at night through the narrow winding pathways, passing fields of luscious grass, and miles and miles of palm groves.*

*At times, one would pass a Mosque, and in the silent night, a priest would be chanting his weird prayers from the turret above, a million dogs taking up the refrain making a noise indescribable.*

*In these strange and weird surroundings, imagine me at midnight, my horse snorting and quivering with fear, and taking fright at every yard.*

*During the day, wandering down little byways, one meets many picturesque sights. Dozens of girls carrying big water jugs on their heads will steal by one by one, their veils closely drawn and showing only their eyes. They are very frightened of soldiers and scatter like chaff when we come along.*

*Our meals we ate under the refreshing shade of the palm trees, sitting on luscious, sweet grass, beside a clear fresh water canal. The vegetation is most luxuriant where the waters from the canals have spread, but beyond that is the desert. The line between the two is as clear and distinct as if cut with a knife.*

*A cow and a camel (ill-suited pair) slowly pull a water wheel round some two hundred yards away. The women are waiting at the well (as Rebecca did), filling their artistic water jars. I was sorry when the time came to return to camp.*

*So **Burridge**<sup>61</sup> is coming along? I will keep an eye skinned for him.*

***Jim Linton** lobbed along the other day, and I could have hugged him. He is in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Battery, 2<sup>nd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade, 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Division, and quite close to us. He was going to apply for a transfer to this battery, but after talking it over together, we both decided that he had far better chances in the new battery.*

***Bill Wallis** – late sergeant of this battery – is his section officer. Bill is a bonza chap and will look after Jim. We have had many long and delightful yarns since he came, and I have heard many things about you all, and about the office. He is looking splendid and is as usual, working like the devil. He is sure to get on.*

*We are going like blazes and will leave for Active Service any day.*

On 24 March, 1916, the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB embarked at Alexandria on the *Simla* and sailed for France. Their ship docked at Marseilles on 29 March and the battery spent a week in a camp in the city, mainly caring for the horses. The change to a colder climate caused some deaths amongst the artillery horses. On 7 April the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB entrained for what would be a 57-hour journey to Havre in Northern France.

Their departure from Egypt and arrival in France was recorded by Roy in his diary, and he used extracts from the diary in his first letter sent from the Western Front.

**12<sup>th</sup> April, 1916.**

**In France.**

*I had better write out a few extracts from a short diary I have kept and that will give you the news in its proper sequence.*

*26/3/16. After a rather strenuous week we left Tel-el-Kebir rather suddenly on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March at 1 am. Embarked at Alexandria next day on a small troopship and sailed for an unknown destination that night. Today is the fourth day out and we are some sixty miles west of Malta.*

*Malta was passed last night. This ship is the worst I have been in so far, one*

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<sup>61</sup> **Pte 5661, later ER/Sgt Clifford Charles Burridge**, 18<sup>th</sup> Rfts/11<sup>th</sup> Bn & AIF HQ, 26-year-old AMP clerk and accountant of Claremont, WA, enl 15/3/16, married in UK and discharged in England, 29/12/19.

*lives like a rat, and the only possible way to get decent food is to buy it under the lap from the stewards. The Officers, as usual, live handsomely.*

*However, it is fine to be at sea again, even under these conditions, after the Egyptian sands. Of course, we are all speculating on what is going to happen to us. I think myself that we will be taken to the English Base in France and train there for a month, before they give us a fly at the Germans.*

*We look forward to this change with pleasure. It should be most interesting living amongst the French, and a fine education. Little did I ever dream that such a thing would ever occur. Eventually we will get to England and then my ambitions will be realised.*

*8/4/16. We have been in France for 12 days and it will be hard to tell you of all the varied experiences we have had. First, we have been strictly warned against giving any information whatsoever. No names of towns to be mentioned, so you see we are bound down a good deal, and the censorship is much stricter than at Gallipoli.*

*We landed in one of the large seaports and received a most hearty welcome from the people. My first impressions of France are very favourable. The most striking thing perhaps is that practically every woman is in mourning. It gives rather a sombre effect to the city life, but the people themselves are quite cheerful in a quiet way, and very confident of success.*

*They are down on the English on the question of conscription, and cannot understand why it is not enforced. They cannot be more disgusted than we are over it, I can assure you.*

*The city was somewhat after the style of Sydney and dirty as seaports are, but the surrounding country is very, very beautiful.*

*We have been exercising the horses a lot, and our trips through the country lanes are just a dream of delight. We have had the best nine days' holiday here since joining the Army, and I can tell you it is great.*

*11/4/16. For the last three days we have been travelling through France, and how can I describe its beauty? If I say it is the Garden of Eden ever again, or if I say it is more beautiful than the Gardens of Paradise, I feel I am not doing it justice.*

*I have often heard and read of the beauty of La Belle France, but no one can in any way imagine how beautiful the scenery is until seen. The wonderful grass-clad hills, the pretty rivers, the abundant lovely trees, the green fields, enclosed with barriers of rose bushes now in bloom, the pretty country lanes, the beautiful flowers, all blend into a perfect dream of beauty. All the banks along the line are spread with blooming primroses – exquisite country!*

*The people turn out at each station and the lovely bright-eyed kiddies implore one for "Souvenir if you please, Soldier," and the women call us "their brave defenders." It is very nice after the natives of Egypt. The womenfolk are very beautiful, especially the country girls, with their cheeks like blushing roses. It is really an exception to see an ugly woman and their manners are perfect.*

When the divisional artilleries arrived in France they were again reorganised. The 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Artillery was now made up of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> Field Artillery Brigades. Three of the four brigades in the divisional artillery had three 18-pounder batteries and one Howitzer battery, while the fourth battery was all 18-pounder batteries.

Roy's 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB consisted now of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> Batteries and the 103<sup>rd</sup> Howitzer Battery.

On 6 April the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB arrived in the Estaires/Fleurbaix area near Armentieres. A Victorian, **Bill Lyall**<sup>62</sup>, was reallocated from the 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade DAC to the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery on 15 April. In his diary he wrote: "I left our billet at 10.30 am and had to walk six miles to the battery, which I reached just on 12 pm. It is a West Australian battery, but the chaps are very decent and I think I will get on alright."<sup>63</sup>

After Gallipoli, the Australians were astonished by the presence of civilians close to the battlefields. Another major – and popular – change was the nearness of villages to the reserve areas, allowing the Diggers to visit estaminets (a cross between a hotel and a café, but usually in a family home) in their free time.

This was made even better when the Aussies could converse and flirt with the young French mademoiselles.

**19<sup>th</sup> April, 1916.**

**France.**

*Am writing this in an old broken-down house some two thousand yards behind the firing line. Once it must have been a charming house, with its faultless little garden, and its shady fruit trees, but it is now the last thing in desolation.*

*We have, however, mended it up a bit, made some furniture and are now fairly comfortable. Our gun pits are close by.*

*My last letter to you I wrote from Havre, which town we left that day in teeming rain. Thence we came by train through many famous towns, until the dull booming of the guns told us we were not far from the front. We detrained in the rain and proceeded to our billet – an old farmhouse – and strange to say left quite undisturbed by the Germans after their sojourn of six days.*

*We reached this place about midnight, frozen to the very bones, and were allowed to shelter in a barn. We slept dreamlessly until morning in the clean, warm straw. After the absence of habitation at Anzac, it is very strange to find these people living on their farms and carrying on their everyday work right under the nose of the guns. It proves to be a veritable godsend to us though. One can always get coffee, fresh eggs and bread.*

*After two days' spell we moved right up into action, where we are now.*

*The night before reaching here, we billeted in a most charming farm. A bonny rosy-cheeked girl of about seventeen met us at the gate and bade us welcome. She could speak English with a delightful French accent, and talked all the evening. Such a gay evening we had to be sure.*

*All in love with her, we sat in the cosy dining room for hours, drinking good French beer, and telling her funny stories, until the tears streamed from her eyes with laughter; while we roared when she tried to give '**Ducky**' Day (the sergeant major and a regular trick) a lesson in French. It will be many a day before I forget her merry vivacious little face as she beamed on us from her seat by the fireside.*

*The village to our right, and about half a mile away, has been almost battered to pieces, and in the early days the British drove the Germans from it at the point of the bayonet, yet a lot of people still live here.*

*One can fire a few rounds from the guns, then stroll into the village for a beer; of course, should they concentrate an attack here it will be lively.*

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<sup>62</sup> **Gnr 11762, later Cpl, William Lyall**, 14<sup>th</sup> Rfts/2<sup>nd</sup> FAB & 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 24-year-old married inspector of Elsternwick, Vic, enl 24/6/15, RTA 25/3/19.

<sup>63</sup> Quote from 'Letters of an Anzac Gunner,' by the late Ken Lyall, a former FFFAIF member.

**22/4/16 – Easter Sunday.** *It is a most beautiful day, and I am sitting in what remains of this fine old garden. Overhead, at least twenty aeroplanes are roaming about, some ours, some German. One could watch them all day, so exquisite are they, and so amazingly agile.*

*One adventuring beggar has gone over the German lines, and I have already counted two hundred shots fired at him, but devil a bit does he care.*

*The apple trees are all abloom, and the May [bushes] look proud and sweet clothed in the year's new leaves. The country is a perfect picture.*

*Have received no mail since we left Havre, so there must be a lot somewhere. I have written to the AMP London, asking them to arrange to have my May and June salary paid there, as I never know when I may get over there.*

*I believe we are getting a week's holiday to visit England – that is a few at a time.*

*I am making persistent enquiries about **Keith** and the Black Watch, but so far have gathered nothing. We are a good way from Loos, and it is very hard to get definite news.*

Roy was still endeavouring to find information on his brother, Keith. By now, the evidence all pointed to Keith having been killed in the Battle of the Loos, so now it was more a matter of finding out *how* Keith met his death.

Roy was able to obtain leave to England<sup>64</sup>, where he made inquiries into his brother's fate. While in London he did some sight-seeing and stayed with a family, surname **Jeffreys**.

**24<sup>th</sup> May, 1916.**

**France.**

*Since writing you I have been to England for eight days, mainly to see if I could get any definite news of **Keith**. From the papers I saw at the Agent General's Office there is no doubt that he was killed in the Battle of Hill 70 (near Loos) on about 23<sup>rd</sup> October last.*

*I have since met a Scotchman who was in the same battle and he told me that the Black Watch, by their very impetuosity, got ahead of the rest and suffered very heavily. They took the Hill but owing to a lack of reinforcements, were later driven back. I am trying to get information from the adjutant of his regiment.*

*I can imagine that it is the way he would have wished to die – in the mad, wild rush of the charge.*

*I had a glorious holiday in London during my eight days. It took me only 22 hours to travel from the firing line right to the heart of London. On arrival at 2 am we were met by a band of ladies and entertained at a delicious supper. The English people are absolutely charming and they simply cannot do enough for an Australian soldier.*

*You have all heard of the marvellous way the traffic is managed, the buses, and the wonders of the underground railways. These have to be seen to be appreciated.*

*I did not do much sight-seeing really, but better than any visiting of palaces and churches, is to stand in the streets and watch the passers-by – a never-ending scene of absorbing interest.*

*The womenfolk are awfully pretty with their high colouring and gracious ways, and dress charmingly.*

*The people in general are extraordinarily kind, and so very pleased if one will only just speak to them. If you happen to be an 'Anzac' you simply walk on air.*

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<sup>64</sup> This period of leave to the UK is not recorded in Roy's service record.

*Everywhere I had meals, people would insist on paying for them, and quite half a dozen fellows I met casually, asked me to go and stay with them.*

*I stayed at the Regent Palace Hotel for four days, a rather fashionable hotel in Piccadilly Circus, but enjoyed it after 'Trench Life.'*

*The last three days I stayed with people whom I was introduced to from France. They were intensely kind and happened to be a newly married couple with a delicious little home. I spent one day out of London, went to Bournemouth, mainly to get an air flight, and secondly to see the country. The first I missed, the second – the English Country scenery – is beyond my powers of description.*

*Am going to close now. You will notice that I am becoming slack with my letter writing. In the first vivid impressions of the war everything was so easy to write about, but now that events are dulled by familiarity and are so ordinary, I find it very hard to write.*

On 30 May, the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery was relieved by the 5<sup>th</sup> and the men marched back to the wagon lines at Steenwerck. (In such a situation they usually left their guns behind to be used by their relief.) On 1 June, the battery was inspected by General Birdwood and three prominent Australians.

**France,  
12<sup>th</sup> June, 1916.**

*Have just returned from a visit to **Jimmy Linton**. He, as you know, is in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Battery, and is situated some two miles to our left. The pathway over led me through some delightful meadows. The country after three days rain is radiant from the kiss of a generous sun.*

*Jim is splendid, and has taken to soldiering as a navy takes to beer; he simply revels in it. I, who am somewhat of an old 'sweat,' view these symptoms with disdain. We had a long chat with him.*

*Our battery has been out 'resting' (save the word) for a fortnight about ten miles behind the trenches. While there we were honoured by a visit from **Mr Hughes**<sup>65</sup> – a little mis-shapen white-faced fellow – and our old friend, **Andy Fisher**<sup>66</sup>.*

*Some six thousand Australian soldiers were dragged out to be reviewed by these cheap politicians. It means extra work for us, but it was an advertisement for them.*

*Later, another bloke came along – **Bill** somebody – Premier of Queensland<sup>67</sup>. He is what one might term 'one of Nature's gentlemen.'*

*I noticed that while being introduced to an English general, this yob stood with his hands in his pockets and a dirty pipe stuck in his mouth. These are but three of 'those gallant gentlemen who are visiting our troops in France' and 'whose salaries a grateful country is ever willing to pay.'*

*Went over to the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion the other day and saw **Frank Mullen**, also **Bill Leslie** of the Engineers<sup>68</sup>. Spent a delightful evening with them, and talked 'Perth' for hours.*

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<sup>65</sup> The Prime Minister of Australia 1915-1922, William Morris Hughes (1862-1952).

<sup>66</sup> Andrew Fisher (1862-1928), Prime Minister 1907-1909, 1910-1913, 1914-1915. In 1916 Fisher was the Australian high Commissioner in London.

<sup>67</sup> The Queensland Premier in 1916 was Thomas Joseph Ryan. 'Bill' was most likely former premier, William Kidston, whose last term in power was 1909-1912.

<sup>68</sup> **L/Cpl 3417 William Leslie**, 6<sup>th</sup> Fld Coy Engrs, 23-year-old engineer of West Perth, Wa, enl 27/7/15, RTA 13/1/17.

*Bauny Castilla has just been in to see me. He is with the horses at present a mile or so in rear of the guns. He was greatly disgusted with the scanty bit of wedding cake his sister sent him.*

The 8<sup>th</sup> Battery took over the guns from the 1<sup>st</sup> Battery on 14 June, in the line near Lavente. On the 17<sup>th</sup> they fired 220 shells at the enemy, who retaliated with 5.9” shells that set a farmhouse on fire. On 28 and 29 June the battery was shooting for up to 20 hours a day in support of a major attack by the British.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Artillery began moving to the Somme Valley on 10 July, 1916, where the Battle of the Somme offensive had begun on 1 July. They travelled via Doullens, Val de Maison, and Harponville, before arriving at Albert on the 18<sup>th</sup>. The 8<sup>th</sup> Battery was in the firing line on 20 July, and subjected to heavy German shelling.

The 1<sup>st</sup> Division infantry would attack the German lines near Pozieres on 23 July, with the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB firing in support of the assault.

**14<sup>th</sup> July, 1916.**

**France.**

*Your letter came to me while we were travelling through some of the most beautiful country of France. Since the ‘Push’ began we have been moving a great deal. We have left the low-lying country and are now in the hilly part of France. It is perfectly beautiful. The undulating hills are a mass of green fields dotted here and there with little woods.*

*To travel along these winding roads is a continuous delight, the scenes are so varied and picturesque. I feel like ‘Alice in Wonderland’ wandering about in this maze of beauty.*

*We are working long and hard these days and await any moment to be ordered into it again. Yesterday as we marched out it was raining heavily and we were very miserable soldiers, sodden, homeless, and overtired, for remember our home is where we just happen to stop and our worldly goods what we stand in.*

*As we came to the top of a hill, the sky cleared and the world turned to gold – adjacent was a field in which poppies and blue corn flowers fought for supremacy. Can you imagine how very beautiful it was? A lark was fluttering in the sky above me, singing as if his very heart would break for joy. The guns muttered faintly far away.*

*It grows dark, we are encamped in a valley in the midst of a thick wood. The camp fires glow dimly, and from each comes the sound of laughter as the boys sit around telling tales or talk over the day’s episodes. It is too dark to write further.*

**About the 20<sup>th</sup>.**

*We are well into it now, and I am having a little spell after four days’ continuous fighting. It reminds me forcibly of Gallipoli, danger lurks everywhere, the excitement is intense, and the firing incessant.*

*I am very happy for I love the excitement and the feeling that the unexpected may happen any moment. The marked superiority of our artillery fire and our air service make me very optimistic as to our success. The war is real here.*

**Later.**

*The unexpected did happen a while ago. One of my best pals was hit in the stomach – **Claude Heppingstone**<sup>69</sup>, and I’m almost certain he will die. The doctor gives but little*

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<sup>69</sup> **Dvr 3062, later Bdr, Claude Athol Heppingstone**, 1<sup>st</sup> DAC & TMB, 26-year-old grazier of Brunswick Junction, WA, enl 7/10/14, KIA 23/7/16, buried Warloy-Baillon Communal Cemetery extension, V.C.23. Claude had been a member of WA Canning’s second expedition, 1908-10, to equip the Canning Stock Route with water wells.

hope. He was a splendid fellow in every way.

**24<sup>th</sup> July.**

*The battle still goes on. I am feeling great and elated at our success. I must leave off, the heavy shells are rushing over our heads in a continuous stream. We start in a moment. Hey Ho! It's a great life.*

*Your garden must be beautiful just now – all the summer annuals in bloom and the grass green and thick.*

*I can imagine the guns in the park in their array of gorgeous glittering red blossom and the park gardens gay with flowers. In imagination too I sit up there watching the placid river and the old 'Duchess' plodding her way across it.*

*I cannot tell you with what pleasure I will someday stand there and feast my home-tired eyes on that beautiful charming little city.*

Despite the stress and strain of the heavy fighting on Pozieres Ridge, Roy included several humorous anecdotes in his next letter home.

***In France.***

***After a successful night attack,***

***5<sup>th</sup> August, 1916.***

*The following little story illustrates to a great extent the apt way in which Australia, represented by her 'Innocents Abroad,' picks up and plays havoc with the French language.*

*Charlie Broadmeadows (we'll say) was up on the unusual charge of "while on Active Service being under the influence of liquor within the meaning of Military Laws and Regulations, and committing a breach of Discipline against His Royal Majesty King George V, Defender of the Faith, Ruler of Great Britain, her Dominions and Dependencies, etc., etc."*

*GAWD SAVE THE KING. (Here pause and breathe deeply).*

*The charge was read out to accused in sonorous tones by Majah Horacio Bottomly Blackboy (We'll say again).*

*"Do you plead guilty?"*

*"Wee," answered Charles.*

*The Court was visibly perturbed. Majah B (with a scowl):*

*"Seven days CB No. 1. Compree?"*

*"Wee. No Bon," answered our Charlie.*

*PS. The French in this heartrending story is underlined to assist illiterate readers. Any eminent scholar should (after deep thought) be able to translate it.*

***Later.***

*I really think one of the most humorous incidents which occur in this Picture Show of Comedy, Tragedy and Drama, is the marching of prisoners through from the actual firing line to the rear of the fighting army.*

*We'll start from the beginning. During an attack one works in a state of concentrated fury, and with one thought uppermost, GET 'EM OVER AT FRITZ.*

*An artilleryman (by the way) rarely has the pleasure of seeing the actual result of his work. He is usually a good way behind and hidden by a crest, and it is left to his imagination to form an idea of what he has done. The artilleryman prepares the way and, as it were, gracefully retires, while the infantryman gets into handgrips with Fritz.*

*After our bombardment, we usually sit round the gun, light the inevitable 'fag' or the dear old pipe, and await impatiently and apprehensively news of the fight.*

*At first, rumours come down thick and wild – some good, some bad – the*

wounded then begin to trickle through and gradually grow to a continuous stream. They pass close by. We ask news of the slight cases – the good ‘blighty’ ones; the bad cases we look at with compassion and sympathy.

One’s heart grows very soft. Taking them all in all, they are wonderfully cheerful. An occasional chap comes down with shell-shock, screaming like a frightened child, otherwise they don’t seem to mind much.

After the wounded, come the prisoners (they’ve been a long time coming, but I haven’t forgotten them). Sometimes they come in scores, but usually in half-dozens.

Last night we attacked strongly and with great success; this morning I have already seen about 150 go by. One fellow – it was laughable – strolled down with nothing left of his clothes but one boot, two socks and something tied round his waist. He was in a hell of a mess. Someone had given him a pipe and he was serenely smoking it, as he passed. Ha! Ha!

Another miserable little fish, he was about 13 inches round the chest, wore glasses and carried a thick walking stick. His clothes were torn amazingly, and he looked most forlorn. I should imagine he was a botanist in private life, who delighted in a collection of rare bugs.

He was accompanied (or guarded) by a youth about 7 feet in height, who wore (amongst other things) an expansive smile and carried a wicked-looking bayonet. He was very affable, but the captured one was ill at ease. Behind him, their faces all a-grin were four of our wounded calling the attention of ‘the mob’ to the ‘rare prize.’

Following on, came two carrying one of our wounded on a stretcher. The leader was short, fat, dirty, very, very ugly, his face inscrutable. The other was tall and thin, his face radiated with smiles, and was set off by a nose which any Jew might envy.

He reminded me of the gentleman who, trying to hide his nose with both hands, asked his pal to “guess vot I am, Ikey?” He had a slight stoop, hence the tip of his ‘boko’ reached about half-way along the stretcher and almost touched the wounded laddie on it. I still smile over it.

A little weedy chap of our own was marching two enormous Germans down. He was awfully proud – a smile from ear to ear, and an enraptured look on his face, as much as to say, LOOK WHAT I’VE GOT. As he passed each stack of our shells, he would stop them, point delightedly to the shells, and playfully prodding Fritz in the ‘tummy’ with his bayonet and say, “NO BON, EH?” This pleasing little ceremony would take place at every heap of shells he passed. I could go on indefinitely, but I won’t.

We haven’t much money, but we do see life. Goodbye and Good-luck.

**6/8/16.**

While having breakfast this morning the stretcher-bearer happened to rest a wounded chap beside me. He was bandaged from head to foot, but from that part of his face which was visible, a ‘fag’ protruded. I gave him a taste of tea, and looking at his bandages, smiled, and said, “Well, old chap, how is the other fellow?” He answered with a half-smile, “I don’t know yet, but say, Cobber, whose hair restorer are you advertising?” The fellows in the battery think it is a great joke.

**France.**

**21<sup>st</sup> August, 1916.**

I haven’t written you for a long while, but then I haven’t written to anyone for an age. I am very prone to argue on every conceivable subject just at present, and when not in action, sit in the gun pit and hold forth. If any poor devil of a gunner argues ag’in

me, I put him on Fatigue and thus kill opposition.

*It is a different matter when I get up against **Tim**, who can talk like the very devil himself, and is still fresh when others would be gasping. We recently went out of the line for a 'REST,' but I never worked harder in my life. However, we are now back in it, and I feel much happier.*

*The fighting is quiet, just an occasional little fly at odd bits of trench we require. The summer weather is beautiful, and the rain keeps off well – one could imagine that the Gods are at last on our side.*

*Although quiet, the shelling never ceases, but continues with clock like regularity, and with an utter disregard for economy. The moral effect must be tremendous.*

*While out resting, I met **Jimmy Linton** a few times, and one evening under the smile of a soft moon, we had a heart-to-heart talk of old days and of the difference this war has made in our lives. I think I have profited much by the experience.*

***Frank Mullen** and **Charlie Riva** had a hell of a time in a recent attack. Charlie got a 'Blighty' wound, Frank came through untouched – a lucky pair – Frank's face still radiates with that charming smile, nothing can take that off.*

Following the terrible, prolonged fighting at Pozieres and Mouquet Farm, the AIF moved into Belgium for a 'spell' and to absorb reinforcements. The artillery brigades were usually kept in the front-line area for longer than the infantry divisions, due to the effort involved in moving their guns in and out of their firing positions.

Roy was now in the Ypres Sector – a place where they would return to in the autumn months of 1917.

### ***Somewhere in Belgium.***

***6<sup>th</sup> September, 1916.***

*I have written very little of late, but we have been meandering through France like restless Arabs for the last two months or so, and I have had little opportunity of writing. Now I think we have come to a rest for a while, and I hope to make amends in that way.*

*We are in a rather noted part of the line. If you remember a ruined city famous for its Cloth Hall you will guess where we are.*

*The place has been under constant shell fire for two years and it is in total ruins. I do not think anything since the beginning of the war has impressed me so much as this awful spectacle. You can form no conception of the feeling of utter desolation one has on seeing so much beauty laid waste wantonly, and this city was beautiful, in its age, its wonderful traditions, its architecture, its slumbering memories.*

*Of the thousands of houses and buildings, I did not see one that was not a wreck. So hurried was the exit of most of these people, the furniture still stands as in everyday life, and seems to welcome one with a sort of wistful appeal. It is pathetic to see it so. We take what little we want – odd trifles – a lamp, a chair, a bed – such-like things.*

*I have not found **Jimmy** yet, although I saw him en route. Jimmy, with his exceptional temperament, treats this portion of his life as a sort of pilgrimage, and in all our wanderings he takes his pleasure in seeking out the beauty spots. He never fails to see all the churches within miles of our bivouac and talks most interestingly of them.*

*I regret to say I am utterly indifferent to such things now – I mean the beauties of the city – the incomparable beauty of the country still holds the same grip on me.*

*The winter is approaching and I rather dread the thought of seeing it through.*

*It would not be so bad if they would leave us in the one position, but it seems to be one of the maxims of the Army never to allow one to get settled down or become comfortably housed. We are forever on the move.*

*At present we are in splendid gun pits. Mine is like an enormous cellar. We, of course, sleep by the gun, and can commence firing at any second during the night or day.*

*We have garnered odd bits of furniture – five chairs, one table, two old stretchers, and one of those complete school desks, taken from a destroyed Reformatory School nearby. I am writing on it now. The mob are playing cards or chewing lollies.*

On 15 September, 1916, Roy reported sick to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Ambulance, where he was diagnosed with scabies, a skin disorder<sup>70</sup>. He was transferred on to the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Ambulance, then in charge of the divisional rest station, where he was treated until being discharged to his unit on 26 September.

Based on his next letter, Roy was able to sneak out in the evening and visit the estaminets and a fruit shop, where he and his mate soon made friends with the owners.

### ***Belgium.***

#### ***24<sup>th</sup> September, 1916.***

*Two of us fellows usually take French leave of an evening (why shouldn't we in France<sup>71</sup>) and walk into a large Belgium town nearby. There we meet the 'bloods' of the town, have a few drinks, see the sights, and at 8 o'clock when 'Curfew' doth ring and the town melts into silence, we go to a little fruit shop where again (in our wanderings) we have found a home.*

*It is kept by two old ladies (Mother and Auntie) and a daughter (Marie). It was quite by accident that we found what gentle kindly folk they were. One evening while we were sheltering in the shop from the rain, they asked us if "we would take coffee with them." From thence our acquaintance has strengthened into friendship and they appear to be very fond of us.*

*Their history is rather pathetic. Well-to-do farmers before the war, their place was devastated during the first rush on Ypres, and they escaped barely with their lives. The only boy who was at school in Brussels has disappeared and no trace can be found in Germany, nor amongst the refugees in England.*

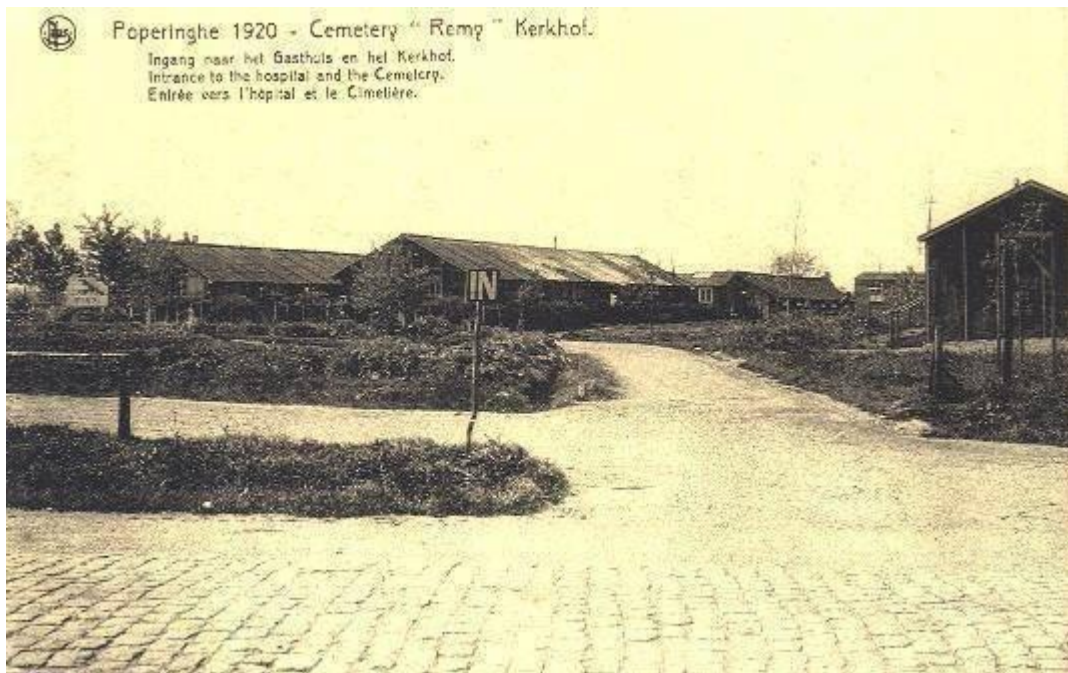
*Three small girls are at school in Paris, but owing to the strict military regulations, the Mother cannot get to them. The girl – Marie – is about 17, has been educated at College and can speak English in a quaint delightful sort of way. Other than this she is fat and of very bad figure.*

*The two old ladies are fat, always smiling and bubbling over with good nature. They tell me that I resemble a boy they knew in the years gone by, and evidently the sight of me resuscitates a slumbering love affair in the heart of 'Auntie,' for I catch her at times beaming on me with a faraway look in her eyes. We wile away many a delightful hour in their cosy kitchen, sitting over our coffee and bread and butter.*

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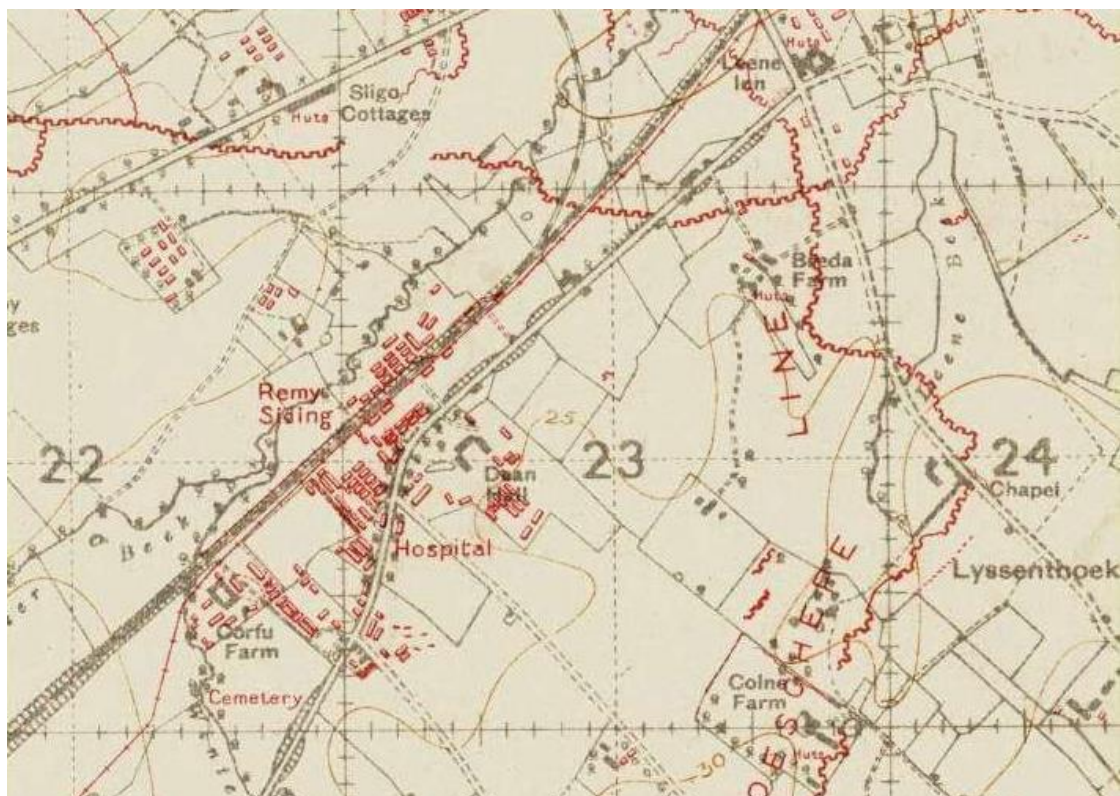
<sup>70</sup> Scabies is an intensely itchy skin condition caused by tiny mites that can be passed from one person to another. The mites that cause scabies, called *Sarcoptes scabiei var. hominis* (human itch mites), only live on human skin. The main symptom of scabies is an extremely itchy skin rash. The rash is usually bumpy and looks like pimples or tiny blisters.

<sup>71</sup> The DRS of the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Ambulance was actually in Belgium at Remy Siding. Remy Siding was near the current site of Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery, not far from the town of Abeele. The 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB were camped in Reninghelst, Belgium, at this time, about 6 km from the 1<sup>st</sup> Field Ambulance were at Remy Siding.



**Above:** The main entrance to the Casualty Clearing Station at Remy Siding, as it appeared in 1920. The DRS would have been adjacent to the CCS. Source: greatwarforum.org.

**Below:** Wartime map of the medical facilities at Remy Siding. Source: As above.



**Belgium.**

**10<sup>th</sup> October, 1916.**

*There is a saying that 'the road to Hell is paved with good intentions.' If that is so, then I am a good way on the road. I have been going to answer your two interesting letters for a long while, but somehow I have neglected you all of late.*

*We have lately been resting for a while, so I took the opportunity of going into hospital for two weeks to get rid of a rather troublesome skin disease, which thrives under the classical name of 'Scabies.'*

*I would have you know, Monsieur and Madame, that this is the first time I have called in the 'Quacks' since starting on my pleasure tour round the world. We were forbidden to leave hospital, yet each afternoon after tea, I would find myself well out of bounds on the road to a large town a few miles distant from the 'Scabies Factory.'*

*In Poperinghe I became acquainted with a very, nice family of Belgians, and there spent many a happy evening.*

*However, after having a really good time, I once again took up the serious business of eating three meals a day in a gun pit and firing a gun occasionally and HERE I am.*

*We are stationed just outside of Ypres. The gun pits are hidden in the ruins of a once stately palace. In places, the firing line is but 1 000 yards away, but it winds and twists in such an extraordinary way that no matter in which direction you gaze at night, you are sure to see the glow of a star shell.*

*It is rumoured, and I believe it is true – that this crumbling ruin was the country residence of the late King Leopold of infamous memory. He may have been an immoral old gentleman, but while I am his guest (as it were), I will not speak ill of him.*

*The Palace is surrounded by a pretty moat, and an old-fashioned drawbridge leads you to the Palace entrance. A most beautiful old garden extended over – I should say – 20 acres, has run wild and frets under the scars of a thousand shell wounds. The trees are torn about terribly, but the garden itself is filled with a myriad of blossoms.*

*Here and there pretty statues add further charm to the place. One I noticed has come under the tender care of some wag, who has dressed it in the clothes of a soldier. In peace times this Lady would charm your eye, standing in graceful robes, scythe in hand, looking out on her garden, but now with a disreputable tin hat, slanted jauntily over her head, a Scotch plaid tied round her amidships, and a rusty knife in her hand, she is by no means a vision of beauty.*

*I gather each day a bunch of roses and adorn the gun pit with them.*

*While out of the line I had the pleasure of meeting **Cliff Burrige**. He is in the 11<sup>th</sup> Battalion. We meandered into a village close by, and while eating fried eggs with a knife, I made him tell me all the news. I was so eager for news that I had him perspiring in the end answering questions. He went to the trenches next day, so I will not see him for a while.*

***Jimmy Linton** is only just across the way. I was down to see him tonight. We had a long yarn and I smoked all his cigarettes – dear Jimmy – he still tries to smoke, but as of old, chews tobacco instead.*

The first plebiscite on conscription was voted on by the troops in October 1916. Roy was disgusted that the 'No' vote was in the majority.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB was now back in the Somme region, in what was the coldest winter for over twenty years. This was the period of the war in which the Australians fought in the most horrendous of the freezing cold, muddy battlefields, in places such as Flers, the Maze and Gueudecourt.

Roy particularly felt the conditions as he was at the time detached to the ammunition column and taking horse-wagons up to the guns each night – a return trip of ten hours.

**11<sup>th</sup> November, 1916.**

*I cannot find words to express my disgust at the attitude of Australia over Conscriptio. Many thousands of heroic souls have died out here to make glorious the beginnings of her traditions, and now the majority of her population have besmirched her name and thrown contempt on her glorious dead.*

*I saw a chap buried today (by the way a man is very lucky to be buried decently here – about 1 in 40 get it I suppose). He was knocked about badly, but his face was composed. It was a fine firm face – a good face. I looked at him and thought, “Well, you have died for your Country, I wonder if you know with what contempt your countrymen treat you?” Oh! the dirty despicable cold-footed, smug-faced swines. If God played the game He’d turn the Huns loose on ’em.*

*For the last three weeks we have been in the mud and slush of the Somme once again, and the conditions this time are really awful. Ceaseless rain, bitterly cold weather, mud up to our thighs, little food, less sleep and fight, fight, fight, day and night. Thank God one gets into a kind of stupor and is numb to feeling.*

*The horses are dying in thousands, and it is heartbreaking to see these poor docile creatures work until they drop dead of exhaustion.*

*You will be sorry to hear that **Laurie Clarke** was severely wounded a few days ago. He had his foot practically blown off by a piece of shell and is certain to lose it.*

*He has been doing fine work since we came to France. He was a good soldier, cheerful, painstaking and conscientious. He took his crack like a man, and a very brave one at that. Not a murmur while they were bandaging it up and it took almost an hour.*

*The only question he put to the Doctor was, “Am I only going to lose my foot, Doctor?” Not bad eh!*

*You might ask his mother and sister to accept my sympathy, and tell them they should be very proud of him. You might tell the circumstances to the Office chaps too.*

*I came away from the guns a week ago and am at the wagon lines with the horses for a fortnight. It is not so bad here except that every second night I have a nightmare of a trip up to the guns with ammunition.*

*It is about seven miles across pathless country, studded with millions of deep shell holes and miles of trenches, all filled with thick slimy mud. The nights are dark and often a thick fog envelops everything. We rarely get through without the loss of a horse, sometimes legs are broken, or else a horse gets in a shell hole filled with mud and suffocates. Drivers and horses are often killed by shell fire. Oh! it’s a blithering trip – takes about 10 hours.*

*If you ever hear of me as “missing believed sunk” you’ll know I’m rustivating in a shell hole.*

***Tim** is going good; he runs a battery canteen and does the grocer act to a nicety. You know the style: “I have an excellent line of stewed peas at 1/2” or “No, we have no pig’s ear but why not try a drop of rum, old dear?”*

*If I ever hear an argument in the lines I know **Tim** is there. We have only one man who can beat him, a chap named **Hooper**<sup>72</sup>, who, according to rumour, talked for 36 hours once without taking breath, and only stopped then to drink a beer.*

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<sup>72</sup> Believed to be **Dvr 3349 William Henry Hooper**, 1<sup>st</sup> Rfts/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & Provosts Corps, ‘19’-year-old labourer of Numurkah, Vic, enl 11/9/14, discharged in England 26/1/19 for ‘business reasons.’ He married Dora Marks at Wilton, Wiltshire, on 4/9/18. Dora’s father was a plumber, so perhaps he offered William a job. William was back in Australia in 1922, and was a policeman in Newcastle. Was living in Kingsgrove, NSW, in 1945. He lost his 1914-15 Star on Anzac Day around 1942 and his Certificate of Discharge when his wallet was stolen in Paris in 1924. Enlisted at age 16½, overstating his age by three years!

Roy waxed eloquently in his next letter, as he saw beauty in his frozen gun-pit, despite it being surrounded by the horrors of the battlefield.

**France.**

**18th December, 1916.**

*Here's a little picture in contrasts for you. Outside it is as dark as the uttermost chambers of Hell. The temperature is 10 degrees below freezing point. The ground, which this afternoon was soft mud, is now frozen so hard that a horse's hoof would make no impression on it.*

*The intermittent bursting of a few shells or the flash of gun firing, allows the eye for an instant to gaze on this dreadful country, pitted with shell holes, dead trees and a myriad of graves, and accentuates the horror of the darkness which follows.*

*Inside the gun pit a warm cheery fire is burning. For the last four hours a phonograph has been enthralling us. The pit is an inviting spot. The gun is in the centre, her breech and brass gears gleaming in the reflection of the fire.*

*Hundreds of shells lie on the shelves to one side and little rivulets of light play on their brass cases. A bed on each side, the phonograph on one. Round one side sit six soldiers, drinking in the music as if it were the strains of a celestial band – to them it is.*

*The glow of the fire reflects each face. Their appearance is not prepossessing, for dirt has seamed their faces and their ragged mud-splashed clothes are wonderful to behold. Each face has its different characteristics, but all, for the moment, bear that faraway look which indicates thoughts of home.*

*Personally, I am enthralled. The phonograph has taken hold of my heart strings. You see, we have been on the Somme for a long while. It has been pretty rough. I hope I never see another eight weeks like it. We are tired and just about at the end of our strength, and a touch of music sends me half mad.*

The Australian artillery was re-arranged again in 1917. The 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB was transferred from the 1<sup>st</sup> Divisional Artillery and became part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Brigade Artillery (sometimes written as 3<sup>rd</sup> AFA). The 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB now was made up of the 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 103<sup>rd</sup> Batteries. The army brigade artilleries were no longer tied to an AIF division, and did not have to move when the division/s they were supporting moved to a new sector or out for rest. They could also be used to support Allied divisions, not just Australian ones.

In March 1917, the Germans began their withdrawal to their newly completed Hindenburg Line. While this meant the Australians were advancing over farmland instead of mud-churned battlegrounds, they found the retreating Germans were destroying the villages and roads, while poisoning the wells and setting booby-traps.

**France.**

**About 21<sup>st</sup> April, 1917.**

*As you know the Huns began a big retreat some three weeks ago, since when we have been busy chasing him. After hurriedly crossing 'No-man's land' we entered a new country – a country of exceptional charm.*

*What a change it is to get away from the devastated country of the last offensive. But for the shattered villages through which we pass, the scenery is beautiful. Green fields and the trees just clothed in their new leaves. Gone is the stagnant life; once again we move continuously. It is a fine life too. If it were not for the wretched weather, it would be wholly delightful.*

*You have heard, of course, that Fritz poisons the water as he goes back, and*

*leaves all sorts of delightful trips for us to investigate. I have been strictly ordered not to touch odd bottles of wine, etc., which are to be found in the villages.*

*A rather amusing incident happened because of this. To begin with, the boys have not sniffed a beer for at least four months, and if asked to express their feelings in biblical language I would say “As the Heart desireth the waterbrooks, so longeth our souls after wine, O Lord.”*

*Well, to get on with this story. While wandering through the ruins of a village one of the sergeants discovered a sealed bottle of Absinthe. Have you ever tasted Absinthe? No? Then you have yet to taste the Nectar of the Gods.*

*He brought it home in great glee. We placed it on a table, and silently sat around it. Who was to taste it? Who was to take the chance? A brilliant idea crept into **Kierath**’s head. “Why not have a hand at cards to provide the martyr?”*

*Right-oh, round went the cards and **Dowling**<sup>73</sup> lost. With due ceremony the cork was withdrawn, Dowling lifts the cup to his lips, we rise and wish him luck.*

*He drinks and Lo! a heavenly smile lights up his face. **HERE**, the joke comes in. Before the poison could possibly affect him (if it had been poisoned), every man jack had grasped the bottle and taken a nip. We laughed about it afterwards.*

***Hal Warren**, one of the old battery boys, and one of my greatest pals during the last two and a half years, left us at Christmas time to go to a Flying School in England. He was killed a few days ago while flying.*

*Even in this land of dead, it is hard for me to realise his bright face and ardent spirit has gone. Aged 23, splendidly educated, a brilliant mind, and a most loveable disposition. Dead – for England.*

*I notice I have told you of something trivial and of something which is sublime. So are the grave and gay sides of life mixed here.*

Roy McLarty was lucky to escape death after a shell landed amongst his section while they were having breakfast on 1 June, 1917, at Ploegsteert, near Messines Ridge. At the time, the 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB was supporting the 3<sup>rd</sup> AIF Division as it prepared for the Battle of Messines (launched 7 June).

### ***1<sup>st</sup> June, 1917.***

*We had a most tragic day today. The Huns began shelling at dawn, and continued all the morning. His shells to start with were not actually close, but just enough to keep us alert.*

*About 8 am we were having breakfast, the table being a dump of boxed ammunition near the gun. The shells continued to come over, bursting some two hundred yards to our rear. We were all eating, watching the bursts, and occasionally chipping **Munro**<sup>74</sup> because of his early appearance – first time on record, and last too – poor chap.*

*We were all smiling over some little joke when suddenly, in a one-thousandth part of a second, we heard it coming and knew it was the end. **CRASH!** Into our very midst came a shell.*

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<sup>73</sup> **Dvr 1373 Arthur Francis Dowling**, 11<sup>th</sup> Rfts/9<sup>th</sup> LHR & 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old teamster of Bendigo, Vic, enl 9/7/15, RTA 4/7/19.

<sup>74</sup> **Gnr 3323, later Cpl, Donald Alan Munro**, 1<sup>st</sup> Rfts/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old clerk of North Perth, WA, enl 17/9/14, KIA 1/6/17, buried Strand Military Cemetery, Ploegsteert, Belgium, III.C.2. Had a brother, **2<sup>nd</sup> Cpl Alexander Munro**, 1<sup>st</sup> Anzac Wireless Sect KIA two weeks before, on 15/5/17.

*My dears, God save me from ever seeing such a sight again. Sellers<sup>75</sup>, the Army Medical Corps Chap, was killed instantly. Beesley<sup>76</sup> and Munro – the two corporals – died within five minutes, all mutilated. Macquire<sup>77</sup> and Tudberry<sup>78</sup> were seriously wounded – out of eight, three were untouched save for bruises. Of the five, three have been with the battery since Blackboy Hill memories.*

*I do not think any of you can quite realise how very fond we are of each other – we old hands – how hard the parting is. We did what little we could to alleviate their pain as they died.*

*Thank God, they almost instantly lapsed into unconsciousness. They are buried now – our comrades – sleeping in this beautiful land. Three years of hard fighting and then to be killed by a chance shell.*

*“Some call it Fate! Some chance!*

*Some Giant Circumstance.*

*But some, uplifting to the ways of God*

*Do call it Providence.”*

*That maybe explains it.*

*The two who were wounded were both in my sub-section. Tudberry was badly bruised, both inwardly and outwardly. Macquire, my bombardier, was hit in the back and arm.*

*I have learned to love Macquire. I don't think I ever knew a man so well. Three years of soldiering together has shown me what a man he is. God never made a better. Gay, merry, witty, and Oh! the heart of him.*

*You should have seen him during the stress of the winter. His blythe spirit pulled me through many a hopeless day. He was badly hit today. He joked all the way to the Dressing Station, although I could see the pain in his eyes.*

*Next day.*

*I raced the Major across the Swimming Pool this morning for 5 francs. He won. I'll have another go at him tomorrow. We are in better spirits today.*

*I haven't worn a hat for a week because of the sunshine, and in consequence my head resembles the blush of a June rose. The mob call me 'The tiled roof.'*

Two days after the above tragedy, on 3 June, 1916, Roy was wounded in action. He was taken to the 9<sup>th</sup> Field Ambulance and given first aid for a shrapnel wound to his back, before being moved to a casualty clearing station later the same day.

Roy was placed on ambulance train No. 27 on 4 June and transported to the 13<sup>th</sup> General Hospital at Boulogne, where he was admitted with multiple gun shot wounds on 5 June<sup>79</sup>. Three days later, on 8 June, McLarty was placed on Hospital Ship *Patrick* and conveyed to England, where he was admitted to the Brook War Hospital in Woolwich. Here Roy's wounds were recorded as gun shot wounds to the 'right foot, thigh, both arms, slight.'

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<sup>75</sup> Pte 2632 Leslie Raymond Sellers, 4<sup>th</sup> LH Fld Amb & 3<sup>rd</sup> Fld Amb/attached 3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old school teacher of Cowper, NSW, enl 25/3/15, KIA 1.6/17, buried Strand Military cemetery, Ploegsteert, II.C.12. Father requested no cross be inscribed on his headstone.

<sup>76</sup> Gnr 1765, later Cpl, Robert Arthur Beesley, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 20-year-old iron moulder of Victoria Park, WA, enl 17/8/14, KIA 1/6/17 at Ploegsteert, Belgium, buried Strand Military Cemetery, Ploegsteert, III.C.1.

<sup>77</sup> Dvr 1855 Hugh Garnet Stanley Macquire MM, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 22-year-old clerk of Cottesloe, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 23/10/18, died 24/4/78, aged 84, buried at Barmedman Cemetery, NSW.

<sup>78</sup> Gnr 12472 George William Tudberry, 15<sup>th</sup> Rfts/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 21-year-old labourer of Pilton via Greenmont, Qld, enl 21/9/15, RTA 18/10/17 with GSW back, died 4/5/32 in Rabaul, death attributed to war service.

<sup>79</sup> Roy's service record shows him being wounded on 5 June, but as there is an entry for being placed on the ambulance train on 4 June, then he must have been wounded on 3 June, as he states in his letter of 9 June.

The next day Roy was able to write home.

**9<sup>th</sup> June, 1917.**

*BLIGHTY is the place for me, tra la la!*

*Here I am a 'Blinkin 'ero.' Gawd knows what they sent me here for, I don't. I had better recite my tale from the beginning, so here goes.*

*I believe I wrote you on the 1<sup>st</sup> June telling you of the death of **Beasley, Munro, and Sellers**. Well, next day, and all the following night, Fritz shelled us with gas shells. He must have thrown 15 000 over at us. We lived in gas masks for eight hours.*

*On the morning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> he turned off the gas works and turned on the metal foundry, a 9-inch variety. All the morning he shelled us, and the bursting shells kept putting our own ammunition on fire.*

*The fire had to be put out you see, to save the guns, so we were dodging in between the shells doing this when I caught it. It was the sixth time, and we stayed a little too long. Before one could move, a shell burst amongst us, wounding four.*

*I got it in the left arm, back, foot, thighs, and right heel. All the wounds are very, very slight, and I expect to be walking about in a few days.*

*When I entered the clearing hospital, I interviewed a dag of a 'dresser.' The doctor, who had a perpetual grin on his face (it was apparently born there), told him to dress me.*

*He strolled over and casually pulled all my nicely tied bandages off (I was done up like an Egyptian mummy), grabs the wadding and sticks it on various places of my anatomy, pulls out about 1 000 yards of sticking plaster, and sticks the damned stuff on wherever he could find HAIR!*

*The next day we bade an affectionate farewell to the 'front line' and went by train to Boulogne. **Campbell**<sup>80</sup> and I were sent to the 15<sup>th</sup> General Hospital [sic, 13<sup>th</sup>]. There we grew in beauty side by side for three days, amid scenes that would bring tears to the eyes of a wooden god.*

*Most of the fellows had frightful wounds and their cries would keep me awake all the night.*

*On the seventh I was told to prepare for England. Two hours on the boat, two further hours in the train, and amidst the cheers of the kids and smiles of the ladies we entered this picturesque and tidy little town.*

An entry in Roy's file shows 'Sgt, Awarded Military Medal, by order Lieut Gen Godley,' on 19 June, 1916, however, there is no record of the wording of his recommendation in the AWM records. The only hint is on one page in his record, which says the MM was awarded for 'gallantry in action.' Presumably this occurred when he was involved in putting out the fires in the ammunition dump, just before he was wounded.

Roy was discharged from Brook War Hospital to the 3<sup>rd</sup> Australian Auxiliary Hospital, Southall, on 26 June.

After four days at Southall, Roy was considered well enough to go on two week's furlough. For his leave, Roy seemed content to visit some of his old comrades in England and Wales, while based at the home of the family he had stayed with on his last leave in England.

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<sup>80</sup> Probably **Gnr 1790, later Bdr, Charles Atcheson Campbell**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & 1<sup>st</sup> DAC, 21-year-old civil servant of East Guildford, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 23/9/18.

*England,  
30<sup>th</sup> June, 1917.*

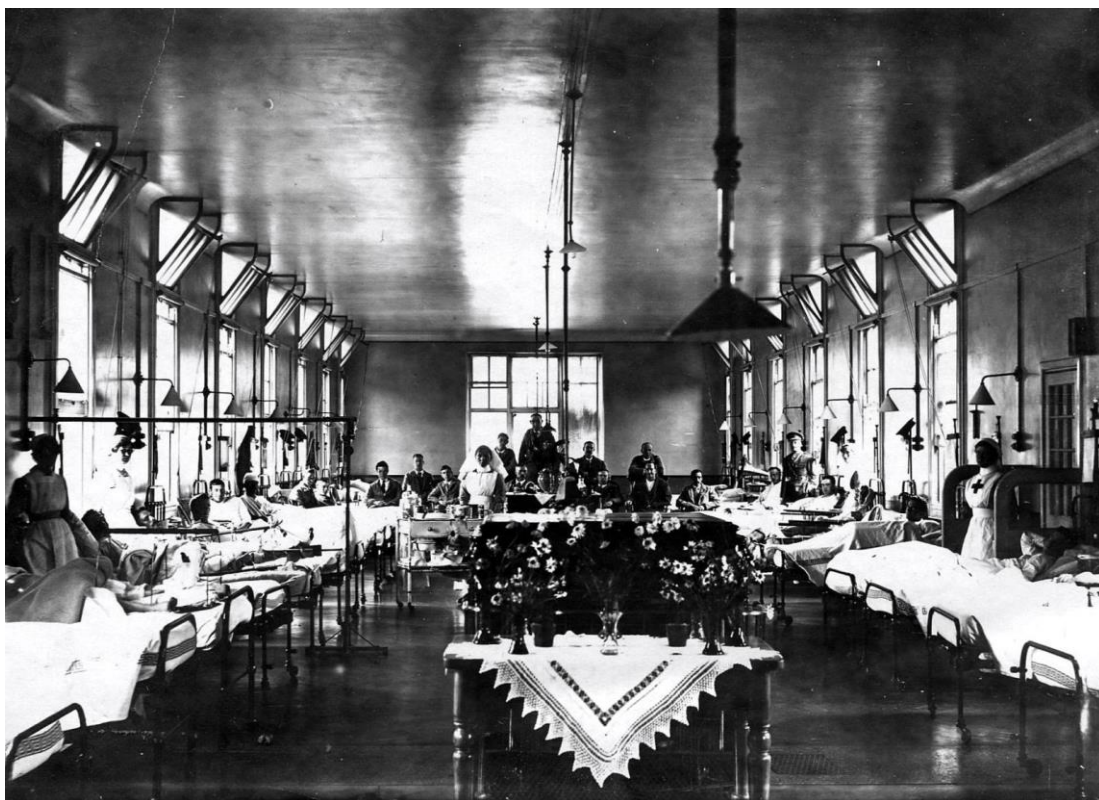
*Yesterday, I left hospital, and am now on fourteen days furlough before returning to France. I cabled you to this effect. I am staying in London a few days with some people named Jeffrey – a dentist and his wife – who have been very kind to me, both this time and the last time I was in England.*

*His brother is going out to Perth in a few months on account of health. He has been totally rejected from the army as unfit. I have given him a letter of introduction to Aubrey in the hope that he will be able to help him get a clerking job. Please make him welcome and do all you can to help him when he calls, as I have been very kindly treated by his people.*

*On Monday I am going to Lincoln to meet **Stan Brearley**<sup>81</sup>, an old sergeant pal of mine. He is now in the Flying Corps. From there I go to Yorkshire to people I have an introduction to, and from there probably to Wales and maybe Cardiff. I will not have time to go to see the Reids in Scotland.*

*I am feeling in the pink of condition again and intend to enjoy these fourteen days to its full. **Macquire** – my bombardier – who was hit, is progressing well at Oxford. I am going up there too.*

*The Sister and nurses seem very sorry to part with me from Woolwich Hospital, and I can assure you I have never struck such a fine lot of people in my life. I am enclosing some photos of Gallipoli and Egypt, which, until now, I never could get printed; also I will get my photo taken and send you some.*



**Above:** A ward in the Memorial Hospital at Woolwich, 1917, staffed by QAIMNS nurses. **Source:** collectionswa.net.au.

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<sup>81</sup> **Cpl 1772, later Capt, Stanley George Brearley DFC**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB & AFC, 20-year-old fitter's apprentice of Subiaco, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 9/12/18.

*I have received no letters from Australia for seven weeks, but they will be sent on to me from the battery. Please address them still the same.*

*There is little news to tell you, so I will close.*

Following his leave, Roy marched in to No. 4 Command Depot at Codford. While there he applied for officer's training.

**Codford, England.**

**22<sup>nd</sup> July, 1917.**

*I was a very melancholy soul the first few days in this camp, but at last have regained my cheerfulness. I thought when I struck camp again that a bare floor and two blankets would worry me, but such has been the spartan discipline of the last three years, I took to it as a baby takes to a feeding bottle. All the same, my old hospital bed seems as alluring and enchanting as a princess in one of Grimm's Fairy Tales.*

*I have seen the proofs of my photos and they are excellent. I should have them within a week, and then I will at once send you one of each kind. A lot of the mails both to and from Australia are being sunk, so please let me know as soon as you receive them.*

*A few days ago I put my application in for the Officers' Training Corps, and up to date it has been received very favourably. It has yet to go to Headquarters.*

*Whom do you think I met today while wandering around this quaint little village? **Cornish** of the AMP<sup>82</sup>. Rather remarkable coming across him here. Of course, we were delighted to see each other, and the conversation was naturally all 'AMP.'*

*The thing that is interesting me intensely at the present moment is the movement afoot to return all original 1<sup>st</sup> Division men to Australia for a holiday. That would be glorious! I see that someone must volunteer and especially name the man he wishes to relieve. I wonder will anyone be fool enough to enlist in my place.*

*Here's a bit of a yarn – some youngsters were told to write an essay on 'The Spine.' One little girl put it this way:—*

*"The spine is a lot of little bones put down the back to stick the ribs on to. My head sits on one end. I sit on the other."*

*I had meant to send you all something home, but while in London could never hit on anything that I thought you would like. However, before I leave England I will do so.*

It was not until late August 1917 that Roy learnt that one of his best mates from the AMP branch in Perth, and serving in the AIF, had been killed in May.

**Codford,**

**1<sup>st</sup> September, 1917.**

*I have to answer your letters of the 12<sup>th</sup> June and 4<sup>th</sup> July. It was the first intimation I had that you knew of my wounds, and I am glad to see you were wise enough to take it calmly.*

*Your parcels are coming along alright, for, although they have not reached me, they have fallen into the hands of several fellows of my Sub [section] in France, who stood in great need of them. I left word for the chaps to open all parcels and they*

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<sup>82</sup> Believed to be **Pte 3363 Wilfred John Cornish**, 11<sup>th</sup> Rfts/12<sup>th</sup> Bn & 52<sup>nd</sup> Bn, 22-year-old AMP clerk of West Leederville, WA, enl 6/9/15, RTA 23/9/18.

wish to render thanks to you.

*It is with deep regret that I have to tell you of the death in action of dear old **Jimmy Linton**. He was killed about 29<sup>th</sup> May last, near Ypres, a few days before I was wounded. I only heard of his death this week, and I am very upset about it.*

*Jimmy was an ideal soldier, conscientious and thorough, and as was his nature, putting his whole heart into his work. The Army can ill spare such men. He had endeared himself to all he met, and I know his officers held golden opinions of him.*

*Personally, I have lost a very dear and lovable friend. A man of rare and delicate personality. I know of no one with principles so high, with ideals so fine. Once one got beneath that Scotch reserve of his, one found an affection as deep and abiding as the sea.*

*How we will miss the presence of Jimmy Linton, the years alone will show. I feel that a great deal of the zest of his life has gone, now that he is not here to share its pleasure and sorrows.*

*God rest his gallant soul.*

*I had the pleasure of seeing **Timbury** last week. He is in hospital at Eastbourne, a very beautiful watering place on the South Coast. Tim is mending slowly, and in the process is allowing his affections to run riot among the nurses.*

*I have been now in this camp for six weeks, mainly owing to bad teeth. I am on a good job at present – orderly room sergeant – back at the old game, you see.*

*I told you last week that I was going to an Officers' Training School, but something has cropped up, and maybe it will not come off.*

*Oft-times I spend a few hours at Salisbury, which is a romantic old town and possesses a wonderful Cathedral.*

*Should the AMP be erecting a memorial plate to Jimmy Linton, please give very liberally towards it from my account.*

**3/9/17.**

*The Commission business has fallen through again. I have just received a letter from the General Officer Commanding the Australian Troops in England, stating that I can have an Infantry Commission for the asking, but it is beyond his power to grant Artillery Commissions to me in England.*

*He tells me that before it can be granted I must return to my unit. I have therefore asked to be put on a draft for France. I expect to be back there soon.*

Roy left Codford on 10 September and marched in to the Overseas Training Brigade at Perham Downs.

**Larkhill, England.**

**Friday, 12<sup>th</sup> September, 1917.**

*I have just heard that the Xmas mail for Australia is closing tomorrow, so am writing a few lines to you.*

*Today, I received a letter from **Bauny Castilla** telling me that he was alright, but that the Battery was having a hell of a bad time.*

*As the winter is now setting in with a vengeance, the big attack in France must cease, so things should be fairly quiet when I return.*

*I am going to France on Tuesday next, after a terrible lot of humbugging about here, and am glad of it. I expect to go to the 5<sup>th</sup> Division to **General Bessell Browne** and expect he will send me back to the Officers' Cadet School. It is possible that I will spend Xmas in England. Until you hear further from me, address letters in case, 'The*

AMP Society, London.’

*The weather has been very wretched all the week, never ceasing to rain. Larkhill must be an awful place in the winter time. The only place of interest in the camp is the YMCA. There are two or three charming girls running the show, and we are always over there yarning to them.*

*I had hoped to be in London again before going overseas but cannot get leave. I am, therefore, waiting until I come back before sending you all a Xmas box.*

*I hope you will all have a Happy Xmas and a Joyful New Year. I feel certain the war will end in 1918.*

*By this mail I am sending you some snapshots we took in France last Xmas and April.*

**16<sup>th</sup> September, 1917.**

**Perham Downs, Wiltshire.**

*I have now been in a new camp for a week. It is the largest Australian Training Camp in England, and the worst too. We are working from 5.45 am until 7 pm, going all the time. The drill is all Infantry, and therefore very uncongenial to an artillery man.*

*On Friday next, I will be going to Larkhill, the Artillery Camp, and from there to France.*

***Bauny Castilla** is back with the battery again, and once more happy. He has just had fourteen days furlough in England. I did not see him, but I hear he had a good time. **Tim**, instead of improving, has been boarded for Australia and should be back there before Christmas.*

*He is sure to call on you, so treat him well in every way possible. Tim and I have been great pals these three years, and I don't know of any chap I like better. He will be able to explain this life to you thoroughly.*

*I received some Australian mail yesterday. I see by the paper that they still talk of sending the original 1<sup>st</sup> Division men home, but nothing official has been done yet. I daresay it will be next year before they get a start-on with it.*

*I rather dread the idea of another winter in France, but infinitely prefer France to the horror of camp life in England. These Salisbury Plains [sic] are cold and bleak – miles from any decent town, and it is not possible to get leave. I will be glad to get back to the boys.*

*Have you received my photo yet, and also my letter telling you of my Military Medal?*

Sergeant McLarty marched in to the Reserve Brigade Australian Artillery at Larkhill on 21 September, 1917. From 25 September to 4 October, 1917, Roy was attached to the permanent cadre of the Reserve Brigade of the Australian Artillery (RBAA).

**Larkhill,**

**near Salisbury.**

**30<sup>th</sup> September, 1917.**

*It's devil of a long time since I wrote you last, but I have been writing a general letter home each fortnight and have asked Mother to give you a copy of them each time. I hope, in that way, I have made amends for my neglect.*

*I have not received any word from Longie for months and months, certainly not since I was wounded, and that is three months ago. However, you are forgiven, for I know how hard it is to write these days. I find, as the years go by, that it grows harder and harder to keep up my correspondence*

*Well, since my furlough, I have been going through a sort of purgatory in these different base camps in England. The life is wretched, and I have been longing to get back to the battery again in France.*

*It is astounding how hard it is to get away from England. I have been bothering the 'Heads' for the last six weeks to be placed on Draft for France, yet I am still here. I have hopes of getting away next week.*

*Only a few days ago I heard that **Major Rogers** had been killed. He has been the life and soul of our battery for the last two years, and the battery will never be quite the same without his genial personality.*

*He was a very charming man and had that rare gift of always being cheerful under the most distressing circumstances. He never inflicted hardships on the men which he would not cheerfully bear himself, and for consideration and thoughtfulness of those under him, I know of no officer who can compare with him. He is a very great loss to the Service.*

*I had a letter from **Cliff Burridge** today; he is in the Army Headquarters in London. He is engaged to an English girl, and is to be married Xmas time. So you see, the world goes on in its old-fashioned way in spite of that dreadful intruder – war.*

*You will have seen my letter referring to the death of dear old **Jimmy Linton**. I cannot realise yet that 'Son of Mine' will sing no more to us, that the piano will never again respond to the magic of his fingers. Yet, although, for the sake of his country, he lies in a grave in France, we who had the pleasure of sharing his affections, will ever retain the memory of his lovable and sincere personality.*

*I had a good time the two days I was in London. I met a lot of the chaps over on leave, **Macquire, Ogilvie, Cusack** and myself saw 'Carminetta' and 'The Maid of the Mountains.' They are both beautiful operas and whirled us away for the time being from the realities of life.*

*Of course, late suppers in The Strand follow. I must introduce you to these splendid fellows when we return.*

Roy's next letter was written from France. He proceeded to France from Southampton, UK, on 17 October, 1917, and arrived at the Australian General Base Depot at Rouelles the next morning (18<sup>th</sup>). From there he marched out the 3<sup>rd</sup> Army Field Artillery Brigade on 21 September. Roy re-joined his unit, ex-wounded, on 23 September.

**1917.**

**France.**

**3<sup>rd</sup> November, 1917.**

*This note will show you that I am back with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery again. I arrived in France about the 24<sup>th</sup> and came straight through to the battery. I am glad in many ways that I returned to the battery.*

*It was great to see the boys again – they all seemed genuinely pleased to see me. The battery has gone to pieces since the Major died but they have been through a perfect hell for the four months I was away, and many old faces have gone. Indeed, the day I arrived, four more were killed.*

*I am not with the guns yet, but at the wagon lines. Yesterday I took six hundred rounds up to the guns – a 6-mile trip. The country is awful; even the utter desolation of the Somme battlefield is exceeded here. To come from the smiling fields of England to this country of hell, is an experience and a lesson in contrasts which I can never forget.*

*The road for miles is strewn with the debris of wagons, guns, dead horses, and*

dead men, and to one unused to such things, an awful spectacle. Yet, with all the obstacles which obstruct our path, including wretched weather, we seem to be slowly pushing the Hun back.

I understand that **Jim Linton**'s grave is not far from here. He and **Major Rogers** are buried in the same cemetery. At the first opportunity I will get a photo taken of the grave and send it to Mrs Linton.

I am living in a tent with **Bauny Castilla**, **Viv Ogilvie** and **Bob Murray**<sup>83</sup> and we are quite comfortable and very happy. I amuse them of a night relating anecdotes of my stay in England.

All my letters are being held in England, but now that I have advised them (the PO Authorities) of my return to the battery, I am expecting a big pile any day.

Glancing through the 'Sunday Times' this morning I came across a reference to Uncle Edward's death – the first I knew of it. Convey my condolences to Aunt Mary Jane. I will write to her when I get particulars of his death from you.

It is three years today since we set sail from Fremantle, and that faraway time seems more like ten years than three. I am sure I am far better for the experience I have had, and I daresay that you will notice a great deal of difference in me when I return, not so much in looks as in disposition.

I rather pride myself on the fact that I have lost that irritability which was always showing out in me, and I am now able to take the ups and downs of life with a smile.

I don't think **Tim** has yet left England, but should do so any day. Mind you give him a big welcome.

I am feeling very fit and ready for the winter.

**France,**

**12<sup>th</sup> November, 1917.**

I have cadged the ink, found a nib, made a pen handle, so here goes.

'**Fat**' **Smith** from the AMP arrived back to the battery yesterday, after an absence of two years. He is fatter than ever, and I am wondering how he will take to soldiering again. We talked for hours of Perth and the AMP, and I got the usual tinge of homesickness when I thought of those old familiar things.

I think I realised too, what an utter stranger I will be when I return, or at least what a stranger to the conditions of living under civilian laws. However, I daresay I will get used to it quickly enough.

I saw a tragic sight today, and yet an inspiring one too. The day was cloudy at about 10 am and a German Taube came over seeking balloons. He hovered over three [balloons], undecided which to attack. Eventually, seeing a bunch of our planes coming up in the distance, he turned and made for home.

In doing so, he ran right into one of our little bull-nosed Sopwith machines and a pretty fight ensued. The Taube must have been carrying bombs, for suddenly we saw his two wings blown away and he fell to earth in a hopeless swaying manner. The bullets from our plane must have exploded one of his bombs. He crashed to the sound of a thousand cheers.

The rain still falls steadily, but despite it and the Italian reverses, we manage to keep heart and still push the Hun back yard-by-yard.

I am sending by registered mail a rather good souvenir. It is a paper knife. The

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<sup>83</sup> **Gnr 1856**, later **Lieut, Robert Sutherland Murray**, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 22-year-old locomotive fireman of West Perth, WA, enl 18/8/14, RTA 19/6/19.

blade is made from the driving band of a German shell, and the handle is a piece of aluminium taken from a broken German aeroplane. It was made in our battery blacksmith's shop by one of the farriers. Please keep it for me.

**Tim** left for Australia on the 1<sup>st</sup> November and should be in Perth before this letter reaches you. I am sure you will like him, so give him a good welcome.

Am sending with this letter a snapshot of the graves of **Jimmy Linton** and **Major Rogers**. They are both buried in the same graveyard in Belgium, these two gallant souls. The graves are well kept and are situated in a charming spot. I am sending the negative to England to get some good prints and will then send you some more and some to Mrs Linton.

I am expecting a WA mail in tomorrow. We received a few Eastern States letters today, incidentally one from Longie, dated 21<sup>st</sup> September and the last WA letters we have had are 9<sup>th</sup> August.

Miss Missingham is to give Grace a photo of **Viv Ogilvie** for me. Please keep it. It is a splendid photo of Viv and you will see what a bonny looking chap he is. At present Viv and I are sleeping together. We have a very happy tent-full – **Mick Robinson**<sup>84</sup>, **Bob Murray**, **Viv** and myself – all original 8<sup>th</sup> Battery fellows.

Every night under the influence of a bright fire, and a tot of rum, we have a singsong, and life is dressed in a merry garb for a few hours. **Bauny** went to the guns today. I am still with the horses.

On 20 November, 1917, Roy was promoted to the role of temporary battery sergeant major.

**Belgium,**

**2<sup>nd</sup> December, 1917.**

Your two letters of August and September reached me a few days ago. They were apparently held up by the Strike.

A parcel of socks, scarf and cap comforter arrived from you today. They came just at the right time, for we are having a very cold spell just at present.

I am enclosing a few snaps of **Jim**'s grave, which please hand round to the people whose names I have placed on the back. I have sent half a dozen to Mrs Linton.

I am now the sergeant major of the battery and it is a good job. I just sit back and order everybody about – suits me. I shall therefore be mainly at the wagon lines in future, and the only time I go to the guns is when ammunition is required.

**4<sup>th</sup> December, 1917.**

I have heard today that **Macquire** and **Cusack** will be returning to the battery in a few days. I shall be very glad for they are two of my best pals.

We are having some very fine evenings at present. We have a gramophone and a very good collection of records, and on those evenings when we are not on the roads carting ammunition to the guns, we get a big fire going, let the gramophone rip and sit round playing cards.

Tonight is such a night, snow on the ground outside, but inside the 'humpy' is comfy and warm; the gramophone is going and the boys are playing poker.

What a life of contrasts this is. In an hour's time we may all be up on those hellish roads – who knows – however, a man always lives for the present and never

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<sup>84</sup> **Dvr 1878, later Bdr, Michael William Robinson, 8<sup>th</sup> Bty/3<sup>rd</sup> FAB, 25-year-old farm labourer of Toodyay, WA, enl 17/8/14, RTA 13/12/18.**

*looks ahead at this game. It wouldn't do.*

*Murray and I made a trip to the guns a few days ago with ammunition. We left at 2 am and for once the weather was beautiful. I quite enjoyed the trip in the hazy twilight. When we approached the guns, the track became almost impassable, and at one time we had seven horses bogged. Fritz, at this period, began to be playful and throw gas shells at us.*

*On the return trip, five Taubes flying low began to play their machine guns along the road. I had a very bad moment. It is no uproarious joke to see a plane diving at you playing 'Home Sweet Home' on his machine gun.*

*By some miraculous means we escaped, and again later we got through a bit of heavy shelling. I got a clout on the arm, but otherwise escaped injury. I can assure you I was glad to get home.*

*We are to leave the line in two days' time, and are going out for a spell, so expect to have a good time.*

*We await with interest the verdict of the people on Conscription. The soldiers' vote, I think, will go against. Peculiar isn't it? But the Australian Army in the field in very discontented. They have been doing far more than their share of the fighting. Personally, I think the ONLY way to win the war is by conscription of men, money, and foods.*

*I was told tonight that I am to be recommended for a Commission at once, so it should not be long before I get to England.*

It was lucky for Roy that he survived the gas shells and the machine-gun bullets, as only a day or so after, he was granted leave to Paris, returning to his battery on 12 December. Needless to say, he had a great time in the French capital.

**France,  
18<sup>th</sup> December, 1917.**

*I have just returned from four days leave to PARIS and have never crowded more fun and joy and sightseeing into so short a time before. A peerless city, ever to be remembered with pleasure.*

*I was only told a few hours before I had to leave, so with much haste we left the line and rode to Bailleul. At 8 am our train started and ran to Calais. There we caught the Paris Express – a further journey of eight hours.*

*On the way I had dinner in the dining car with two English officers – one I found to be an artist in civil life, the other a student of Economics.*

*We arrived in Paris at 8 pm, and driving through the streets I had my first glimpse of this lovely city.*

*We were very tired and turned in early. At the hotel we picked up a gem of a chap who consented to act as our 'Guide, Philosopher and Friend' for the four days. He was an excitable little fellow, with the real Parisian knack of getting fun out of life.*

*Early next morning we started out sightseeing, the crowd consisting of the guide (nicknamed 'Bolo'), **Quartermaster Allen, Sergeant King**<sup>85</sup>, **Corporal Hardwick** and myself – all from the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery. King is a special pal of mine, a little chap full of mischief and merriment; fun fairly bubbles out of him.*

*We saw Notre Dame, which is perhaps the most famous church in Europe. I wish I could describe to you the glory of the stained windows and the grandeur of the architecture. In one corner, on an altar, I saw about a thousand candles burning and*

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<sup>85</sup> King is unidentified.

women praying before them. You know, of course, the Catholic custom of burning candles in memory of their dead. They were relatives of soldiers who had just died.

Next we saw the Tomb of Napoleon – I think the most impressive sight in Paris. The tomb is of pure marble and the building is quite as large as the Perth Museum and Art Gallery.

From a gallery you. Look down on the actual tomb, surrounded with statues of all his famous generals. The roof is lofty and grand, and both it and the walls are inset with a stained blue glass. The light reflects from the glass to the marble, and this soft, ethereal blue color casts a magic over everything. The effect is so beautiful that one cannot but be speechless while under its spell.

The Boulevards are wonderful, fully a quarter of a mile in width, garden in the centre and down the sides, and everywhere you see statuary. The ‘Champs Elysses’ is the finest Boulevard in the world.

We saw ‘Faust’ played at the Grand Opera House, and it was a dream. The orchestra consisted of two hundred professional musicians. The singing was superb.

I like the people. They are so very kind and lighthearted, so eager to join in a bit of fun. The kiddies are LOVELY. I spent most of my time kissing them. They take to a soldier like a bee to honey.

We spent one afternoon on the [ice-skating] rink, and all the pretty girls would insist on taking us around. I know about a dozen words of French and all these people seem to know about a dozen words of English, so conversation was strictly limited and mainly carried on by signs. It’s not bad fun either.

On 22 December, Roy was advised that he had been selected for Officer’s Training College in the UK. He reverted to the rank of sergeant and began his journey to Royal Artillery Cadet School the same day. Roy arrived in England on 24 December and went to his friend’s residence for Christmas.

### **December, 1917.**

*I had no sooner returned from Paris than I received word to proceed to England to the Officers’ Training School. It took me three days to get across and here I am on Xmas Eve, staying with the Jeffreys. I have a really happy time with this ideal pair.*

*I must leave off now; will write further news later.*

*Dee, Chris and I are going shopping tonight to get you all a Xmas Box.*

McLarty marched in to No. 1 Royal Artillery School at St John’s Wood on 4 January, 1918 and was appointed as an officer-cadet.

### **St John’s Wood, London.**

**19/2/18.**

*I know I’m an ungrateful devil the way I fail to answer my correspondence, but knowing your generous forgiving natures, I take advantage of them and depend a lot on my home letters being passed on to you, and thus, in a lazy way, filling the deficiency.*

*Various parcels of socks, cigarettes, and sweets have reached me from you, for which I am very grateful. You are all absolutely tip-top to think of me so regularly during the stress of the last four years.*

*I have now been at the school in London two months, and am doing fairly well. It is a long course, and lasts until June, but I am not at all sorry to be away from France, so long as I can keep free from the beastly English camps.*

*We work very hard here, but I manage to have quite a gay time with odd nights off, and Saturday and Sunday afternoons. Have seen most of the theatre shows, and often spend a delicious three hours at the grand concerts in the Albert Hall.*

**5/3/18.**

*Continued after two weeks of hard study. We sat for our first examination yesterday, and I did rather well. The next examination comes in a month's time, and then another in two months' time.*

*Tonight I am sitting beside a fire in a cosy little room which we have rented for study purposes. I am doing nothing except gazing into the fire and building 'castles in Spain' in the light of the glowing coals. **Moore**<sup>86</sup> is playing the gramophone – a lovely thing called 'Under the Stars' – and I think of you all under the glorious stars of the South. Outside, it is snowing, and a freezing wind is blowing, making inside seem more cosy and home-like.*

*I am getting four days' holiday from Friday next, and am going down to Wiltshire to see **Longie Henderson**<sup>87</sup>. Maybe afterwards I shall run over to Wales.*

*I have been very upset this week over the tragic death of one of my pals. You may know him, **Eric Munro**<sup>88</sup> of Claremont, a great pal of the Hughes of Claremont. He was one of the finest men God ever put into this world, and a very lovable chap.*

*He had just become engaged to an English girl (I know her too) and they were spending a holiday in London. I spent an evening with them at one of the shows, and I have rarely seen two people so happy, so obviously meant for each other. Three nights afterwards they were both killed in an air raid. They were found lying on the footpath.*

*Isn't it dreadful? I don't know how poor Mrs Munro will take it. Eric was the third son, the other two have been killed in the war.*

*I am sending you a photo of a friend of mine who is going out to Perth in a fortnight's time on account of health. Give him a good greeting. **Stan Jeffery**<sup>89</sup> is his name.*

*Thank you once again for acting the Santa Claus so often.*

On his four day's leave, Roy was able to catch up with his good friend, **Longie Henderson**.

**London,**

**11<sup>th</sup> March, 1918.**

*I left the School last Friday on four days' holiday after passing my first examination.*

*The first thing I did was to go down to Warminster and see Longie. He is looking splendid, and I don't think he stopped talking for one second all the time I was there.*

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<sup>86</sup> Moore is unidentified.

<sup>87</sup> 'Longie' enlisted in the AIF and had arrived in the English camps. He was **Gnr 39234 William Longmore Henderson**, 34<sup>th</sup> Rfts/FAB & 3<sup>rd</sup> DAC, 31-year-old married AMP clerk of Mt Lawley, Vic, enl 4/2/17, embkd 22/12/17, RTA 23/7/19, d.27/9/39, aged 53, buried in Karrakatta Cemetery, Perth.

<sup>88</sup> **Gnr 12305, later Cpl, Eric James Garfield Munro**, 14<sup>th</sup> Rfts/2<sup>nd</sup> FAB, 24-year-old salesman of Claremont, WA, enl 1/11/15, killed in an air raid 16/2/18, buried in Brookwood Military Cemetery, Surrey, England, XI.A.13. His brothers killed in the war were **Pte 1111 Norman Alexander Munro**, 28<sup>th</sup> Bn, KJIA 16/12/15 and **Sgt 1876 Roy Campbell Munro**, 28<sup>th</sup> Bn, KIA 26/2/17. Roy was right to worry about Mrs Munro, as she lost three sons and her future daughter-in-law in the war.

<sup>89</sup> Possibly **Dvr 20305 Herbert Stanley Fritz Jeffery**, 8<sup>th</sup> FAB BAC & 3<sup>rd</sup> DAC, 18-year-old clerk of Surrey Hills, Vic, enl 29/1/16, RTA 5/9/19 so did not return early as Roy thought. There is a chance Stan was one of the Jeffreys [sic] family who befriended Roy in England.

*You will have heard the dreadful news about **Eric Munro**. Such a splendid chap. I was only out with him and his girl two nights before they were both killed in the air raid. I must write to Mrs Munro about him, and if possible visit his grave.*

*The last news I had of **Bauny** he was doing alright and seemed happy.*

Roy's next move was to the coastal town of Shoeburyness in Essex, where the School of Gunnery was located.

***RH & RFA School,  
Shoeburyness, England.  
26/5/1918.***

*You will see from the address I have passed my London exams, and am down here for the last month. I have been working rather hard of late, and in consequence had little time to write.*

*I had a couple of days' leave before coming down, which I spent with those charming people, the Jeffreys.*

*I only arrived here today, so do not know what the course is like. The town is a pretty little place, resting on the side of a hill looking out to sea, on the east coast of England. The greenery is simply lovely. England at present is showing herself in the garb of spring, and the whole countryside is ablaze with colour.*

*During my five months in London, I saw about six air raids, but always managed to escape danger.*

*The rations for the civilian folk are improving. They have been very poor for three or four months. I suppose you, too, are feeling the pinch.*

After six months of officer training, Roy finished his theoretical and practical gunnery courses and passed his final examination to become an officer on 26 June, 1918. He then went on a fortnight's leave and travelled to the ancestral home of the McLartys – Scotland. While there Roy met up with a friend from his school days in Fremantle.

***In the Highlands,  
Oban, Scotland.  
2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1918.***

*You will see by the above that I am on my last leave, and for the first time in Scotland. I don't think I told you the results of the final examination. I passed with eighty-five per cent to my credit.*

*We then had two days' shooting at Larkhill to finish, and I need hardly recall to your memory that dismal hole.*

*On the 26<sup>th</sup> June, the course was over and I became a 'temporary gentleman' by order of the King. We had a wild night to end up, and I was in London next day with the 'PIPS' up.*

*That night I left for Scotland on twelve days' leave, and a ten-hour trip by express landed me in Glasgow. I had a peculiar feeling of satisfaction and expectancy on reaching this land of my Fathers.*

*While breakfasting in the hotel, a dear little girl ran up to me calling me 'Dadda,' to the amusement of the crowd, and. Would insist that I WAS her 'Dadda,' although I tried to convince her that it was not so. That, you must admit, was a fairly good start.*

*Glasgow is a dirty city, and. Busy as the devil. The trams are its redeeming feature – millions of 'em apparently and cheap – a 3 miles trip costs ½d.*

*I like the people and they do talk so prettily. I always imagined the Scotch brogue was hard and unpleasant until I came here, but to tell you the truth, the girls talk like the angels. They resemble their hills too, rather wonderfully; stubborn and proud at a distance, yet when you came to them, friendly, homelike and generous.*

*I stayed in Glasgow two days, and to show you how small the world is, I must tell you that while walking down the main street one day, I bumped into Mr D. Of course, we had a long yarn.*

*That afternoon I left for the Highlands, and how can I ever describe them to you? An hour up from Glasgow we came to Stirling, and having a four hours' wait, I had a look over the castle built about 1100, where most of the Scottish Kings have lived and loved and slept and murdered and died, etc., etc.*

*Afterwards I paid my homage at the Mecca of all Scotchmen – the grave of Wallace. 'Twas evening as we entered the Highlands and the beauty of them was as soothing as the grace of God. Range after range of lofty hills and the most delightful dainty lakes placed between them.*

*The country has not the fairy touch of Southern France, nor the greatness and splendour of the Blue Mountains of New South Wales, but its beauty impresses one more keenly than these, by its very homeliness. I never felt so soothed and quieted, every sense seemed to know it was home, every breath welcomed you.*

*We travelled along the fringe of the lakes, each seemingly more beautiful than the last, yet each as you gazed at it was the fulfilment of all beauty.*

*We reached Oban in the dimness of late twilight, a quaint pretty old town, resting on the edge of a series of glorious river reaches, which eventually enter the sea. The hills hereby are wild and rugged; at their feet little farms lie sprinkled about, secure in the shelter.*

*I spent some few days hereabouts; trips on the lakes and through the hills, and altogether had a fine time.*

**6<sup>th</sup> July.**

*Regretfully, I left on my way back on Thursday, meaning to run across to Edinburgh, but meeting one of my school-pals, stayed at his home for a day. Friday night found me homewards bound for England. My last impression of Glasgow was my best. The town was enshrouded in a soft haze which hid its ugliness and accentuated its actual beauties.*

Roy proceeded to France via Southampton on 16 July, 1918, arriving at the Australian General Base Depot at Havre the next day. On the 20<sup>th</sup> he marched out to join the 5<sup>th</sup> Division Artillery, where he was to become a subaltern in the **5<sup>th</sup> Divisional Ammunition Column** on 23 July.

On his arrival, Roy discovered he would soon be transferred to the **5<sup>th</sup> Divisional Artillery Headquarters**.

**France,**

**23<sup>rd</sup> July, 1918.**

*You see I am once again mixed up in the fun. I left England a week ago and arrived in the line a few days ago. Through the kindness of **General Browne**, I was transferred to the 5<sup>th</sup> Division, and in a few days' time am to take a job on his staff. In fact, I am to be his ADC. Thus you see I am becoming one of the 'Ker-nuts' of the Army.*

*Although I am to mix with the gentlemen who live in the higher altitudes, my heart will always be with the boys of the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery. Nothing can ever change my affection for that band of fine comrades. The war news is very hopeful of late, and with*

*the aid of the Yankees, I think we shall most certainly win inside of twelve months.*

*I have seen a good deal of these Americans, and the sight of them gladdens the heart. A fine, sturdy lot, the nearest approach to our own 'Diggers' in the allied Armies. ('Digger,' by the way, is the pet name for an Australian soldier.)*

*This part of the line is fairly quiet at present. I would have you know there is no need to worry over me in future. The job is a very safe one. It's well known that the Staff never get knocked.*

*The 8<sup>th</sup> Battery is about three miles from here, and as soon as I am off duty, I'm going over to see them. I get quite excited at the thought of it.*

*My stay in London was rather costly. I thought it just as well to have a good time while I was there. While at Warminster, I met **Hilliard**<sup>90</sup> of No. 3 Mount Street<sup>91</sup>. He was on a job in England after being gassed. We had a long yarn, and he wished to be remembered to all the folk there.*

On 4 August, 1918, rather than become the ADC to General Bessell-Browne, Roy was to be the Staff Officer for Reconnaissance, replacing **Lieutenant EH Booth**<sup>92</sup>.

Roy was delighted to be able to visit his old mates in the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery, which was stationed nearby.

**France,**  
**7<sup>th</sup> August, 1918.**

*After returning to France, I was posted to the 5<sup>th</sup> Australian Division Ammunition Column, and a few days ago I came along to Divisional Artillery Headquarters, and am now ADC & Reconnaissance Officer to **General Bessell Browne**. I may stay on this job a long while, or if not I'll go to a Battery.*

*While in the Divisional Ammunition Column, I spent a couple of risky nights up forward, but on this job, there is nothing to worry about.*

*I found the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery a few days after arriving back, and have ridden over several times since. It was delightful the way everyone seemed glad at my return, and I was sincerely touched by their welcome. It is a high compliment, after leaving a unit to find so spontaneous a welcome back. From my experience I know it to be rare. I do not mean to boast of it, am only glad it should be so.*

*I, of course, had dinner and tea with my old Sub-section, and it was great being with them again. **Macguire, Ogilvie, and Bauny Castilla** and I spent hours yarning.*

*Stirring days are ahead, and long before this reaches you, you will have received splendid news.*

However, it seems as though the job was not as 'cushy' as Roy hoped, as he was back in charge of a team of mules! At least his accommodation was rather spiffy.

**August 1918.**  
**Some Job:–**

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<sup>90</sup> No Hilliard from this WA address has been found in the records, but it could be **Dvr 33888, later Cpl, Stanley Hilliard**, 1917 FAB Rfts & 8<sup>th</sup> FAB (part of the 3<sup>rd</sup> AFAB) & AA Pay Corps, 22-year-old railway clerk of Lewisham, Sydney, enl 8/10/16, RTA 15/5/20 (married in England, 3/1/20).

<sup>91</sup> '3 Mount Street' was the same address as Mrs McLarty's residence. Perhaps Roy's mother ran a boarding house for AMP employees. Trove shows in Keith McLarty's death notice of 16/3/16 that Mr and Mrs McLarty lived at 1 Mount Street, so it seems the McLartys owned adjoining properties.

<sup>92</sup> **2<sup>nd</sup> Lieut, later Capt, Edgar Harold Booth MC, MID**, 1<sup>st</sup> MTMB & 5<sup>th</sup> DAHQ, 23-year-old Physics lecturer of Uni of Sydney & Chatswood, NSW, enl 9/6/16, RTA 9/3/18.

*For three weeks I laboured in the Divisional Ammunition Column, most of which time I spent trying to entice a dozen mules to carry ammunition up close to the line. From pampering to murdering them, we tried every conceivable method (except carrots) on these sweet(?) -natured brutes and eventually completed the job. If you have a special 'down' on anyone, take my tip and present them with a mule.*

*At present I live in a Chateau and occupy its best room. Believe me, the Palace Hotel is a hen coop to it.*

That is the last letter in Roy's AWM Record.

On 7 October, 1918, McLarty had leave to the UK for one week, returning to headquarters on the 14<sup>th</sup>.

Roy ceased to perform the duties of the Reconnaissance Officer and marched out to England on 15 November, 1918, to commence his journey home.

Roy was a 1914 enlistment, which would normally see his return to Australia expedited. However, his service record shows that he was returned for 'Other reasons' and he paid his own fare home<sup>93</sup>. According to the information on the AWM website, Roy married Matilda Mary Stanton, at St Mary Magdalene Church in Wandsworth, London, on 27 December, 1918.

Roy McLarty and his wife Matilda returned to Australia on the *Orsova*, departing at Liverpool on 8 January, 1919, and disembarking in Fremantle on 12 February. His appointment as an officer in the AIF was terminated on 20 April, 1919.

Roy returned to working for the AMP Society upon his return. In 1935, Roy took a promotion within the firm to Adelaide. Three years later he became state manager for AMP in South Australia.

### **AMP BRANCH MANAGER.**

#### **West Australian's Success.**

*From February 1, Mr HR McLarty, formerly accountant in Perth for the Australian Mutual Provident Society, will become manager for the society in South Australia. A member of an old West Australian family, Mr McLarty was born in Fremantle and educated at the State school there. On leaving school he joined the society's Perth office in 1903<sup>94</sup> and consistent progress earned him the position of accountant at the Perth branch in 1930. In 1935 he was transferred to Adelaide as sub-manager there. Mr McLarty is a returned soldier. He served in Gallipoli and France with the 8<sup>th</sup> Battery, 3<sup>rd</sup> Field Artillery Brigade. He enlisted as a private and returned with a commission.*

**Source:** 'West Australian,' Friday, 23 December, 1938.

After working in Adelaide for some years, the McLartys moved to Melbourne, where Roy rose to be the Chief Executive Officer of AMP.

Hector Roy McLarty died on 12 September, 1964, at Box Hill Hospital, aged 77. Roy was cremated at Springvale Botanical Cemetery and his ashes were spread in the grounds.

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<sup>93</sup> The 'other reasons' are not stated. Perhaps his mother had taken ill or a business opportunity was there to be taken up. It is hard to believe that after serving since August 1914, the army still made him come home at his own expense. His file does have an entry, '1914 leave,' but I have not come across any other 1914 enlistment who had to pay his own way home. Perhaps Roy and Matilda paid to have a private cabin on the *Orsova*, or to board a ship returning earlier than the one he was assigned to.

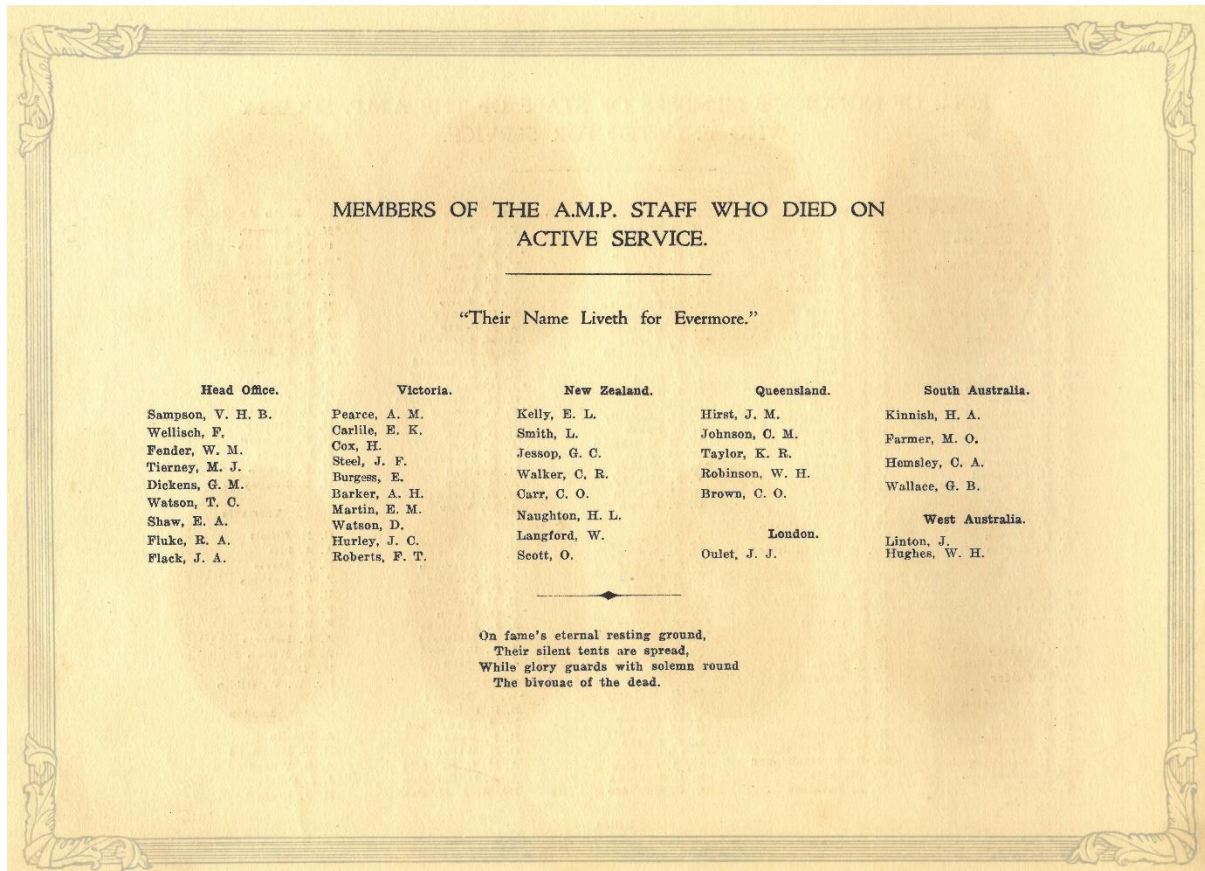
<sup>94</sup> Roy, born in March 1887, would have been 15 or 16 years old when he began working for AMP.

## Appendix: The AMP Society's tribute to its employees who served in WWI

At the time of writing, the AMP had a display of archival material on exhibition at the Noel Butlin Archives centre in the Menzies Library at the Australian National University. With the assistance of Alice at AMP Head Office in Sydney, and Abbey Turrell at ANU Archives, I was provided with some images from a booklet [cover below] produced by AMP in 1920 to mark their 'Welcome Home' to staff on 7 June, 1920.

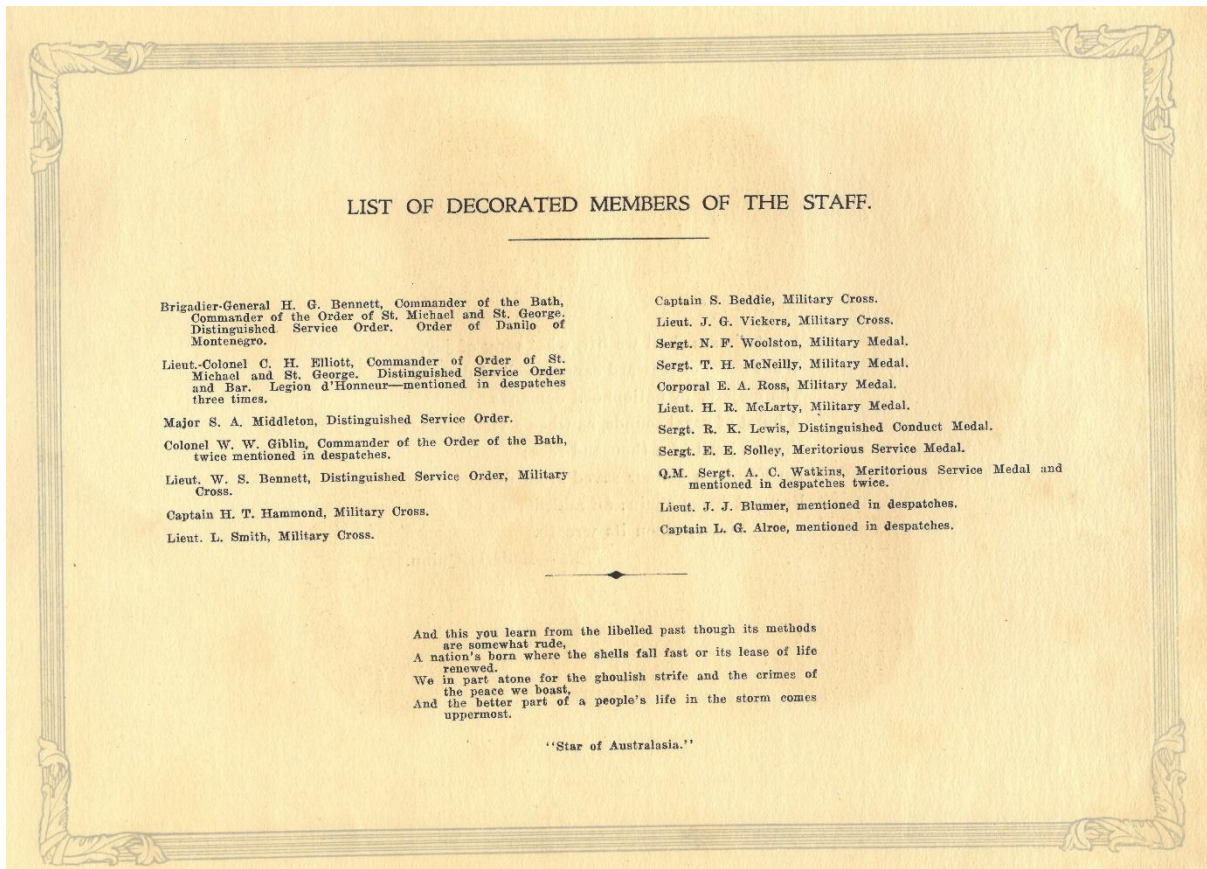


**Below:** Honour Roll of AMP staff who died on active service. **Jimmy Linton** was one of two Western Australian AMP clerks killed in the war. The second soldier was **Pte 5715 William Henry Hughes**, 18<sup>th</sup> Rfts/11<sup>th</sup> Bn and 28<sup>th</sup> Bn, 23-year-old AMP clerk of Leederville, WA, enlisted 15/3/16, KIA 28/10/17.





**Below:** AMP Staff who were decorated or mentioned in dispatches in WWI.



LIST OF DECORATED MEMBERS OF THE STAFF.

Brigadier-General H. G. Bennett, Commander of the Bath,  
Commander of the Order of St. Michael and St. George,  
Distinguished Service Order. Order of Danilo of  
Montenegro.

Lieut-Colonel C. H. Elliott, Commander of Order of St.  
Michael and St. George. Distinguished Service Order  
and Bar. Legion d'Honneur—mentioned in despatches  
three times.

Major S. A. Middleton, Distinguished Service Order.

Colonel W. W. Giblin, Commander of the Order of the Bath,  
twice mentioned in despatches.

Lieut. W. S. Bennett, Distinguished Service Order, Military  
Cross.

Captain H. T. Hammond, Military Cross.

Lieut. L. Smith, Military Cross.

Captain S. Beddie, Military Cross.

Lieut. J. G. Vickers, Military Cross.

Sergt. N. F. Woolston, Military Medal.

Sergt. T. H. McNeilly, Military Medal.

Corporal E. A. Ross, Military Medal.

Lieut. H. R. McLarty, Military Medal.

Sergt. R. K. Lewis, Distinguished Conduct Medal.

Sergt. E. E. Solley, Meritorious Service Medal.

Q.M. Sergt. A. C. Watkins, Meritorious Service Medal and  
mentioned in despatches twice.

Lieut. J. J. Blumer, mentioned in despatches.

Captain L. G. Alroe, mentioned in despatches.

And this you learn from the libelled past though its methods  
are somewhat rude,  
A nation's born where the shells fall fast or its lease of life  
renewed.  
We in part atone for the ghoulish strife and the crimes of  
the peace we boast,  
And the better part of a people's life in the storm comes  
uppermost.

"Star of Australasia."

**Below:** A sample page of photos of AMP staff killed in the Great War.



**Below:** A photo of AMP staff, taken outside Sydney Head Office in 1914, involved in a fund-raising activity for the war effort. Note the collection boxes they are carrying.

