

**WWI Seen
Through Captain
George Cooper's
Letters**





CONTENTS

Item	Description	Date	Page
	Foreword	01/03/2022	4
	Scanned Original Letter	May 1915	5
	Location Map France	1915	7
	Trench Map France	1915	8
LETTERS FROM FRANCE			
1	Western Front Base - Le Harve	May 1915	9
2	To the Front in France by Train	Thur. 1915	11
3	3 Miles Behind The Firing Line	01/6/1915	15
4	At The Front Line	9 June 1915	20
5	On the qui vive for Gas	Sun June 15	24
6	Water Shortage - Trench Stench	20/6/1915	28
7	4 Young Children At Firing Line	28/6/1915	33
8	Angels of Ypres	24/7/1915	40
9	George's Servant (Batman)	24/7/1915	44
10	Return to the Trenches Again	30/07/1915	50
11	Back to The Reserve Billets	Wednesday	57
12	Return From Leave to The Front	20/8/1915	61
13	Written 2 day's prior to Battle of Loos & First UK use of Gas	23/9/1915	64
14	Battle of Loos over with Great Loss on The British side	25/9/1915	67
	George Cooper's Favourite Brand of Cigarettes		77

CONTENTS (Continued)

Item	Description	Date	Page
LETTERS FROM EAST AFRICA			
	Background		78
	Supply Line, Operations Map		79
15	Travel by Sea to Beira East Africa	16/03/1916	80
16	Zomba Nyasaland	17/04/1916	82
17	Karonga Nyasaland	10/05/1916	86
18	Old Landsberg - Last Letter	21/05/1916	92
19	George's Death Notification	03/09/1916	107
20	Update re George Cooper's Death	03/12/1916	108
ADDENDUM I			
	George's Last Battle - Extract Military History		110
	Military Map Sketches - Georges Last Battle		113
	Extract From Roll of Honour		136
	George's East India Company. Background		139
	George's "Dead Penny"		140
	George's Name on 2 Church War Memorials		141
ADDENDUM II			
	More Background to The Nyasaland War		143
	Postal Communications - Norforce		156
ADDENDUM III			
	Use of Poison Gas in WWI 1915		160
	Cooper Family Pictures		169





FOREWORD

The treasure trove of Captain Edward George Cooper's World War I letters passed down through his family to his great niece, who during the covid lock-down period in England 2020-21, used the time to good purpose to complete a long outstanding task of transcribing George's (he was known to his family as George rather than Edward) wartime letters from the field. This was no easy task, as his letters were written on field notebook paper, in pencil, which had become faded and very fragile over time, made even more difficult with the foreign place names, both in France and German East Africa.

It was a painstaking task, necessitating the use of a magnifying glass and deep research into military history and place names to ensure the correct transcription of the letter collection into a readable format.

For this reason there are a number of places where some words and phrases could not be deciphered, indicated by ".....," But these are few and far between! Scanned samples of an original letter can be seen on pages 4 and 5 following.





Original Letter I from France (Le Harve)

Page 1

Dear Swaine -

Just a line to say that we have arrived at our Reserve base behind the firing line, which is about 10 miles away. We turned up last night after 28 hours in a stuffy carriage. They took us just zapping half over France before we got here. The extraordinary thing is that nowhere was there the slightest sign that there was any war on. Excepting of course troops of all colours & nationalities everywhere. Somewhere along the line people were working along in the fields just as usual - but one could not help noticing that the workers were all very old men & women & children - still everything was calm & peaceful. Directly our train came racing along at about 4 miles an hour, down would go their tools

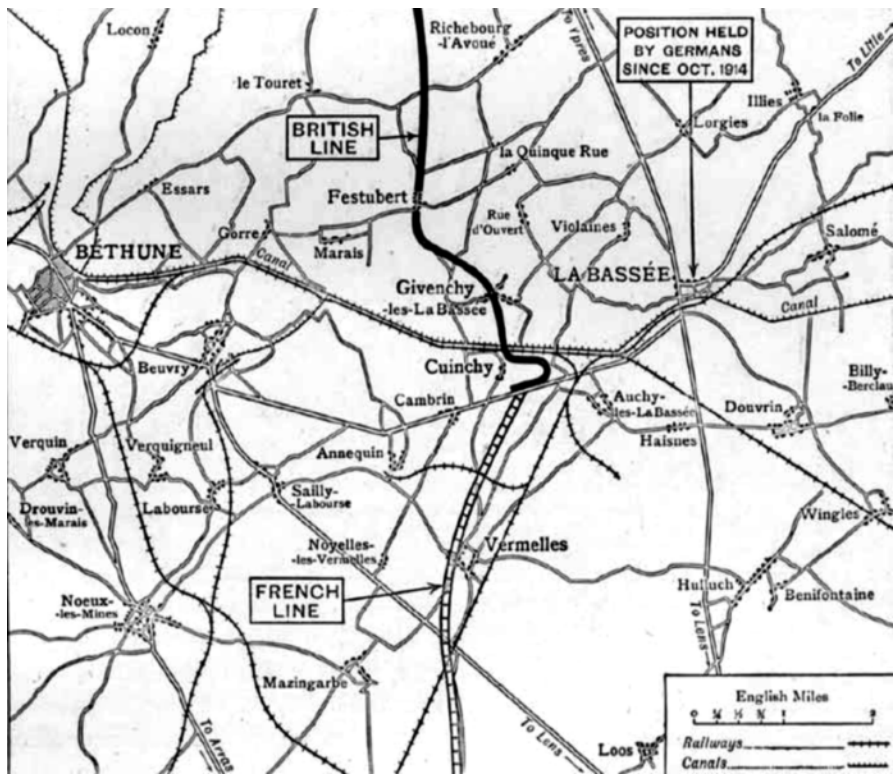


Original Letter I from France (Le Harve) Page 2

* And women & children would come rushing up waving their arms & clamoring for "Souvenirs". Promptly they would be met by chaps from all along the carriage & that they liked better a shoveln of ration biscuits!! We Officers and all were issued with 4 lbs of ration biscuits about the same weight of Corned Beef in 1 lb tin, & about 2 lbs of Groceries - This ^{we} were expected to carry, as well as about 40 lbs of kit on our backs!! You can well imagine that, considering we could buy food all along the line, we, & especially the Tommies, weren't going to cart any more weight about in the tropic heat. So when they cried for "Souvenirs" it just rained biscuits, Corned beef & groceries!! A very young Sub. lost his heart very badly to a very pretty flapper at Vichy - they talked for quite a while, - he were in a dining there for nearly two hours, on parting he gave her his photo amidst cheers from about 30 of us Officers & she with 2yso swimming dashed off into a house near by & just as the train was moving off ran onto the platform with what do you think? A Cat!! It was a full grown Cat with a ribbon 2



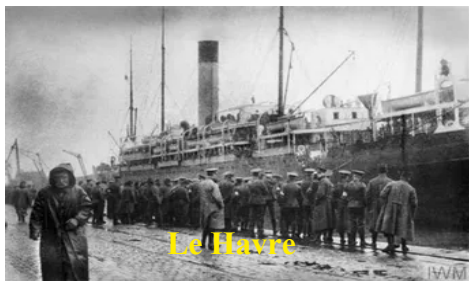
Map: Area of France where George Cooper was located



Map of Battle Lines, 1915, The First World War seen through the letters of George Cooper



Letter I from France



**Attached 1st Battalion,
The Kings-Liverpool Regiment
6th Infantry Brigade,
2nd Division,
British Expeditionary Force,
France**

May 1915

My Dearest Gwennie,

Just a hurried line while I have the time to write to you from our base – Le Havre – for goodness knows when I will get the chance again. We stayed in town one night at Southampton and crossed over to here early yesterday.

Le Havre is not all a bad little town, but, excepting for the weird sight of Tommies strolling about, you'd never think a war was on. The heat here is simply appalling. I never felt anything like it in England. Perhaps it is the sudden change from the cold winds up in Hightown as well as to find that our clothes are too heavy. Anyway I feel whacked out. To add to the discomfort I had a second inoculation and could hardly sleep with the pain in my arm. They say inoculation in hot weather here hits you harder than in the cooler weather in England.

Anyway I'm glad it's over, as they say this heat will bring out regular episodes of Typhoid and I am not looking forward to that. I cannot give you any details of news from the front, but can only say that this camp is a hotbed of alarming news most of which needless to say is not true. I am off to the 1st probably tomorrow to take on the work of a Machine Gun Officer. I am told that instead of the usual section of two guns, I am to take over 8!! The three officers who had them before me have all gone on their last journeys. It's a very risky job taking over such a large

number of guns. Anyhow, I had rather a compliment paid me – of which I feel very proud – The Camp Commandant said to me when I reported and after he had told me I was to hold myself in readiness to take on the Machine Gun Section in the firing line, “what they want is not the old type of Machine Gun Officer, but a really expert Officer to take charge. I hear you’re an expert Cooper!” I was surprised and said “No Sir”. He said “Oh that’s all right. I have seen a report from the G.O.C. the Western Command about you. You’ve started well so here’s your chance”!

Will you please get through to Humphrey at once and tell him to hurry up Craig & Davies with my boots. I want them at once. Remind him that they are to be square toed and broader here (diagram included with original letter). I also want them properly nailed. Then I want that thin notebook and my Puttees. Also ask him to get me a pair of knitted khaki imitation puttees. They are like this (diagram included). I want a small pair. I also want a plain leather strop for my razor, if he can get me a second hand one, well knocked into shape, so much the better. There are lots of other little things I want but can’t remember just now.

I am sending him a blank cheque, tell him to wait until he’s got all I want and then fill it in to repay himself. I don’t think I shall have a chance to see Maggie’s husband unless I find him this afternoon. I am returning my Sam Browne belt, will you please look after it for me as I shall not need it again. I wish I could have said goodbye to mother as somehow I should have liked to have seen her just once again. I doubt if I shall get a chance to write to wish you many happy returns on your birthday Gwennie dear so I will have to do so in this letter, I am afraid, what is more, I shall not be near any shops for a good while yet so I cannot get you any little present, but perhaps I may get the chance later on.

Please address all letters to me as above.

And now I will say goodbye Gwennie, best love to yourself, mother, Muriel, Humphrey and Gerald.

**Your loving brother,
George**

Letter II from France

This letter documents the train journey through France to get to the Reserve base behind the firing line and is partly written just before he goes up to the trenches for his first experience of fighting the Germans.



The Kings Liverpool Regiment
6th Infantry Brigade
2nd Division
British Expeditionary Force
France
Thursday 2015

Dear Gwennie,

Just a line to say that we have arrived at our Reserve base behind the firing line which is about 10 miles away. We turned up last night after 28 hours in a stuffy carriage. They took us zig zagging half over France before we got here. The extraordinary thing is that nowhere was there the slightest sign that there was any war on. Excepting of course troops of all colours and nationalities everywhere. Everywhere along the line people were working in the fields just as usual – but one couldn't help noticing that the workers were all old men or women and children – still everything was calm and peaceful.

Directly our train came racing along at about 4 miles an hour, down would go their tools and women and children would come rushing up waving their arms and clamouring for “souvenirs”. Promptly they would be met with cheers from all the carriages and, what they liked better, a shower of ration biscuits!! We – Officers and all – were issued with 4 lbs of ration biscuits, about the same weight of corned beef in 1 lb tins and about 2 lbs of groceries. This we were expected to carry as well as about 40 lbs of

kit on our backs!! You can well imagine that considering we could buy food all along the line we, and especially the Tommies, weren't going to cart any more weight about in the terrific heat. So whenever they cried for "souvenirs" it just rained biscuits, corned beef and groceries!! A very young sub lost his heart to a very pretty flapper at – they talked for quite a while – we were in a siding there for nearly two hours.

On parting he gave her his photo amidst cheers from about 30 of us Officers and she with eyes swimming dashed off into a house nearby just as the train was moving off and ran onto the platform with what do you think? A cat!! It was full grown with a ribbon round its neck to which was attached a piece of string. I've seen a good many frightened cats in my time, but I don't think that I have ever seen one that had got it quite as badly as that one. Its eyes were nearly jumping out of its head!

Anyway it was a "Souvenir de Paulette" and was going to be taken right into the trenches as a pet! Well Paulette was the best cursed cat in France during that journey. At every stop Paulette was brought out on the end of that bit of string in case the poor devil wants to do anything, but all that cat did was nearly strangle itself at every step. Paulette meowed hard for about eight hours without stopping.

At a place near here that I am not able to mention and about a hundred yards from the platform, Paulette escaped! You never saw such a scene! She tore down the line past carriages of cheering and howling Canadians and K.R.Rs who jumped down and gave chase. Across the field went Paulette with about a hundred of our fellows after her; eventually she climbed on the roof of an old barn and found sanctuary. We Officers then had to step in and herd our flock back to the train again. So we left Paulette! Two nurses at the station promised to entice her down later on and adopt her.

Talking of nurses – the only really sad sight was seen at this station and that was the sight of ambulance trains being loaded with the wounded. Poor devils they looked so awful. Three of them were dying on the platform as they lay there. They had been "gassed" by the poisonous gasses that the Germans have been using. I never have seen anything so

pitiable before in my life. They were just slowly struggling and struggling to breathe and every minute they were able to get less and less so that they were very slowly choked to death. The sight of them raised everyone to a fury and God help any German that falls into the hands of any of the crowd who saw those men on that platform! When we arrived at our last station and I was superintending our kit being put onto the Regimental transport about fifty German prisoners were marched in. Only one had a cap.

They were covered in dust and looked like overgrown louts and slouched along like skulking dogs. We could scarcely keep the men in bounds and stopped a very ugly rush in time. The Canadians were simply crazed. All the men raised a howl of rage and disgust, such as I have never listened to in my life. It was honestly blood curdling and made me feel quite creepy. I never thought that English people could be worked up to such fiendish fury and hate as those men were. There was not ironical cheering or jeering at the Germans, the air was simply filled with the foulest swearing and threats I ever listened to.

One thing that did give me grim delight, was to see those Germans turn simply ashen with fear when they heard the howls of rage that went up. The swines that could do what those fiends have done ought to expect no mercy. I think those Germans were more frightened then than they ever were in their lives.

I am billeted in a pretty wee house with two others. It was very weird lying on one's own bed last night listening to the booming of the Artillery ten miles away. It was quite loud like distant thunder and lasted all night. Indeed, at a quarter to three, I woke feeling the whole floor shaking and the distant guns louder and more incessant than ever! Do you know that all the time that this was going on, two nightingales and a blackbird were singing somewhere outside in a little wood nearby. They sang the whole night through! You'd have thought that they would have been scared away by the distant noise, especially nervous birds like nightingales – still they kept at it without a stop. Even now while I am writing, some doves are cooing in the trees and yet those guns are booming away as loudly as ever.

Friday

Since starting this letter we have received orders to move forward and relieve some trenches so tonight we shall have our first taste of a battle! I wonder what our first sensations will be like? I'm deadly keen about it – though funny enough I don't feel a bit excited. I feel just a quiet grim sort of feeling in me as if I've loathed nothing in all my life as much as I loathe these German curs! We're all supplied with respirators now and I've been drilling my men in putting them on quickly. They can do it now in 25 seconds so we ought to be all right. I've been overhauling my guns personally and have been tuning them up. Three out of the four work like dreams – I find that I have got four guns and not eight. So now nothing is left to chance and I pray and hope that the Germans will attack in force tonight. If only they'd come up in close formation!!!! Any moment there may be a forward rush, when, from all accounts the Germans will be pushed back a good way. It may be only a few miles at a time, still, back they'll go. I think they are only waiting for some reserves, then up goes the balloon as far as the Germans are concerned.

I cannot tell you what the Regiment has suffered lately. But I can tell you this, that, we've never yet given up a trench for a minute and very, very few can say that. You can gather what it costs a Regiment to do that!!

Now as I must be closing, I must think of what I want. Will you ask Humphrey to forward a £1 out of the cheque I sent him to Players and ask them to send me 200 cigarettes per week in 50 cigarettes per tin. Tell him to hurry on my boots.

And now Gwennie, Good bye, please forward me on all letters. Ask Humphrey to ask Gordon to send on my letters from Hightown.
Love to all,

**Your affectionate brother,
George**

PS: Give Taylor all the news as I have told him I will let him know through you.

Letter III From France

Written from Staff Headquarters 3 Miles behind the Firing Lines - the Day before His First Experience of Fighting at the Trenches

1st The Kings Liverpool Regiment
6th Infantry Brigade
2nd Division
British Expeditionary Force
France

1st June 1915

My Dearest Gwennie

Just a line, while I am able, to let you know that we moved off a couple of days ago and have arrived here ready to move off into the trenches tomorrow. We are quartered – that is to say the headquarters staff to which I belong now – in a beautiful old Chateau only about two or three miles off the firing lines. Bar the continual roar of the heavy guns – they sound very much louder now and occasionally beat the most frightful crashes of thunder I've listened to – it is very difficult to realize that one is just a short distance away from the scene of one of the most frightful wars the world has ever seen or likely to see and that night and day hundreds of men are being killed on both sides even on our short front.

The villagers' children all seem to carry on just as usual. While I am writing, I can see one of our aeroplanes being shelled by the German anti-aircraft guns – It's an extraordinary thing to say, but yet it is one of the prettiest sights I've seen.

You see the plane buzzing along when all of a sudden from nowhere – you don't see the shell going up like a rocket – a tiny puff of white smoke appears near it – round like a little snowball – and out of this little puff you see a flicker of light – quickly others appear under, over and all around the plane which goes tearing off wheeling here and there trying to upset

the gunners' aim. The object of the anti-aircraft guns is to drive off the planes rather than to hit them. I've seen over twenty of the allies' planes fired on up to now, but although one plane had about 50 shells fired at it and most of them went very close yet I've never seen one turned away yet. The coolness of the pilots is wonderful and everywhere, at this stage of the war, they beat the German pilots hollow.

Since beginning this letter yesterday I cycled over with the headquarters staff and inspected the trenches so as to know exactly where the machine gun positions were so that everything will be ready when we take over tomorrow. The whole time a very heavy artillery duel was going on between the two sides – we were shelling some positions of theirs a mile or two behind their lines and they were doing ditto with ours. So that all the time we were there we had shells upon shells passing overhead making a noise like a long drawn out howl followed by a ground shaking crash as they exploded some distance off.

This goes on night and day and no one takes any notice. The German trenches are only between 400 and 600 yards away – one had to be very careful indeed however as snipers were always on the look-out and at the very first sign of any movement “crack” and a bullet flattens itself uncomfortably close to your head

They were very quiet yesterday however and we had only one shrapnel burst near us and that nearly came to “outing” one of the party, as I saw a nasty jagged splinter of shell come down “biff” just about a yard off him. I was badly “had” over that though and learnt a good lesson. I jumped forward to pick it up and dropped it with a yelp! It was burning hot! Fancy having a splinter as hot as that buried inside you!!!

The men of the 1st are a splendid lot and although they have been very badly mauled time and again, they have never wavered. They have been doing great work out here. In England you hear only of the deeds of pet Regiments such as the Highlanders, but out here they really know, the Kings are counted amongst the very first for discipline and real sterling fighting qualities. You can't help tingling with pride when you hear of their deeds in the last great fight of three weeks ago.

They stormed and took a terrible fight, 3 lines of German trenches in their own sector and were just enjoying a breather when news came that the Regiment – whose name I will not mention – on its left had failed, so the poor old Kings – who were tired-out and dead-beat, had to turn again and helped the other Regiment to take their lot of trenches! The individual feats of bravery are too numerous to be noted and most of them go unnoticed.

Today is the 2nd and I can't help feeling it's a weird way to spend it. I am sitting in the garden with nothing on but a towel and am having a sun bath while I am writing this letter – about 300 yards away some French 75's are crashing away and making the ground and the empty window frames – the glass of all the windows are all slivered and broken – rattle every time they go off. About 10 minutes ago a German shell fell in the yard of a house quite close to here and killed some horses as well as wounding an old woman very badly.

Since writing the above I have had my first taste of being really under shrapnel fire, the Germans started shelling the village in the hope of finding some French guns which have been firing at them, or perhaps by some mysterious means they have learnt that the Headquarters are installed in this Chateau, anyway I was just laying on my bed dozing after a bit of a route march when I heard a shell come howling along – only this time much lower than the ones that had been going over all the afternoon – and to my surprise instead of passing overhead it went off with a terrific crash and I heard slates go taking off and bricks come tumbling down and then another.

I think it took me exactly two minutes to dress and come down too. The first thing that I thought of was whether my ponies and mules had been hit. So I dashed to the yard to see and saw about the best circus performance I've ever looked at.

The way those mules carried on was a sight! The shelling stopped as suddenly as it had begun – still they killed a woman and a dog and wounded a girl in our grounds also! (we have dug some “dug-outs” in the grounds for people round and about to shelter in).

I don't seem to be able to get any peace writing this letter so I think I will stop. The Sergeant has brought me some letters to be "censored" before they are sent off. Each officer has to pass all letters sent out by the men of his platoon.

Two bright sparks in my machine gun section have become engaged to two French girls and you should read their letters in French! Glory knows how the fair fiancées make head or tail of them! One fellow who was writing to his girl for the first time ended with this choice bit of advice "*Si vous non comprends this letter parlay vote mare who comprends Anglay a psw*"!!!

If you have time drop me a line and ask some of the others to do so as it's a bit lonely without any letters. Homemade cakes, plain chocolates and cigarettes would be very welcome.

I shall have a lot of idle time on my hands from tomorrow, as we go into the trenches then to relieve a French Regiment. Then it is a case of dreary watching and waiting with no chance of sleeping until, after two or three days of it, one becomes utterly wearied out and falls asleep in the very narrow space at the bottom of the trench. By the way send out only old magazines as they are greatly appreciated by my men.

I am lucky getting into the fighting line so soon as usually the chaps who come out from home remain for weeks at different bases before they are allowed up.

I have no news of how the war is going on as a whole excepting that it's a crying shame that we are not getting the ammunition that we want. If we were confident that the supply was sufficient I am sure that we could make a big forward rush. We daren't do it until we get all we want, as it would be nothing short of wicked murder to expect our men to dash into the Germans without being properly backed up by the Artillery.

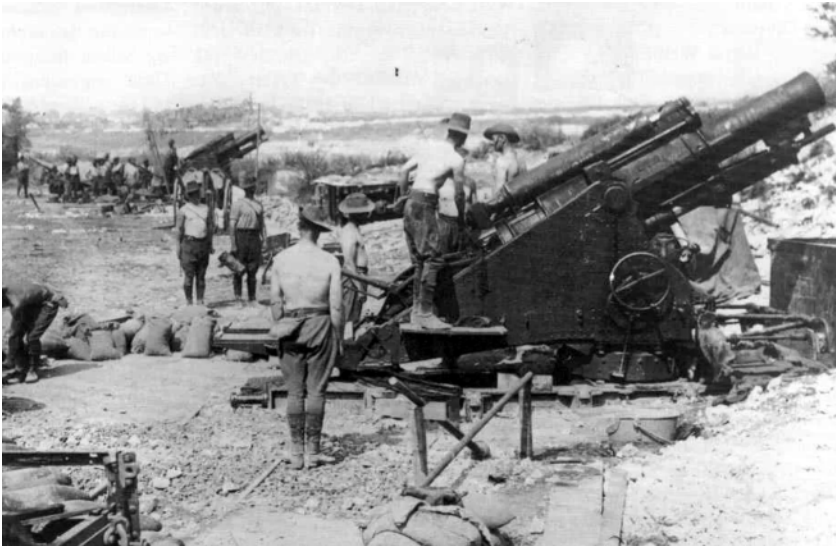
I must stop now as it is getting dark and we are not allowed lights of a night so Good night. Give what little news there is to those who enquire after me and write soon.

Love to all,

Your affectionate brother

George

PS Tell Humphrey to hurry up with my boots – my soles are nearly through and I've only got 1 pair. I also want 2 pairs of fairly thick socks – smallest size.



British WWI Expeditionary Force Heavy Guns on the Western Front



Letter IV From France

9th June 1915

My Dearest Gwennie,

Just a line to let you know how I am getting on. We have been properly through it since I wrote home last. I think I wrote to Muriel last, but I suppose you read each other's letters to get the news.

The trenches we were in when I wrote to Muriel were fairly quiet as far as attacks were concerned until one last day there and then we got it fair and square. We had been accustomed to the incessant shrieking and the crashing of the shells all the time we were there, but when they started shelling us properly with high explosive shells the noise and roar was beyond all description.

Somehow they made a dead go at my gun positions from the very start as if they knew exactly where they were. I had two very high on a slag heap where they tipped rubbish from a coal mine. This was half a mile away from my other two guns where I was at the start. I had been very queasy indeed for three days with Diarrhoea and could only keep down two eggs during the whole time, so I was feeling pretty weak when the attack came. Every time a big shell crashed on our slag heap, the coal rubbish was hurled up to a great height amidst a great black cloud of smoke.

I very soon saw that they could not remain in that position very long, so I signalled to them to leave. As they did not turn up after a time, I had to go up to see what had happened and found that they daren't move out with the guns as they were being peppered too badly with shrapnel and high explosive shells.

Well we got those guns down at last and came down to the last bit of that slag heap head over heels as a big shell knocked us off our feet. Fortunately I did not lose a man then, although that slippery slag heap was as high as "Oaklands".

But just as we were safe back in the trenches and we had opened fire with the guns from another position, one of the best men of my section was hit by either an exploding or ricochet bullet. Poor devil he spun right round and fell shouting out “the dirty tykes have got me at last, Sir”!

I laid him down and opened his shirt and found that he had a great big wound on the top of his chest. We dressed him as best we could there and then carried him to my dug out. He knew he was done and said so. He asked me to send his “Princess Mary’s Gift” and watch to his mother. He died before he got to the base poor chap. I have just written to his mother sending on his things. We beat back the attack all right and I think that a good bit was due to my guns, as we kept up such a deadly stream of fire along their trenches that the Germans simply could not move out.

I don’t mean to say that we did more than our share, but four guns spitting out between them a very accurate fire at a rate of 2,000 shots per minute must have helped a decent bit. We had very few casualties on our side which is extraordinary considering what we were presented with in the way of shells.

We were relieved in the morning by the Territorial Battalion and wasn’t I pleased. We have marched to one or two places in the line since and are waiting to go into a new line of trenches tomorrow. All the time we were in our last trenches I never had my boots or puttees off once and that makes your legs swell, so tell Humphrey to hurry up with those knitted puttees. Tell him to be sure and not to forget all those various things I have asked for. As I have no one else to write to to get them for me. If he wants another blank cheque I will send him one.

You were asking me, Gwennie, what you could get me that would be useful. Well I think what I would like most would be just three linen khaki handkerchiefs and a couple of pairs of woollen socks – not cashmeres – they are too thin for marching – please don’t send a greater number than I have asked for as I have to carry everything when on the march and every ounce counts. Another thing, will you please find me a small hairbrush in the house and send it on to me as I have lost mine and have to brush my hair with a nail brush!

Since beginning this letter I have received yours for which many thanks. Fancy Osbourne being a Col. now! Still, I expect that is only a temporary rank. There are a lot of cases of that out here. That is what causes a lot of dissatisfaction out here. Men who have been fighting and doing all the work of a Captain for months are still Lieutenants and yet any fool is given Captain's rank in Kitchener's army; and what is far worse, Captain's pay!

Our own Commanding Officer has been out here twice since the start and has commanded the regiment for months, yet he is only a Brevet Col.: and only receives the pay of a Major: yet Ernie Chambers who was at Cambridge with me and is the same age was made a Major in K's army!!! The heat here has been appalling and the worst of it is that one wears just the same clothes as one wears in winter. Even my machine gun horses and mules are quite knocked up with it.

June 10th

Thank God it has begun to rain, we have just had a big thunderstorm and that has cleared the air. By the way, ask Humphrey to get me 6 good mouth organs (F key and Echo brand) tell him I don't want the very big ones. I want them for my section so that the poor chaps can have some music when we march off at night time. We have just heard that the Germans have been reported by Aeroplane – bringing up big Cylinders of gas to use against the trenches we are going into tomorrow. So I am afraid we are badly in for it now!

I don't mind shells , I think bad as they are, that I have got quite used to them now – but, gas, well I don't care much about the idea!!

Please thank Muriel very much for the sweets and the cigarettes which were very welcome indeed. Tell her I will try and write to her tomorrow or next day.

By the way tell Humphrey to see about ordering my cigarettes as soon as possible as it is awful being without them. If he arranges to have them sent out of bond they will only cost half the price. Tell him to arrange for

a month's supply @ 250 a week. He can pay in advance and repay himself out of my cheque.

Well, Goodbye Gwennie, love to all,

Your affectionate brother,

George

PS:1.30 am (Just marching off, good bye and good luck)



**A Heavy British Frontline
WWI Gun Being Fired**



Letter V From France

Sunday June 1915

My Dearest Gwennie

We are in the trenches again and have been here just two days. These however are not the same ones I wrote you from last as again we have been moved on and now occupy a new line. I don't know what the idea is continually moving our Division on the way they are doing. For just as we are beginning to know our way about the trenches and are beginning to settle down, off we go!

I hear that we are extending our lines a lot and we have to make room for new Regiments that are coming out from home. You see they sandwich a new Regiment in between two veteran ones until they gain confidence and experience.

We are very much on the qui vive for Gas here. They are quick to use it if they get a favourable wind blowing our way. Thank goodness it hasn't come off yet, but still we daren't be caught napping, as it doesn't matter so much the killing of some of us or the or the injuring of others as it matters, whether, because of that, we have to fall back and so let the Division down!

The Kings have never given an inch away yet and we are very jealous of our reputation.

The trenches were in an awful condition with the rain when we first arrived and by a miracle my boots arrived just half an hour before we marched to come into them – otherwise I would have had a miserable time of it. Anyway it's nearly all dried up now so it's a bit better. Food is very hard to get up here on account of most roads leading up to us being shelled continuously at night. So for two days it's been a case of bully beef and bread for breakfast, lunch and supper and absolutely no water to

wash it in. The chap who shares my dug out with me and I washed our teeth in cold tea this morning!

You ought just to see the village behind us or rather what once was a village. There is not a single roof left anywhere and the whole place looked sombre and gruesome as we marched through it at two in the morning – dodging shells as we went. Every house and cottage was burnt out and looked a blackened ruin.

The Germans certainly had done their work grimly and thoroughly. It's a funny thing, but dogs will generally take off when a village is deserted finally, but somehow if there are few bricks left standing cats will always cling to their old homes. Whilst I was billeted in the village I heard a most pitiable meowing and found a cat as thin as a skeleton and half mangy under some bricks. Poor devil she could scarcely move she was so weak, and what do you think? She was laying on three kittens trying to keep them warm! I had no milk to give her so I gave her some water out of my bottle and some tinned meat, you should have seen that cat drink water, I thought she'd never stop.

After that I killed two of the kittens and left her one as I knew she was too weak to bring up the lot and scattered some crumbs about to attract rats to her place. One of the transport men told me that she was still there yesterday, he left some more food as he was passing.

The number of dogs that come now in spite of the shells and attach themselves to different companies is marvellous. We've a regular pack now. One little mongrel bitch, no bigger than Teddie adopted the Machine Gun Section. She just turned up and wouldn't go away. As she can do all sorts of tricks (all on her own) the men kept her. She was quite well fed and plump when she arrived so we knew she wasn't a stray. T

he sequel came when we marched back to our billets at the end of our 4 days in the trenches. She was claimed by a woman in the village and was marched off and we didn't see her again for over a week. Then if you believe, she turned up this morning in these trenches! How the devil she found us I don't know for we are 11 miles away from her home and about

16 from the other trenches. She must have passed other Regiments on the road and yet she never got mixed up. The only thing I can think of is that she picked up the scent of the mules. She was particularly struck on them and used to sleep with them. Anyway I don't think she'll ever see home again as it's not likely we shall ever go near her village again.

I have been writing this letter at odd intervals and it is night now. We are having rather a hot time of it tonight as the Germans have been livening things up pretty much with shells of all kinds and with machine guns firing. We've had four men wounded today from fragments of shell. It's a sickening form of fighting this and getting wounded when you are not looking and by an enemy you can't see. Still I dare say they are getting just as bad, if not worse, from our own guns in our rear, which send shells howling over at intervals all night.

It is funny how used you get to the shells. Now a crash doesn't even make you turn round to see where one falls, you can tell to a few yards just by the sound.

Talking of sound, one of my ticklish jobs is to try to find out by the sound the whereabouts in their trenches a machine gun might be firing at night. I was called out by telephone last night by a message stating "Machine Gun fire on to B. Coy trench 7th Platoon Machine Gun Officer please note". So off I had to go with my orderly and crawl up on the fire parapet and lie down and listen.

I could hear the bullets hitting the trenches to my left and gradually working towards me. I was just going to slide off and let the stream pass me when I felt a bang on my shoulder and at the same time my orderly started cursing and fell off the parapet. I felt no pain but just a burning sensation.

"Funny being wounded doesn't hurt" was what passed through my mind and I slid off to see what had happened to my man. By this time men were lifting him up. Anyway he wasn't hit by a bullet at all and it took a minute or two to convince him that he hadn't a bullet through his head. A bullet had knocked a splinter of stone up and cut his skin open at the

eye brow!! “Were you hit, Sir?” asked a Sergt. With visions of V. Cs before me for continuing to do my duty though wounded I very loftily said “Oh, a mere scratch Sergt it hasn’t touched a bone”!!

They wanted me to go down to the dressing station but oh dear no, I was all for winning some distinction and began to think that being wounded wasn’t half as bad as I thought it would be. So I got up again to see after that gun fully convinced I was covering myself with all sorts of glory!

I even fancied I could feel blood trickling down my arm! After a bit I got down and bravely walked down to my dug out and started to strip, feeling quite prepared to find a good deal of blood as my shoulder was burning like Billy oh! I’d just pulled my shirt off with the assistance of my servant, when a bullet fell on the floor. I stared at it and couldn’t make it out. To draw a long story short it was a ”spent” one that had gone right between my clothes and my skin without actually even scratching me, but just rubbing up the skin a bit and blistering me with its heat! If that was Muriel’s palmist’s idea of being wounded I don’t think much of it!!

By the way a big cake has just arrived by post for me with no address or name of sender so I can’t make out where it came from. Anyway it is mighty good and three of us have started on to it already. If you or Muriel sent it – it’s not home-made – thanks very much indeed.

It’s getting near day light and I have to go on my rounds so good bye.

With love to all,

I remain your affectionate brother,

George

PS: Keep H up to it about those photos of mine.

I would like a writing block if you will get me one as I have to write all my letters in my Field Note Book.

Letter VI From France

Can you send me any of those fly paper strips that wind-up.
Life is miserable with the flies.

June 20th 1915

My Dearest Gwennie,

Your letter just arrived for which many thanks. We are all fearfully disquieted as we had a pretty hard time of it in our last trenches with - at any rate for me as I'm the only Machine Gun Officer and have no one to relieve me - practically no sleep for four days and not to mention that we had no opportunity of even washing our hands once during that time as water - owing to the road being shelled was being saved for drinking purposes.

Well, we were mighty glad when after marching all night on the fifth night we got to our rest billets in a very pretty wee village in the rear and looked forward to at least a week's good slack. But no! We'd only been there for 36 hours when news was rushed up that another Division had had a very bad mauling and we were ordered to march off to a place you have all been reading of lately in the papers - where we've been gaining ground and being pushed out of it again because one Regiment couldn't hold the ground that another one had paid so dearly for to capture to hold lines of trenches at all costs.

You see we've got the reputation now that whatever the odds have been we've never lost an inch of ground. So we marched off at 15 mins notice and took 8 hours to do a paltry 11 miles. This was because the roads leading up were being shelled the whole time so as to prevent support being brought up.

We never lost a man, though shells even dropped in the spaces between platoons! For the last mile or two we walked in single file.

And here we are, prepared for anything they care to bring up and only too glad of the opportunity of being attacked instead of having to attack.

Last night we had it! Not very terrible as compared with some of the absolute infernos that the Regiment went through just before I joined them, still, small though it may have been, it was quite bad enough for a first go.

The real and terrible attack was on the trenches immediately on our right, but a little of it swayed over and overlapped in our direction. As is usual my guns and the right flank ones supported the Regiments on their right and let rip as soon as the Germans showed up above the trenches ready to come forward. The night was lit up as bright as day with dazzling bright rockets and huge sheets of flames that seemed to belch out of the exploding shells.

At first the trenches on our right got it all and somehow as shell after shell crashed over them, all around them and actually into them a wave of pity went over me when I thought of what those poor devils were putting up with. But what we were getting was nothing compared with what the Germans got.

It positively rained shells on them from big Howitzer shells that explode with an awful crash and throw up the earth forty feet high, down to the wicked little 'zip bangs' and 'pip squeaks' which will tear half a dozen men from limb to limb. I can never on paper describe the thundering roar and crashes of the shells during the bombardment. Just imagine the most frightful crashes of thunder you have ever heard and imagine that you wouldn't hear a sound of it in the roar of last night's affair and you'll get some idea.

The bombardment of both lines, the Germans and the Allies lasted at full pitch for about an hour – and then came the attack, the Germans came up in not a very solid mass and were simply mown down by shrapnel and bullets. They never stood a chance with the few they sent forward and very few ever got back. This is neither war nor fighting it is just murder at a distance.

Anyhow, during the attack, we got it from the shells and I don't think I can describe what it was like!

I was too jolly anxious about my two guns – which were a good distance apart. The shells were dropping “plomp” just in front of our lines throwing up yards of earth and filling the air with choking smoke and flames that hung about. Our front lines were manned by the Liverpool's and Terries' crowd, who stuck it magnificently.

I got one awful moment at one time and that was when I picked up the phone to get to my other gun from the one I was near. I got no reply “Good God” I thought “they're wiped out”! I sent an orderly and waited but he didn't return, so I thought he'd gone under. So I took off to see what had happened. To my great relief I found the phone wire had broken and that the gun was still ripping away quite gaily! I could see that it was firing, but I couldn't hear it for the awful noise going on.

So now I've been in it and had one or two hot experiences of being under fire, although of course last night wasn't the first little scrap that I was in. The worst of it is afterwards when you have to write to the relatives of your men who have fallen. I was lucky last night, considering all things, in having only two casualties out of eight men.

The Regiment in the trenches caught it though. As for the Regiments on our right I don't know anything of how they suffered. You know nothing out here of what's going on excepting what is actually going on before you. I am enclosing you a letter I got by the same mail as yours. It's in answer to the kind of letter that I hate writing. It's relating to one of my men who was killed a few days ago.

I got a long letter from both Jessie and Florence today. I am sending each a post card. Tell them I will write as soon as I have time.

This is a very small world indeed. I've tumbled across people I never expected to see and most of them in most unearthly out of the way places. We have a very comical little interpreter attached to the Battalion who I don't know as most of us speak quite an average amount of French. It

transpires he knew the when they were staying near Nice or Monte Carlo. Interpreter's name is

Tell Humphrey those Cigs have never come. I'm utterly miserable today without any. Still they may turn up in tonight's mail.

I think the magazines I would prefer if you could get them for me are "The Wide World" and "Nash's".

The most acceptable sweet is just plain chocolate. They are particularly nice for chewing on very early in the morning – from 1:30 to 4 o'clock – during the early rounds, especially as you can make hot chocolate drinks with it.

I haven't managed to get Muriel the helmet yet as all the dead Germans I've seen are too far out. They are very expensive to buy as they average 50F to 60F. Still I am sure I will get the opportunity soon – if I am not pipped out first. I have some huge portions of shells in the trenches here, but they weigh such a terrible lot I don't know how I would ever get them over to her. Talking of dead Germans, I had a rather sickening experience this afternoon.

I set some men to work to fill sand bags to mend the Machine Gun emplacements that had been knocked about. After a bit they came to me and complained that the earth smelled terrible so could I let them have some Chloride of Lime.

I went to have a look and came to the conclusion with them that either the Germans or the French were dirty devils and had buried all their refuse near the fire trenches! So I got some Lime and told them to dig it all out and bury it further back. You can imagine my surprise when one of the men came rushing up to me white as a sheet and retching his heart up, he could only point in the direction of the others. I went up and then I started. Talk about being sick!!! They had uncovered a pair of German boots and the feet were still in them!! Talk of smell!! Urgh!

Two men with respirators had to fill all the earth in again and pile a mound of earth over it! That is about 15 yards from where I am writing! Can you wonder at it that we fear Dysentery and Typhoid? So you see that there is quite a lot to worry any Officer who's really new. And that's

where your youngster will generally fail. There are other things besides bullets that kill!

By the way, Gwennie, the socks and hankies have just arrived. Thank you ever so much for them. Although the socks will be just the thing when we are resting, I am afraid that they are far too thin for marching any distance.

The roads here are terrible and mostly heavily cobbled, so we have to take very great care of our feet. In fact I have a foot inspection of my section every second day.

As I'm writing they are plugging away at two of our airplanes which are sailing overhead. It is really a beautiful sight to see the little snow white balls of smoke suddenly appear as if from nowhere. They seem to creep closer and closer as the Gunners get the range. Goodness knows how the two planes escape, but they always seem to.

By the way I have it on my conscience that I never wrote to thank Mrs for that Testament that she sent me. It was burnt the next day at the fire atI really never had a chance of writing to anyone then. I will however write to her soon and explain.

Muriel tells me in her letter of Taylor's trouble. Poor Taylor, I am sorry for him. M says that he'd write to me but is too shy to. Tell him I'd be only too pleased to hear from him if he has the time.

I find I have written twelve of these pages so I'll stop.

**With best love to all I remain, Your affectionate brother,
George**

PS: The photos of Gerald are splendid. I think he looks ripping now he's had his hair cut. Tell mother to write when she gets the time and is in the mood and I'll write to her on things out here that may interest her if she does.



Letter VII From France

THIS LETTER DOCUMENTS THE APPEARANCE OF FOUR VERY YOUNG CHILDREN WHO ARRIVED BEHIND THE BRITISH FIRING LINE. They had, unbelievably, survived crossing from behind the German firing line during heavy shelling of the road that they had travelled on during the night. This was after they had become separated from their parents and older brother who were captured by the Germans.

Monday 28th June 1915

My Dearest Gwennie,

Thanks so much for the splendid parcel you sent. To say that it was a God send is putting it mildly. Funny thing but this morning I was feeling just miserable without any cigarettes and had to send my servant over to the section to see if he could borrow a packet of Woodbines for me off one of the men! And now the ration cart has turned up and it is simply rained cigarettes! You sent 200 from Selfridges, Humphrey sent 100 and Jessie and Florence sent 100; so now I don't care what happens!

The Regiment is now a few miles in the rear and I am on duty in the reserve trenches here alone where there is nothing much doing so I am taking up my quarters in a room - I may say, the only room left standing in a very pretty little cottage close by. Tanner, my servant, who is second Taylor, has rigged me up a bed out of an old crate and come canvas and last night I think I had the most comfortable sleep I've ever had in my life. This morning I had my first decent wash in the form of a tepid bath in an old tub which Tanner raked out from Heaven knows where and put in a ruined farm yard next door.

I fairly enjoyed that bath and was standing up soaping myself and singing away, thinking that I was monarch of all that I surveyed, when I heard laughing and yells of "*voila l'officier Anglais*"! I looked round and saw

four kids, the eldest of whom was a girl of about 14, gazing at the wonderful sight of a British Officer in his bath!! Tanner heard me calling and chased them out with his best "Allez's. I couldn't make out where on earth they had come from as there are only about 4 skeletons of houses anywhere in sight.

Tanner was puzzled too and went forth to investigate, that man has a wonderful store of very bad pigeon French, and came back with the news that the four kids with their father, mother and brother of 16 had tried to slip through the German lines to come to an uncle who lives a good many miles south of here.

They had been caught and the father, mother and brother had been detained whilst the Germans had driven the kids forward to take their chance. How they had escaped alive is a miracle as the night before last the English had simply rained shells along the road they'd come by and our Machine Guns had searched all along it at intervals through the night. Anyway they got through and found shelter in a very ruined barn.

There they had been for over 30 hours, frightened to move out as they were terrified at the unearthly row kicked up by some heavy artillery of ours that is hidden in some ruins nearby and which kept it up all yesterday. After I'd dressed, Tanner brought them round to me, in his arms he'd got the youngest, a baby of about two and a half who was yelling and kicking like a little fiend, much to the amusement of her sisters. I tried to quieten the kid, but she yelled worse than ever when I took her, so I handed her over to her eldest sister.

On my asking what was up with her, all the other three started laughing and talking at once; after Tanner had quietened the other two, I found out from the eldest, whose name was Jeanette, that the Germans had tried to frighten the younger ones by saying that the English lived on young children – in fact they lived on nothing else! Of course the others only laughed, but the baby quite believed it! They said that they'd only had bread and raw potatoes to eat since they started so Tanner and I decided to give them a dinner party. So after they'd had a wash at the pump, they had some steak and fried potatoes and tea. They hadn't much meat

between them as it was only my one day's ration, but they had plenty of fried potatoes and bread and jam. Tanner even gave up his ration which was two slices of bacon.

All this time the kid wouldn't come near Tanner or myself. Jeanette had lost one shoe on that awful night and her feet were all cut about, so the ever so handy Tanner made her a pad with some cotton wool and bandages and I fixed her up with a pair of socks that you first sent me.

When I went up to the trenches later, Tanner took them over to the reserve Gun Section and showed them the mules and the little dog I told you of. When the ration cart came up that evening I sent them back on that with a few francs to see them through and told the driver to take them to the Mayor of the village.

By the way, they all thought that Tanner was an Officer and that I was his son - I wish you could see poor old Tanner! Anyway, just as they were going to get onto the cart and I was trying a last effort to make up to the kid, Tanner came up and gravely saluted and said "please Sir, this 'ere girl; I mean the big'un Sir, wants to know if you'll kiss 'em Good bye, Sir"! I couldn't help bursting out laughing, then one of the Sergrts laughed and then the whole reserve section laughed. But not so old Tanner, he just looked daggers at the others and then cleared his throat and continued by way of explanation "I don't think there'd be any 'arm done Sir, seeing that they're poor orphans Sir". So I started on them and couldn't help thinking that Jeanette was a very old fashioned 14, if the way she kissed had anything to do with it.

I suppose that even over there girls get khaki fever! Anyway, I kissed the three of them good bye but any advance on Bebe was still met with shrieks! Then if you please, Jeanette, upped and declared that she was going to kiss my father! Poor old Tanner turned red and if you'd heard anything like the remarks from the admiring section as Tanner took his cap off and leaned down, you'd have killed yourself laughing. Twice Tanner bent down and twice he straightened himself up to throw back a suitable remark under his breath to those standing around! I told him to take no notice but to get on with it, so he got on with it, but he was livid

with rage as they kept on asking the blushing Jeanette if she would 'prefer violets on lilies on her grave' and advised her to 'close her eyes as she wouldn't see his face then'. So that is the last of the poor kids - they went off about two hours ago. But poor old Tanner has not heard the last of it.

A few minutes ago I heard a voice in the yard saying to him "Sergt Barber's compliments and could you please oblige him with some bacon as he's got a poor old woman refugee over there, and he says when she's going would you please mind coming over and kissing her good bye as he's got a sore throat"!

Tanner was evidently speechless for there was a moment's silence and then he burst out with "You go and tell Mr Sergt Barber I'll knock his 'ead off as soon as I've finished washing these 'ere plates, an' tell him from me to wash 'is big ugly face as I don't want to dirty my hands again"!!! Of course nothing will happen as Barber is a Sergt and Tanner is too old a soldier to do anything silly, still he is in a very bad temper over it.

I was talking to the Brigade Staff Machine Officer today and he tells me that there is a likelihood of our being pushed further down the line to a place where there is some very hot fighting going on. That means that again I shall not be relieved and get any rest at all. I should have liked a day or two in the Reserve billets away from it all before we go up there - still it can't be helped. Where we are going the 1st got frightfully cut up about 7 weeks or two months ago and only came out with less than half of their men and a handful of Officers.

I expect it means that we will make an attack. It's a funny thing but if there's anything that wants really doing and they seem to be against it, they send for either the Guards Brigade or for ours, the 6th. The Germans know us well and call us the "Iron Brigade"! And yet when decorations and medals are given out, very few find their way to the 6th.

We've been cut up two or three times, but have always gained ground and yet other Divisions and Brigades that have not done anything like as well, get the most honours! If we are up against an attack forward I'm afraid

that very few of us will come out alive, as whenever we've move forward we've got there – whatever it may cost. There is a marvellous spirit of Corps in this Regiment that I like to see, and you can take it from me that, however much we grouse and grumble, when it comes to fighting the men know the reputation of the Regiment is at stake and so go forward grimly.

Why at Givenchy, in one part of the line (through an error of the R.A. the barbed wire wasn't shelled down) one platoon of men struggled to get through, but were all shot down bar the Officer who managed to get past the wire and although he discovered that he was quite alone he charge down to certain death so as to encourage the other Companies on his flanks!!

All of which leads up to the fact that I know I've got to look out for all the risks and chances and as I shall try and take every chance I get to do well and am not a bit afraid to take the consequences, I shall have to take all the risks. That is why, if anything happens to me and I don't return, it's only if, I want you to do just one thing for me (**the rest of this paragraph was written and then all crossed out**) and then continues

Another thing, if anything does happen, for goodness sake don't all start going into mourning, it's a horrible custom to my mind and nothing is so morbid looking as to see every other person draped in crape and black – you should just see it over here, it's a sight! Thank goodness they are introducing a new custom and that is the wearing of a wee red, white and blue bow just to show that a relative has gone under fighting for his country. There's some sense in that, but, to go into black just in the same way as if he's passed away during a bad attack of gout is hardly the thing. All this sounds very morbid, but believe me I don't feel in the least like it, but these things have to be said, so now I have said it, it's finished.

I wonder if Muriel still wants to write to any lonely soldiers as she wrote and told me some time ago? There are one or two chaps who have started writing to ladies who have sent parcels for distribution and have enclosed their names and addresses. I of course read their letters as they pass through my hands and can't help smiling at their clumsy efforts, after a

letter or two, to flirt with the lady in question. They always begin with 'Dear Madam', but as they write on they warm up and grow bolder. One chap informed the lady he was writing to, "that he was sure that she was good looking and he could tell by her handwriting that her '*eddication*' was good. He said he hoped to call on her when he got home and to take her for a walk 'as there isn't no shame to be seen out with 'a' honest man, if his suit is made of good old khaki"!

Needless to say I enclosed a little note of my own to his letter and explained to the girl or woman (she was a Miss) not to take any notice of his ignorant talk and I had the gentleman up and "told him off" for being familiar with ladies who were kind enough to interest themselves in men such as himself!

I am afraid that there is very little news to give you excepting that we are hourly waiting to hear of the fall of **Souchez**. If the Germans don't break through, the French will have a very fine haul and we all think that the whole German line will have to fall back from there all along the line to the sea. We get very little news here of what is going on around us, they keep things very quiet on account of the spies that abound round here, and so you in London get most of the news before we do. And sometimes when the papers are only 24 hours old – I don't know how they get them up so soon – we get the first intimation from them.

Are there any Studd's out here, I am wondering, as we've been next to the Guards twice since I came out. Still I never asked as I don't know which are cousins and which are uncles.

Tell mother not to forget to do my slippers as I really want them. The socks you sent are just the very thing and will come in handy just now. The chocolates will be very welcome too. It's funny but one gets a very sweet tooth out here there being very little to do of a night but smoke and eat chocolates.

Of course in this present position I have no night duty thank goodness! Tel Humphrey his parcel arrived quite safely, for which many thanks. Can you get me just a tiny calendar about an inch or so square, as it is very

..... trying to remember days of the week much less dates. I think that the reason is that there is no fixed time for sleep or meals, you get either whenever you can. We've had breakfast as late as two in the afternoon and supper at two in the morning. Consequently one doesn't know when one day ends and another begins!

Well I must stop now so good bye – love to all from,

**Your loving brother
George**



Givenchy - Above: Trench Map - Below 6th Marching



Letter VIII from France

24th or 25th (July?) 1915

My Dearest Gwennie,

Many thanks for the magazines which I have handed over to the section who believe me appreciate them very much.

We are still in these trenches and mighty glad I'll be when we get out of them – and God only knows when that will be! We had only 36 hours rest when they rushed us back to the trenches and brought us here and on top of that instead of keeping us here for the usual four days, we've got to do eight – of which we have already done six and then after the 8 days when the Battalion goes some miles back to the rest billets in a ripping wee village, I've got to still remain up here with my section as the guns are wanted badly, as this is a very important sector.

Added to that these are the worst trenches I've yet struck, the stench in some parts of them from decomposing bodies is awful! And to put a topper on to all of it, it's started raining and the trenches are like a quagmire!

If I lie down now it's just on a layer of wet sacks on which is spread an India rubber ground sheet, this with one blanket constitutes my bed. So you can imagine how fed up I'm beginning to feel. It's better for the others, because they've got the rest in the rear to look forward to the day after tomorrow. I think I could stick all this without a grumble if only I had cigarettes.

Humphrey wrote and said he'd arranged with Players to send me out 200 per week as I had asked, but not a damned one has turned up yet! I wish you'd phone him and tell him to raise a devil of a row with them about it, as they are hardly playing the game. Ask him or you might do it sooner by sending Taylor out for it. Send me a box of 100 **Navy Cut** Gold Flake and ask H for the money as I think he has some of mine left. Do please

do this at once, Gwennie, as I have been absolutely without any for days and I hate keeping on cadging off the others.

Very much the same thing is going on as usual, an exchange of shells at intervals all day and night and the everlasting "phut, phut" of bullets hitting the trenches! The Germans seem to waste an enormous amount of ammunition on practically nothing. I suppose they are getting "jumpy" and are hoping to keep us on edge too. Now and again they strike lucky though.

Yesterday a shell dropped in a communication trench and tore our man in two at the waist and knocked the top of another fellow's head off. Yesterday they varied things a bit by exploding a mine very near our front line. I was only about 50 yards away at the time.

I was with another fellow and we were both laughing as we dodged some shell splinters that came "buzzing" down from a shrapnel, when the ground seemed to shiver and then lift up, the two of us were bowled over and as I lay I could see earth, stones and sandbags shot up sky high with a dull roar about 50 yards away! If they had not made a bad calculation in digging the tunnel all of our front trench would have gone up. As it was they only buried their men in the debris. Two of them got out alive. We replied by firing two mines in the afternoon. I had just been asleep about 10 minutes at the most when our two went off and never woke up!! So you can guess we are dead tired when we do lie down!!

I wonder could you send me out some fly papers? The flies here are more than a plague, they're awful!

By the way when is the much promised home-made cake coming? We are far from living on the fat of the land and anything like cakes or home-made rock cakes would come in as a welcome addition to the bill of fare while in the trenches.

The fields out here are one blaze of colour on the few occasions that one can see over the edge of the trenches to look, one sees great splashes of scarlet where great masses of Poppies are growing, then Cornflowers and

Marguerites. In a dale in the woods between and where we passed through about a month ago, we were practically marching through one enormous Lilly of the Valley bed – it was growing wild and it seemed to be a wicked shame to tread it all down. Still I suppose war is war. I wrote mother a few days ago and suppose that she got it alright. I enclosed something in it for you, did you get it?

The Germans are now using a new poison gas bomb. I think it is in the hopes that it will penetrate respirators made to withstand Chlorine, anyway they laid out six of our fellows the other morning and a few from another Regiment, although the respirators saved them being killed by it, still they are in hospital. We are having a few cases of men whose nerves are completely broken down by the long strain.

One of my Sergeants came to me the other day nearly crying saying that he couldn't help it but he really couldn't stick it any longer as his nerves had quite gone and the noise of the shelling at night nearly made him stiff with fear. Now that man was no funk, he's been right through the war and has seen some appalling sights, so I sent him down to the Doctor and he is now home on a week's leave. It's the continual strain of watchfulness that tells, especially this look-out for gas which everyone seriously dreads. Some of the men take in funny ways – they see Angels standing by them night and day and fighting by their sides etc. I see all the letters home as I have to censor all my section's correspondence.

There are hundreds of men out here and wounded at home who will be prepared to swear, if you can get them to talk of it, that at a critical moment in the charge at Ypres, some months ago, a host of Angels appeared over their heads and went forward with them! Mature veteran men, otherwise quite sane, swear to it and you can't talk them out of what they declare they saw with their own eyes!!

I have a gun position near a broken railway bridge over a canal and twice I've had one of my men ask me whether there was a French Regiment the other side of the canal. Each time I've told them no! (once it was the Canadians who were there and once the Guards), yet these two different men, who did not think much of the occurrence at the time and had not

told one another of it, told me emphatically that they had heard a challenge in French coming from the bridge and each time it was answered by “Viva la France”! Peculiarly enough on each occasion it was 11 p.m.! Just within these hours since I left off writing we’ve had a big thunderstorm and you should just see the trenches!! They average from 4 to 18 inches of water!! Everything is flooded out and nearly everyone is simply sopped through.

Thanks to my servant who’s simply a jewel, I had a pair of long India rubber boots with me. Nobody else brought a pair! Naturally nobody thought that the trenches were going to ever be like this again. It was only this morning that I was saying to Tanner, my servant, “we were d-d fools lugging these things about, Tanner”!

The cellar where four of us have our meals in a ruined house where only the cellar remains is three feet under water! Now I feel wilder than ever that I’ve got to remain on after the Battalion goes to the rear. I don’t know how long it's going to take this lot to drain away, and if it should come on to rain again I don’t know what’s going to happen. My dugout is under water too and my few odds and ends are simply sopped and smothered in mud.

I suppose there is nothing much in the way of news in Norwood?

Do you see anything of Edwin Loud? The last time I saw him he asked me to let him know when I was going and also to let him have some news, so if you see him can you tell him what’s going on. By the way, ask if he can get me a letter pad – just a little larger than this sheet and some envelopes; also if he has got the Diary for me.

I must end now as it is time to send this letter to Headquarters to go down by the post cart.

**Love to all, Your loving brother
George**

PS: They have just started firing gas bombs into the trenches just behind us.

Letter IX From France

THIS LETTER INCLUDES A DESCRIPTION OF THE LOYALTY AND ECCENTRICITIES OF HIS SERVANT, Tanner, (every Officer was assigned a servant, usually chosen by the Officer from among his men. The term 'bat-man' for the same role did not come into use until after WW1)

July 24th 1915

My Darling Mother

I'm still on the look-out for a letter from you and also for those slippers that Gwennie tells me you have made for me. The slippers would come in very handy just now as we are back in Reserve Billets for four days. You don't know what it means to have great hobnailed boots on your feet for sometimes five or six days at a time without ever having a chance of taking them off – sleeping in them - whenever you have the chance of sleep – and marching about nine or ten miles with clay-caked boots to come to your rest billets! Your feet get very swollen and I can tell you it's as much as you can do to pull your boots off. So you can imagine what a God-send a pair of slippers would be! So now it is up to you to hurry up and send them out!

Later I will find out his size and get you to make a pair for my servant. I've got a jewel of a man – in fact a second Taylor! I believe he would pinch anything off the Col. himself so that I would not go short!

Sometimes when the Germans are shelling the roads very heavily and the transport can't get up we have a very thin time of it and have to eat bully beef and biscuits that look and taste just like dog biscuits. Water too is very scarce at those times for it would be suicide to attempt to drink any from the pumps in the ruined houses that dot about amongst the trenches - even if one risked crawling out to get it – as the ground all round is filled with half decomposed bodies.

It's at these times Tanner comes up with a sort of conjuring trick. If any other officer is about nothing happens, but he will wait until I'm alone so that I won't share it with anyone. Anyhow, at some odd moment, perhaps at 3 in the morning, I'll be sitting smoking and dreaming in some forward trench listening to men talking to one another and watching the rockets go up when Tanner will come stumbling along the trench. "Hello" I'll ask "what's up with you I thought you were asleep"? "Oh, I've been asleep Sir" he will say "but, begging your pardon Sir, I thought maybe you'd like a little of this, Sir", 'this' will probably be a cup of coffee or tinned café au lait and a mixture of all sorts cooked up, potatoes, cabbage, beans and bully beef and perhaps an egg! Where he'd got the ingredients from I'd never find out. "Oh, I found them Sir"! That's all I'd get out of him! It's ten to one he'd risked crawling out over the trenches to find the vegetables in some ruined garden!

He's a funny mixture is old Tanner. There's a streak of the devil in him worked into the attributes of an angel. He knows about six words of French and when we are in a village, he'll go and buy anything I want at about a third of the price they'd ask me for the same article.

An old woman will be furious with me for billeting myself on her and within half an hour Tanner will have the run of the kitchen and the old girl will be washing my clothes for me – the meanwhile chatting and laughing with Tanner who as I say, understands about six words of French all told!!

Twice I've been wild with him for getting very merry on red wine and have sent him back to his work with the guns and each time he's been back in two days. Generally on the second day I'll hear an argument outside my dug out and on investigating find that Tanner is having a devil's own row with the new servant because he's not looking after me properly or find that Tanner has got up an hour before he need go on duty just to clean up my things without saying a word.

What could I do but just swear at him a lot and take him back, at the same time threatening all sorts of punishments the next time I caught him at it. To show what a faithful man he is I will give you one instance of the kind

of thing that he did. It's a very ticklish and risky job creeping out in front of your trenches to investigate towards the German lines.

For one thing if a rocket goes up and you move ever so slightly, you're sniped and another thing, the Germans themselves might be sending a man out - they don't value the lives of their men - to crawl amongst the grass in front to investigate. Anyhow I'd just built a new gun position of my own and was now very keen on finding out if it was well hidden from the front.

I didn't like to ask any of my men to take the risk in case they got sniped and I got into a row. I knew if I went and got sniped, well there wouldn't be any one for them to row with. So I went down the line and sneaked out carefully into the darkness and began crawling out. Every time a rocket went up I lay very quiet. So I gradually worked round, when as I was laying listening, I suddenly thought I heard a movement in the grass! I scarcely breathed and lay very still. Then I thought I heard breathing! I was sure there was a German crawling about somewhere.

I very gradually rolled over and went to get my revolver out. Imagine how my heart sank into my boots when I discovered I had left it behind! How I cursed myself for a silly careless fool! And then I really felt a pang of fear. I was marooned and out in the grass in front and there was a German somewhere about. If I'd got half a brick I think I would have felt better but I'd nothing! I know I lay very still wondering what I'd better do. At last I started to crawl a bit to the right and again heard a movement but this time on my right - Good Lord I thought another one! That was too much of a good thing and I felt fairly whacked.

I lay and thought of all sorts of things and then gradually began to think about 'Oaklands' and wondered what you were all doing just at that moment, from that my mind wandered quite gaily to Liverpool etc. and then I suddenly realized I'd forgotten all about the Germans. Anyway I thought the only thing to do was to get up and make one big dash for the trench and chance that the Germans would be surprised and shoot and miss me. Well I'd just got on all fours ready to make a spring up when "crack-crack" sounded from the German trenches and "ping-ping" went

two bullets overhead. I dropped to the ground as if shot, when a voice called out “are you hit Sir?” in the most agonised tones. I knew the voice at once, it was Tanner! Just imagine the sense of relief! As soon as the feeling that there was no danger appeared, instead of feeling pleased I was furious with Tanner for giving me such a turn. I think at that moment if I had a gun I would have put a bullet into him as he hurriedly crawled towards me.

When I got him back to the trenches how I swore at him!! And yet in my heart of hearts I knew very well why he'd come out! All I could get out of the penitential Tanner was that maybe if there was any trouble he could have given me a hand!

I wondered how he ever got to know that I'd gone. After a while I got out of him that he'd noticed that I'd emptied my pockets onto my blanket and had left a note for Gwennie and one for the Col.! “I knew that something was up Sir when I saw the notes, for I says this way”, If he'd wanted to have spoken to the Col. so bad he could have used the ‘phone!”

It has been raining pretty heavily the last few days – it's just our hard luck as it will make the trenches simply awful for when we go back. There has been a good deal of illness and sickness too and quite a fair amount of fever and Malaria (of all things).

People who have been in the tropics are showing symptoms of Malaria. I think this can be accounted for by the swarm of Mosquitoes and flies that make life in the trenches almost unbearable. There are a good many soldiers and officers who have had Malaria so the germ is carried about.

There is a very good account in the Daily Express of the 22nd giving an account of a Territorials' first impressions of the trenches at Cuinchy – Read it – The Territorials were the 22nd London and the Regiment they were relieving was ourselves! All the trenches out here are named after the streets in London and have boards up. We have Harley Street where the dressing stations are, Piccadilly with Bond Street, Dover Street etc., etc. leading off, etc. Otherwise it would be quite impossible to find your way about from one part to another.

Dug-outs or shelters dug in the ground are also named – we have our Buckingham Palace, 10 Downing Street and the Houses of Parliament!

As I am writing this, the Germans have started shelling a small town scarcely a mile away and every now and again a shell comes shrieking overhead and explodes with a loud crash among the houses of the town in question. The people in this village are terrified and at the first bang bolt into their cellars like rabbits.

The Tommies, however, are quite indifferent to it all – one gets hardened out here, and the only shell that really matters is the one that bursts quite close to you! The woman of the house has taken refuge in the cellar, but her two kiddies have crept up the stairs to my little garret under the roof and are laying on my bed with their wee arms round one another. Such is this belief and faith in the English that these two kids have crawled up to me, as I suppose they think that German shells would not dare to come near an English Officer!!

I don't know how a dog's mind works, but a somewhat similar idea works in the little Machine Gun dog's brain. For if ever one happens to be knocking about the streets and hears a shell, down goes her tail and she's off like greased lightning for her pals the mules! I think I told you about her in a former letter. She doesn't go for protection to the men, but to the mules! Very flattering to us!

I have written this letter at all moments during the past day or two and tomorrow we move off back to the trenches for another four or five days of roughing it. We seem to be doing nothing but wandering about the north of France. Every time we go into the trenches, it is a different line and every time we come out to rest, it is to a different village that we march; always changing and always on the move. However we are in for a very big show soon, we've been expecting it daily for the past two or three weeks and it can't be very much longer before we are right in the thick of the attack.

I must stop now as I've just received orders to relieve the guns in the trenches at 7.30 tomorrow morning – which means we have to be ready

WWI Seen Through Captain George Cooper's Letters

to make a start from here at about 4.00! So as I've got to see about getting things packed up I must bring this letter to a close.

Now don't forget to write soon.

**With best love to all
I remain, your Loving son**

George



Water Logged Trenches in The Area



Letter X from France

July 30th

My Dearest Gwennie,

I am wondering why I haven't heard from you for some days. Perhaps it's that young Gerald is occupying most of your time, as I expect he requires quite a lot of looking after now that he is able to run about. I wrote mother a longish letter some days ago; did she get it?

Well we are back from the trenches again thank heavens, after about the worst four days and nights we've ever had since I've been out. I had hardly a wink of sleep during that time. We've been shelled with all kinds of stuff – both heavy, light and trench mortar bombs, 'till it all seemed a living hell! It started our first night in, by the boshes exploding a mine just on our left in front of the -----'s line. I was writing up some reports in the dressing station, which is about 1200 yards to the rear of the firing line and is situated in the kitchen of a ruined farmhouse - at the time, when all of a sudden there was a muffled roar and the ground fairly shook and bits of plaster and tiles came tumbling down off the shell-smashed 'roof' and ceiling.

The very next instant shells howled and crashed quickly one after another and started exploding all along the line and even as far back as within about 200 yards of the dressing station. Whenever a mine goes up the place is in uproar, as each side tries to prevent the other from occupying the crater, or hole caused by the explosion - which is generally situated between the enemy's line and our own. Of course machine guns are invaluable for this work, in the sweeping the edges of the crater with a hail of bullets to stop any attempt on the Germans part to rush and fortify it.

So I had to rush up and get up to the reserve guns as soon as possible so as to direct their fire, as this is dangerous work, for of course these guns

have to fire over the heads of our front, which is ticklish work when the ground is so flat.

Running along nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile of the trenches to get to the guns was hot work I can tell you as it was pretty dark and as the bottom of the trenches were covered with bricks etc. Consequently it was no easy matter! Every few yards you'd hear the shriek of a shell followed almost instantaneously by a flash and then the crash of the explosion. Instinctively you'd duck and press yourself close to the side of the trench until all the splinters had stopped falling.

The noise made by a falling splinter is most unnerving, it's a kind of a buzzing wail that gets louder and louder as it gets nearer and you don't know where it's making for so you can't dodge it! After I'd gone along a bit, going around bends and corners I kept on tumbling up against stretcher bearers carrying down the wounded.

There were a good many of them, poor devils, and some of them were terribly wounded and maimed. Others were just dragging along like drunken men; they just stared in front of them and noticed nothing – they were suffering from shock – that is to say that the high explosives had injured all the nerve centres without actually wounding them.

Their injuries were however just as bad if not worse than actual wounds. Most of them were covered with a bright yellow powder deposited by the fumes from the high explosive powder and consequently look ghastly by the light of the rockets and "Very" lights that were shooting up sky high every few seconds. One boy, further on and nearer the firing trenches, was struggling along shrieking out at the top of his voice. "Dick! Dick! Lemme go back and find 'im – 'es buried in that ----- dugout. Dick! Let go, I'm all right, I want to find Dick!!" Etc.

A shell had fallen right on the dugout and had buried some and hurled pieces of others all over the place. This boy was wounded in five places besides having his arm broken and yet he was struggling and kicking like a mad man to get back to find "Dick"! But Dick was never found again, they buried a leg and part of his face – the rest of him probably lying in

some long grass a good many yards away! The noise in the reserve trenches was awful. All along men were blazing away with "rapid fire", here and there machine guns were spitting out bullets in one long rattle. And above that was the "crash" "zip-crash" of shells exploding all over the place.

When our heavy guns in the rear took a hand in the show the ground fairly shook! This lasted at top pitch for about an hour and then gradually began to quieten down 'til there were only occasional bursts of rifle fire and every now and again a shell here or there just to show that either side was on the qui vie. When things had quietened down I made my way back to the dressing station. Communication trenches that were untouched when I came up were now blown in in one or two places and it was ticklish work crawling over the wreckage to get past them as stray bullets were "pinging" all over the place.

The scene in the dressing station was a weird one and will remain imprinted on my mind for some time. It would make a wonderful picture for any painter looking for a subject. The little kitchen with its red tiled floor and its iron range laid out with bottles and instruments and which was kept beautifully spick and span in ordinary times was now filled to overflowing. Candles stuck in bottles gave light to little groups in the room.

Outside lay men on stretchers with perspiring bearers standing by. Some had already been attended to and were awaiting the arrival of the motor ambulance to take them down to the field hospital, whilst others with the first field dressings still on them waited their turn to go into the little kitchen. I went in and had a wash and then gave a hand at dressing the cases.

I think it was nearly three in the morning before the last man was lifted into the ambulance and we got a chance of sitting down and having a smoke.

We managed to get a little sleep 'till five and then the German "hate" started again! This time they'd brought up some big guns and dropped

huge eight and ten inch shells, which fortunately missed most of our trenches, going over them and falling just a couple of hundred yards in front of where I was sitting in the warm sun drinking hot coffee. It was a wonderful sight to see the earth thrown up high amidst a huge volume of black smoke.

The craters formed by these explosions have to be seen to be believed! I saw one fall on to a ruined mass of a farm – well when the smoke cleared away, there wasn't a thing to be seen above ground!

Our little Regimental Cemetery just behind these particular lines is sadly increasing every day. Every evening two or three fresh little mounds mark where fresh graves have been dug ready to take the bodies wrapped round with their ground sheets.

Two brothers were serving in this Regiment. One was sniped at night whilst on sentry duty. The other brother was very upset when his brother was buried, I believe, and said he wished he could die and lie next to his brother. That very night he was sniped and killed whilst with a working party and next day he was buried next to his brother!!!

That was only a few days ago. Well what occurred on our first night practically went on at intervals all the time that we were in the trenches this journey. I don't think I ever felt so weary and done up in all my life as I did at dawn on our last day. And I don't think I looked forward to the first streak in the sky so eagerly as I did that morning.

When we were relieved I took my men by easy marches 'till we got into sight of the town where we are billeted and then we all seemed to buck up , we were within sight of 'home'!

We had such a rough time of it that we are allowed eight days rest this time. In all we had three mines blown up near our lines and had put up with almost continual and heavy bombardment all that time. Things have greatly improved since we came back and now we are as cheero! As ever! And you wouldn't imagine we'd seen any fighting at all these past two months.

I've had a good deal of extra work shoved onto me now as there are a good many chaps going sick in the Regiment. We have four in hospital with various kinds of fever etc. and two or three have been wounded and to cap it all our second in Command is off home to undergo an operation whilst another Officer is waiting to be invalided out of the service as he's 'cracked up'!

Now I've had the duties of M.... President shoved on me and am understudying the adjutant as well as doing the work of training and running the section! So my hands are pretty full. The Adjt looks like cracking up, so it's on the cards I shall be made Adjt. in his place! Much to the wrath of one or two who though younger than me are senior to me in the Regiment.

All my knocking about and rolling stone life has stood me in good stead out here as being a sort of Jack of all trades I continually find myself pushed into jobs that others can't do so naturally I keep on finding myself in the lime light so far as the Regiment is concerned.

If ever the Adj. falls sick and I take his place I intend to try and make myself indispensable to the C.O. I think he is very fond of me as it is, as he's always chatting and joking with me; a thing he never does with the other subalterns. There's one thing I've made good over the machine gun section – I shouldn't say it, but I have and know it – and the Col. has noticed the difference that has come over it since I took it over. From being a very badly disciplined lot of blighters, in about a month's time it will be the smartest section in the Brigade!

I've had to fight tooth and nail to have my own way and I've had it and have been right, so the Col. has given me credit for it.

I think I could get a commission into this Battalion, but I wouldn't take it, as I would have to start as second Lt. and I wouldn't do that at my age, with Captains younger than myself. If we live through this – and there doesn't seem a huge chance of that the way things are going, I'm going to have a smack at a Colonial appointment. Lord Derby has sent us out some band instruments. So now we have some music of an evening. You

little know how a band cheers one up and it makes one think of England hearing all the old Revue pieces played over!

I think the Germans are going to have another cut for Calais – their last one – everything points to it. They will bring up huge reinforcements – but I don't think they stand an earthly now. They've waited until the English have got too strong – it will take a million or two of theirs to budge them now!

Sunday

I've been writing this letter in driblets and now it's Sunday. We've just come off church parade and in spite of the terrific heat – the sun is simply frizzling hot – I'm trying to rack my memory to try and remember a morning I enjoyed better and I honestly cannot find one. And why do you think it was so enjoyable? Just because we had two bands to march to (two bands, a brass and a fife and drum). And what made it all the sweeter they were our own bands! For the first time since we came out, a year ago, the Regiment has marched to the strains of its Regimental bands.

You don't know what it meant to us, we were no longer units of a fighting machine – gun fodder etc., we were the Kings again “The Kings” I might say. The Kings, the only Regiment that had never given away one inch of ground – and by gosh we knew it and every man was fired with pride and walked as if the Kings were the only Regiment that mattered in the whole Brigade. It wasn't a Church Parade, it was a Triumphant procession. With bands playing we marched through the old town and the streets were packed and lined with people. The other Regiments who marched up were a sorry lot compared with ours as of course they hadn't anything to march to.

The Church Parade was very impressive, as all the Generals of the Brigade were there. We are getting very short handed, another two young officers have been taken off to hospital ill today. It's a funny thing but these youngsters in their teens and their early twenties can't stick the

strain – for strain there is, more particularly if only one has any part of a responsible job.

I must say this though the are about the cleverest lot that I have come across. They're always working and if you come across a stream they're in it before you can say Jack Johnstone! I'm afraid that there is very little glory attached to this type of warfare and a tremendous amount of hardships – far greater hardships than they had to bear in the early days of the war.

I keep on dropping across people I have met at different times and even in different parts of the world. Some of them are awful kids and throw on the devil of a lot of just because they wear spurs and top boots and are generally in the A.S.C. – a very despised lot out here.

There is going to be a horse show for Officers and men here on Tuesday. I'm entering two of my mules in the pack animal class. It ought to be good fun as there are classes for jumpers etc.

In about a fortnight or so I shall have done my three months out here and perhaps I may get two or three days leave and come home.

I must be stopping now as I think this letter is long enough and adding to it will only delay its posting home. Ask H whether he's got all the parcels I sent.

Love to all from,

Your loving brother,

George

PS: Please thank Jessie for the cigarettes and the chocolate and say I'll write soon.



Letter XI from France

Wednesday.

My Dearest Gwennie,

Just a line to say that we are in our Reserve Billets in quite a decent sized town. Still a few shells come over from 12 miles away even to here. It's quite a change to see a lot of people about and to be able to go into the Barbers shops and Cafes – although of course everything is like the City of the dead at 8 o'clock of an evening.

Today we had a Tommies Concert in the town theatre which went off very well indeed: even Staff Officers turned up in full force. The turns, for the most part were awful tosh, as generally the men's courage oozed out of their boots by the time they found themselves before the footlights. I wish I had some songs here, but as I hadn't I couldn't sing anything.

Do you think you could get me that **“Son of Mine” (Freebooters song)**, **“The Yeomen of England”** and a song called **“Pal of Mine”**, each of them in the lowest key? If you could also get me that **“East End and the West”** – the one Con used to sing, I think it was out of the **“Spring Chicken”** – I would be very pleased, as we are sure to have another concert the next time we come out into billets.

I could not help looking round the theatre and wondering how many absent faces there would be the next time we had a Regimental Concert: and I could not help letting my mind wander back to the Somme just three days back when I passed about nine or ten of our wounded being carried down to the rear of the firing trenches just after a scrap up with the Germans with hand grenades and trench mortars. Poor devils some of them were frightfully torn about and mutilated.

We've lost quite a decent number of men since I came out – especially in our last position where our sap heads are only 8 yards away from one of theirs. Night and day there was an exchange of bombs and grenades every hour or so.

The exchange of comments between the two Nations is very amusing at times, even if after a bit it reaches the very limits of profanity. The German threats are all the same, what will happen to our women-folk when they take England!

Now the Tommies have got a beautiful, though unprintable rejoinder, which generally sends the Germans crazy when they hear it! We have bowled over quite a few Germans with Machine Guns that way, you just train a gun on to the end of their saphead from a good way off and then the Tommies sit down in their dug outs near the point and sing very insulting songs about the Germans, just to egg them on.

When things become unbearable and the Germans start bombing out of temper, we let rip with a gun and generally one or two Germans who in their hurry to get rid of the bombs expose an arm or a head.

What do you think? Taylor sent me out a parcel with a large cake, some fly papers and a 100 cigs! Wasn't it good of him? I told him that he wasn't to send me anything again unless it was an occasional cake and then only on condition that you gave him the ingredients.

What's up with Willoughby that Muriel says he's on crutches? It's hard luck, whatever it is.

My servant has gone home on leave and I told him to ring you up and ask for H's phone number. I wonder if he did or got tight instead?

We have a new Colonel now or rather, new to me, as he was at home wounded when I arrived. He is very keen on Machine Gun work, so I shall be able to get a bit of my own way as he will always back me up.

It's a funny thing I find I can't sleep very well now I'm in a comfortable bed. I seem to miss the hard ground and everything seems so strangely still after the eternal din of the trenches.

I have sent Muriel on some more shell nose caps by a friend in the Regiment who lives at Belfast and has gone on leave. If you care for any

ask M for some. They are only off small shells as the large ones are very seldom found, as the force of the explosion drives the nose caps deep into the ground. You can imagine this when I tell you that when a J Johnstone explodes it knocks a hole in the ground big enough to hide a carriage and pair.

We had to turn out to line the streets just outside here today as Kitchener came out to inspect us. He looks quite old now and his moustache and hair are almost white. Still he is as big and as great as ever. The Prince of Wales of course was there, but we have often seen him riding about on his bike just like an ordinary sub, saluting his seniors just in the same way! He's grown a little slower but is still quite a kid in his ways.

Lord Derby came out from England when we were at a place called La Bourse about a month ago. I was the first Officer to be introduced to him and he asked me to explain the working of the guns to him. He made quite a long speech congratulating the Regiment on its achievements, which have really been great.

The Guards Brigade relieved us in our last position and an Officer of it told me that they were always thankful when they heard that the Kings had been in the position before them as they always found that the Kings always managed to tame down the Germans in front of them by constantly sniping and bombing them night and day and using their machine guns on them at every opportunity.

We even get shells over to where we are but generally the only victims are women and children.

Fever has already started and one of our officers was sent off with Scarlet Fever two days ago. It is all right though as he was attached to a school as an instructor at the time, so he was not near us. So you need not fear contagion.

This inoculation must really be good as it's a marvel to me how there is not an epidemic of Typhoid with all the stench of rotting bodies in the

trenches. Of course the rules for keeping the latter very clean are very rigid.

I have to drop H a line before the Regimental post goes so I must be stopping now. By the way, your parcel has just arrived although I notice from the postmark that it is the same date as Taylor's which I received 3 days ago, very many thanks for the cigarettes and the fly papers.

**Your ever loving brother
George**

Tell mother I have not heard from her yet.



**LA BASSÉE, Rue de Lille, Brasserie Saint-
Jean, 1915**



12th Letter from France

August 20th 1915

My Dearest Gwennie

Just a line to say that I have arrived quite safely, after a particularly trying journey, and am now sitting down in my dugout scribbling you a short letter before I turn in for forty winks – as judging from appearances and from what I hear there will be none for me tonight. I believe they've had a simply rotten time of it all the time I've been away and everyone is particularly fed-up and looking forward to next Tuesday, when thank goodness, we go to the rear for a bit.

I am afraid my holiday did not do me much good, as the difference is painfully noticeable on returning back to these dreary trenches again.

The first cheerful news I got when I reached the rear trenches was that Pratt and Nicholls, two of our Officers had been wounded early this morning. Pratt through the foot and Nicholls through the shoulder. How we're going to get on without a fresh draft from home, I don't know, as we were very short before these two were taken.

The next cheerful bit of news was that a good few had been killed or wounded during the past day or two from shell fire! As I dodged up the trenches - dodged, I say, because that was all I could do, as the German "hate" was still going on. I could not help noticing how they – the trenches – had been knocked about at several points since I was in them last. It has been raining all day, so everything is slushy and wet.

Saturday

I could not get any further with the letter yesterday, as I'd scarcely started writing when these darned Boshes started exploding mines and I think I told you in the former letter what that means!

Anyhow it's three in the afternoon and I haven't had a wink of sleep yet since I left home. As on the boat they caught me for duty and I had to take charge of a section of men returning from leave and in the train to Bethune there was such a crowd and a crush that sleep was quite out of the question.

All last night I was sitting by one or other of my guns and firing in one direction and then in the other, at working parties of Germans. One could not see them as it was too dark, but one could hear them at work digging. So every time that word was sent up that there was a working party in front of such and such a line, we opened fire on them so as to drive the blighters away.

The worst of it is that I've got to work this afternoon putting up a position for indirect firing and tonight I'm on duty by my guns again. So what I'll feel like tomorrow I don't know. Unless I can get a doze sitting down by the side the trench for a little while tonight and then everything is wet and dripping! I am afraid I am feeling properly fed up today; still I suppose one ought not grumble, as everyone else is having to put up with exactly the same thing more or less. Anyway everyone is grumbling too. I think it does one good to do so. A little grumbling and cussing does relieve one's bottled feelings!

By the way I forgot to give you a cheque for that £2 you gave me at the "Troll" so I am enclosing it with this letter. Another, thing while I think of it, a new order has come about addressing letters. You must only put 1st The Kings (Liverpool) Regt. B.E.F. France and not 2nd Div. etc. Why the change, I don't know: I suppose it's just because some junior Staff Officer thinks that he is stirring up enough fuss to warrant the wearing of a red tab on his collar. Please let the others know, in case I forget to mention it in my letters to them.

I found one or two letters waiting for me on my return here, including one from Florence – she has been having a week's leave roaming the country parts – such as Richmond and thereabouts.

The Germans have been springing a new surprise on us at this position. They are now using aerial torpedoes! It's a huge sort of trench mortar with a propeller and kicks up a terrific roar when it goes off. Three fell about 50 or 60 yards away this afternoon. The concussion or rush of air is very great and gives anyone nearby a dull pain in the head.

Ask H to get me an enlargement of Givenchy Church done, as I want to see how it looks when he has treated it.

I am afraid I had better close this letter now as I do not seem to get a proper chance of finishing it. I get interrupted every few lines and consequently find it hard to pick up the thread again.

**Love to all,
Your loving brother,**

George



Givenchy Church Today

Letter XIII from France

THIS LETTER WAS WRITTEN TWO DAYS BEFORE THE START OF THE FIRST BATTLE OF LOOS WHEN THE BRITISH WERE GOING TO USE POISON GAS FOR THE FIRST TIME. It is has avoided being censored as the intention was for it to be delivered by a soldier returning to England on discharge!!!

Thursday, September 23rd 1915

My Dearest Gwennie,

I have just a little while to spare before taking my Machine Gun Section back to the trenches after refitting, so I'm sitting down to write you and give you what news there is. I'm going to try and get this letter through by a man who is returning home on discharge, otherwise I wouldn't dare to put in what news I am doing.

Well the past fortnight or so has been quite a nightmare of preparations at high pitch excitement for me. The fact is we are going to make a huge attack all along the line and if all goes well and the wind is in the right direction, we are absolutely for it the day after tomorrow early in the morning.

The fact is we are going to use gas at last – a very deadly variety from what they say. In the past two days our guns – actually hundreds of them – have been giving them first class hell: there is no other word for it. All day and all night the guns have been roaring and crashing in one great inferno of noise!

Although we are at the moment in a small town about a couple of miles to the rear, yet the ground shakes and the houses almost rock when some

of the big guns are fired. There is scarcely a pane of glass left – they have nearly all been slivered by the concussion of our own guns!! So you can just try and imagine what sort of a time we are having!

The British Tommy is truly a strange creature! In the big market-square outside the window about eighty of them are playing football. I should think there are forty a side – they are absolutely entering whole heartedly into the game and no heed to the morrow. And yet tomorrow the Regiment marches back to the trenches in fighting kit only, ready to scramble over the top and start the attack at the given signal. I don't suppose much more than half of them will march out when it's all over! Still that doesn't seem to worry them, today's the one thing that matters.

It has been a most trying time for me as I'm desperately keen on the Machine Guns doing well. As in the past shows they evidently didn't cover themselves with glory! So it's up to me to try and reinstate their good name.

You see I'm absolutely on my own and have to submit regular written plans of campaign to headquarters. Everything was arranged to bring off this show 10 days ago, but somehow the Germans got wind of it and so the postponement. Anyway now the day has arrived and I'm off a day earlier than the Regiment and go off in a couple of hours to the trenches to get my guns into position and to post all my reserves of ammunition and stores. In case you read of it in the papers – we are attacking from Cuinchy and with the South Staffords are going to take the Railway triangle – a great stronghold of the Germans.

The cylinders of gas have already arrived and are placed into position in the trenches. If the gas acts alright it will be a cakewalk for us, but if it doesn't – well we shall be walking into hell itself as the Triangle is bristling with defensives. Still it's in the lap of the Gods! Anyhow I can't help thinking that the Germans are going to get a bad hiding this time, as the attack is going to be pushed along miles of front at the same time. As soon as the show is over and I'm alive and kicking I'll send you a post card. Still we may be fighting for three or four days, anyhow don't worry as if anything happens you'll hear soon enough through other channels.

Tell H I am sending him a cheque in this letter in case he's run out of what money he has of mine. The photos of machine guns firing are quite we were firing at the Germans at the time. Please ask him to send me a complete set of photos as soon as possible and some more cigarettes soon. Tell him all his parcels have been delayed because he doesn't put 1st Kings Liverpool Regiment on them.

No more just now as I'm too busy.

Best love to all and if the worst happens, Good bye.

**Your loving brother
George**

PS: The Col. refused to let me take that Adj's job as he says a Lieut. of a line Battle is better than an Adj's. of a Terries crowd.

He says that I'll get a better chance of getting a job from the 1st Battalion after the war. They are making him a General soon; so he'll have influence.



A Trench At Cuinchy

Letter XIV from France (the Last Letter from France)

This letter was written at various times during the first four days of the Battle of Loos when poison gas was used by the British for the first time with disastrous consequences for our own troops. Two companies launched an attack from the Cuinchy section. Out of 7 Officers and approx. 450 men only 2 Officers and 70- 80 men survived

Sept 25th 1915
11 o'clock for us

My Dearest Gwennie,

Well it's all over and I'm still alive and untouched, a thing I never expected during two hours and more this morning. I hope I never have to see the sights and witness the scenes I saw then – although I'm afraid it will be my lot to do so.

So far as the two Regiments on our front were concerned our attack was an utter failure! The artillery, in spite of the bombardment, never cut the German wire. The much talked about gas, went all wrong – or rather the wind did and any number of our men were badly gassed and died. The fight was simply a slaughter and the whole of our B Coy was wiped out. Not one officer in it was left, they were all killed!

How I got through I don't know! What with the German guns popping shells into us (and occasionally our guns did the same with us) and machine gun and rifle fire it was simply hell.

Then to add to the horror of it all the gas refused to go forward quickly and we ran right into it!!!

I was told beforehand to have two of my guns ready and to rush over with them into the German's trenches directly the first platoon got into them. But the first platoon never got there nor the second, third or fourth. They

were quickly mown down. On they went, but were wiped out. I saw my own pals shot down one by one before my own eyes. Just imagine my agony of mind, as I simply couldn't help them as if I'd opened fire I'd only have poured shots into our own people's backs!

The 26th

I shall always look back on yesterday as the most hideous of nightmare days I've ever lived through. I can't give you all the details as it would take a book to describe it all. I never saw anything like the pluck of our poor fellows as they went over, platoon by platoon, to absolutely certain death. They and everybody else knew there was no hope or chance – we were beaten before the show even started. The artillery did their work routinely and never bust up the German wire properly.

The gas never moved as the wind was shifty and consequently the men had to charge into a regular dense fog of it, poor devils! Still they went to their doom trying to cheer through their masks! They never got far past our own wire. I felt awful having to look and not being able to do anything to help.

I think I must have got a mad desperate fit when I saw poor old Ryan, Harvey and Baillion, all of them half gassed, staggering along a bit and then fall shot down by the hail of machine gun bullets. Anyway I jumped into a sap – a listening trench that runs towards the enemy trenches and with my hand pressed over my mouth and nose, I was wearing a respirator – I tried to reach the men who were now without any Officer at all – but it was awful!

I had to walk over and tread on wounded and gassed men who were falling into the trench to try to get away from the gas and get back into our lines. Very soon it was impossible to get any further because of the men. So I started to climb out on top. I may say the ground and trenches were in an awful condition owing to the rain. As I was struggling to get up the slimy sides I felt myself helped by strong hands and looking round I found one of my gun teams had followed me, imagining I suppose that I was going forward with my first gun! I yelled to them to go back but

what with feeling half choked by the gas that was gradually coming through my respirator and what with the terrible uproar of the shells howling and crashing all round us, they did not hear me, but scrambled up and started to mount the gun! When I found the gun was there I forgot about the remnants of the company and busied myself with it. I suppose that was what I wanted just to be alongside and doing something,

What we were to do exactly I couldn't think as we were crowded round with dead and wounded men and in the dense fog of gas and smoke from the smoke candles you could not see anything of the German lines. At last I spotted flashes somewhere on our right and signalled the gunner laying by me to lay on to them and fire. One shot went off and the gun jammed! We struggled about with it but could do nothing.

I ordered the gun out of action by signals, when a shrapnel crashed just above our heads and laid three of my team of six out! I don't know how I wasn't hit as the shell went off so low that you would have thought that nothing as big as a man could have escaped! Anyway we managed to get the gun out of action by a miracle and then discovered that the gas had absolutely destroyed the springs! All my guns were the same – useless for the time being! I've never heard or dreamt of such a thing happening. Yet here it was: I've since heard today that other Machine Gun Officers had the same experience.

Then came the job of going out again and getting our wounded gunners as we weren't going to leave them there. I had carefully fitted a big haversack with a regular first aid outfit including Iodine, Morphia tablets and hypodermic syringe and Morphia solution. By this time our attack had utterly failed and "B" Coy was wiped out, so as it was a forlorn hope, the reserve Coy was not sent out. The gas had cleared off by the time we got our gunners into the little Sap – this was just a shallow trench affording very little protection from shell fire. I patched them up and sent them off into our lines with some of my men.

I then noticed some of the other men in that Sap – poor devils some of them shockingly mangled and unfortunately every shell that burst over them wounded some again and killed others. I hadn't the heart to leave

them there, so I left my water bottle near them and went off back to get to our line to get some help and also to throw off my heavy equipment. I think the poor devils thought I was leaving them for a man cried "God, you're not going to save us Sir! For God's sake take me away I'm dying!" and burst out crying. I told them to stick it a few minutes longer and then I'd bring help and get them out of it. "God bless you Sir" and "Thank you Sir" moaned some of them (I'm not spinning a yarn and bragging but trying to piece together a few vivid pictures that remain of yesterday's nightmare) well I won't go into details of how we got those men out, it would take too long and the details are not nice.

Anyway we got them eventually back into our front fire trench – nearly all the chaps who fetched in the wounded did heroic deeds and a good many were wounded themselves in doing the good work. Then came the awful work – patching up the worst cases then and there in the firing line. I established a sort of advanced dressing depot and did what I could as I felt so terribly sorry at the sight of so many big fine men that I knew and who knew me laying there helpless in their utter misery.

I had nothing else to do, my guns were done in and the men were stripping them down. Anyway I've never felt so thankful that I have a good nerve and knew something about the work. Somehow it made life seem worthwhile. I don't know how that day dragged through but it did. But night - which I was looking forward to - was made hideous with a bombardment of poisonous shells.

If anything has hardened me against showing an ounce of pity ever for a damned German it was the experience of last night. It really was dreadful and I think I can honestly say that it was one of the very few times I have felt real fear rather than dread since I've been out here. Although it was a great opportunity to have a good night's rest as I had no guns to look after, sleep was quite impossible, as one had to sit by all night with respirators ready for instant use. It would not have been so bad by day – but by night it was awful.

I shall be very thankful when we are relieved as this strain is very severe on one's nerves. Just as I'm writing the Boshes have started a firing

bombardment of our lines to which we are replying with interest. There seems to be no peace at all. This will be my fourth day – I came in before the Regiment came in and I'm beginning to feel very worn and tired.

27th

This letter seems to be developing into a sort of diary. So if on reading it, it seems disjointed you will know it is because it is written at all sorts of odd moments. The guns are again crashing and it's hard to concentrate one's mind on a letter when one's ears are on the "*qui vive*" for the sound of a shell that's going to drop very near you.

It's very peculiar out here how instincts that are dormant at home are sharpened up and developed out here. I can tell the kind of gun that's firing and the kind of shell that's being fired, where the shell is going to fall – near you or not – just by ear alone!

Thank God the sun has come out at last. We've been feeling wet and cold and miserable for days – with no chance of getting warm.

Sept 28th

We've been through it again! I was interrupted in the middle of writing to you by a telegram from the Brigade Machine Gun Officer telling me to rush my guns up to the firing line – they had only just been returned from the armourers – as we were going to make another gas attack in 35 minutes!

Talk about being in a rage – I was furious! 35 minutes to organise 7 guns, ammunition supply, everything! It was a two days job! Anyway an order is an order and I had to do my best. It seems that we are in the unfortunate position of being a weakened Brigade who have to keep on making attacks on a veritable fortress just so as to cause a diversion and prevent the Germans from taking any troops away from here in order to try and stem the tide of the rush of French and English troops who broke through further South – you will have read all about this by now. It's simply

damnable that we the 6th Brigade, the Iron Brigade as the Germans call us who have been the backbone of all the fighting up to now should be put on this hopeless job. We shall reap none of the honour and glory that the troops further south will reap. They've simply walked over dead Germans that were outed with the gas at a very thinly protected front and now are fighting Germans who are on the run. What's hell too, is that now we've got very little artillery support behind us, as most have been rushed south to join the chase.

The awful part of it is that they are keeping on throwing forward troops unnerved by the fiasco of being gassed by our own gas! You don't know how that demoralizes troops. They lose all confidence in everything. We simply feel now that those above us don't seem to know their job. They've been shattered and reduced and really ought to have been taken out and rested for a few days – as has been the custom all along – but no, we're still kept on here facing the same front and gradually getting weaker and weaker.

They haven't even bothered to send new Officers to fill the gaps that are widening every day. We've implored them to let us attack without the gas. We know we are going to be killed off gradually and are not afraid of it. The only thing we ask of fate is to be given a fair fight. It makes one disquieted to think though that we've got to risk not only what the Germans hand us out, but also being gassed by our own gas and also to be hit by our own damned amateur Kitchener's Artillery!

I am afraid all this is very morbid and sounds as if we've lost our pluck – but don't you believe it, we're not down on our luck but just disquieted and in a rage! We've cursed and sworn about everything and everybody amongst ourselves and it does make one feel a little better to get it off one's chest. So that's why I suppose I'm letting you have the benefit of it all.

Anyway Gwennie dear don't worry about it. I've come through another big ordeal – unscathed - yesterday and have not had my spirit broken yet – far from it – but somehow if only the weather would clear up a bit, it would not be quite so bad. But the very day we started in for this

attacking business, it rained and it's rained ever since. Consequently we're living in an absolute quagmire – nothing keeps out the mud and the slush and rain. Half the time our feet and legs feel frozen – and now we daren't attempt to take our boots off to wipe our feet or to rub in rum as we'd never get them on again.

Now I'd better tell you of yesterday's performance. Well I'd only just got my guns ready when the gas started off. This time it went over beautifully, a terrific white cloud of it and the wind fairly raced it over the odd hundred yards that divided the trenches. But I knew it was going to have no effect, as the Germans were now forearmed. From the second the gas attack started, up flared great coke and petrol fires all along their lines, which created a draft that simply lifted the gas comfortably over their heads!

At the same time the artillery spoke, and well – I thought I knew what it was to be under heavy artillery fire – but this was absolutely the bally limit. They dropped great big heavies up and down our front lines and high explosive shrapnel up and down our communication trenches. Every time a heavy dropped, a portion of a ten foot thick parapet was flattened as if an elephant had trodden on a sand pie. If you were anywhere near it you got a shock inside your skull as if someone had welted you on the back of the head with a sandbag.

Every now and again I had to crawl into a corner and just bring my heart up. This went on for half an hour and then the CO sent frantic 'phone messages to Brigade to say the gas had not affected the Germans and it was impossible to attack with any hope of the men reaching even the German wire alive! So Brigade, hard to convince that gassed and dead Germans cannot pour a hail of shells over a position, and wanting some more proof of the fact that the Germans were still alive – said "all right don't advance, but send out a patrol to see if the gas has acted"!

So out went ten of the greatest heroes England has bred. Very quietly Roberts – the last remaining of my personal pals – dropped into the same sap that was the scene of Saturday's fiasco, with nine men to crawl out and investigate. I think – I'm not sure, three men came back alive. Poor

old Roberts was the very first to be killed. The General was satisfied! The remainder told them what the heavy German shells, machine gun and rifle fire couldn't tell them – the Germans were not dead neither were they suffocated!

And so at night we went out and fetched the dead and the wounded in and quietly rebuilt our parapets – and made all our preparations to withstand a counter attack, which never came off. I only wish to God it had! If only we could have caught them out in the open! Still – it wasn't to be!

Thank God Gordon did not come up to this Battalion when he came out or the Lauders' would have been mourning today. The men who came up in his place to bring "B" Coy up to full strength are now dead. By the way, I wrote Mrs Lauder c/o Oaklands, some time ago, did you forward my letter?

All the time I am writing to you the artillery are exchanging souvenirs. This uproar has been going on now for four or five day's night and day. I often wonder what some of the chaps I used to know would say if they had just two days of the last four or five to put up with – even leaving out the fighting!

Still Tommy is a wonderful creature! If we went out to rest tonight – tomorrow, he would spend in washing and getting himself to look like a human being again and then the very next day he'd be playing football in the market square as if nothing had happened! There's no yesterday with Tommy, only 'Today'.

I think if I came out for 48 hours I'd spend it in bed – if I had the chance, and get a really good rest. Still this hard campaigning has made us so hard that I don't think anything really upsets us much. We just grumble – well I think we're built that way, but really you gradually get hardened into not really caring what happens. You put up with everything just as a matter of course.



3 pm

The sun has come out a little and everything seems to have changed. Men are not caring for shrapnel and are coming out of dug outs and shelters and sunning themselves and getting a chance of drying themselves and getting warmed up a bit.

I feel quite cheerful now and have been standing outside in water half way up to my calf feeling grateful of the chance of getting my shirt and vest dried on me. If only my luck keeps in a bit longer – and I've had extraordinary luck if only you knew it – I may get another chance of leave in about a month's time – then I shall be able to tell you all about it and give you all the interesting details of the last few days. I haven't told you one hundredth part of it all yet but have simply just rambled on here and there.

It all seems like a dream now and like dreams, vivid little bits come back to one now and again. If I come home again we'll have the Lauders and the Andersons quietly to dinner at home my first night and afterwards over coffee and cigarettes and sitting by a big fire I'll tell you about the worst bit of fighting, they tell me, the Regiment has been through.

Fancy only two companies were actually launched forward in Saturday's affair. 7 Officers and about 450 men and today there are only 2 Officers and about 70 or 80 men left. And yet we're still fighting. I haven't enough trained men to go round all my guns now, as I had two teams nearly wiped out and as I've been with my guns and men day and night the whole time – you can imagine that I've whispered into the ears of Death once or twice.

Still I think, things will settle down again soon for a little while.

I must stop now or I'll never get this letter off. Do keep on writing pretty often and get the others to while this business is on, as somehow letters help to buck one up. It isn't the news that we want, it is just the getting that counts.

Well Good bye dear. Love to all,

From your loving brother.

George

PS: I forgot to enclose H's cheque in my last so here it is.

Tell Jessie and Florence how awfully sorry I am for them and explain why I can't write for a little while.

Let Hopkinson and his pal Hubert read this as I haven't really time to write in answer to their letters yet.

Tell Kenneth to tell Hubert that I never got the paper he mentions and do not know what he is alluding to. Ask him to try and send me a cutting in a letter as newspapers so often get pinched in the post.

Have just heard we are to make an attack tonight! If my luck doesn't carry me through – Good bye. Will send you a post card tomorrow if I pull through.

I have been wounded since I wrote this letter. Nothing serious, just a comfortable bullet wound in my left arm, so don't worry. I may be able to get someone to take this through tonight to London.



Soldiers injured by the gas blowback on 24th September 1915

THE ILLUSTRATED LONDON NEWS CHRISTMAS NUMBER, 1906.—41

Golden Prospect

A golden prospect indeed, not only for festive days but all other times as well. Here in fact is luxury by the hundred or the ounce... a happy thought certain to bring delight to anyone.

PLAYER'S
GOLD LEAF
NAVY CUT
CIGARETTES & TOBACCO

CIGARETTES • 12 for 2/6 • 24 for 4/11 • 50 for 10/3 • 100 for 20/9
TOBACCO • 1 oz. 4/9 • 2 oz. Airtight tin 8/7 • 4 oz. Airtight tin 19/2

An old advert, from the period of World War I, of George Cooper's favourite brand of Cigarettes, which he was often requesting from home.

THE BRITISH - GERMAN WAR IN EAST AFRICA WWI

Background to Captain Cooper's Letters, Whilst With Norforce

The campaign in East and Central Africa during the First World War has received relatively little attention despite the remarkable exploits of Major General Edward Northey and his men known as Norforce, consisting of a polyglot force operating in some of the most difficult terrain of WWI, which Captain Cooper joined in 1916, where sadly he lost his life fighting for King and Country in the same year.

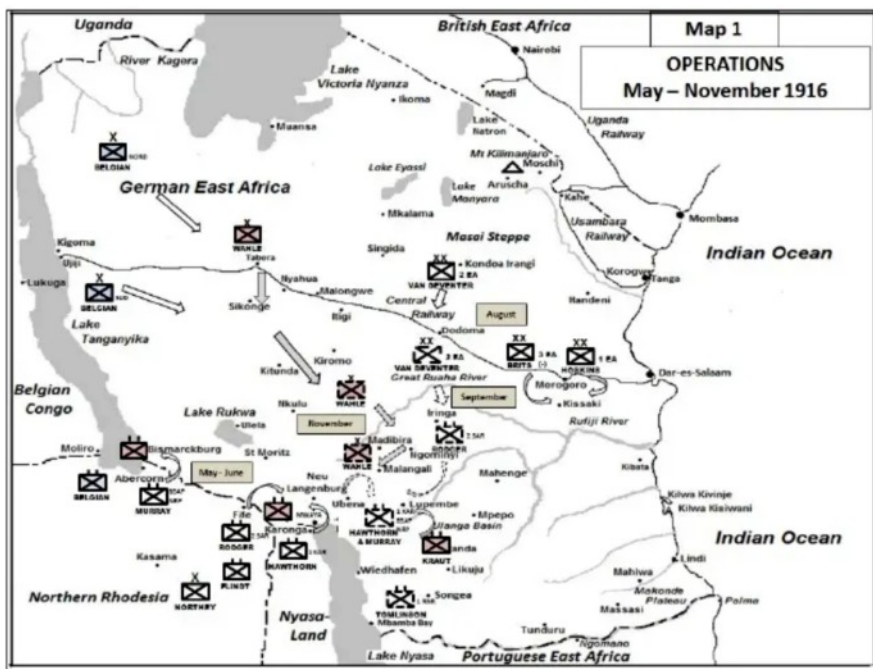
Despite The Norforce command which George Cooper joined not being much more than a reinforced infantry brigade until 1918, Norforce advanced thousands of kilometres during its existence, often with detached columns operating up to several hundred kilometres apart with lines of communication (see table Page 79) extending over 1200 kilometres to the rear.

Norforce's organisational success was in sharp contrast to the administrative failures that bedevilled British columns operating from British East Africa throughout much of 1916. An article attempts to redress the imbalance through a description and assessment of Edward Northey's tenure in command of Norforce which can be viewed, while it is still available, by clicking [**HERE**](#).

There were a total of three battalions of the King's African Rifles (KAR) in East Africa, totalling nearly 2 400 soldiers of which only the Depot and three companies of 1st Battalion KAR (1st KAR) were based in Nyasaland with the remainder in Uganda and British East Africa.

Segment	Distance in kilometres	Mode of travel ³¹
Durban – Beira	1 235	Ocean steamer
Beira – Chinde	230	Coastal steamer
Chinde – Chindio	195	Stern-wheeler
Chindio – Blantyre	280	Railway
Blantyre – Zomba	70	Lorry
Zomba – Fort Johnston	130	Carriers (later cars)
Fort Johnston – Karonga	485	Lake steamer
Karonga – Mwaya	35	(steamer directly to Mwaya)
Total	2 660 km	

Table - Norforce Lines of Communication



**MAP: Operations in German East Africa
May- November 1916**

Letter XV Africa

British India Steam Navigation Co. Ltd.

S.S. Dilwara

March 16th 1916

My Dearest Gwennie,

Well here I am still on my journey after six weeks of it! I am now on the Dilwara on my way to Beira, where I shall probably have to wait some while for a boat to Chinde. I am just about getting sick of it and wish to goodness I'd get to my journey's end. I had a good time of it in Durban as the people were very kind to me and did everything to make my stay pleasant. Indeed I could not accept half the invitations I got.

As soon as it got round that there was a "regular" officer (and one who had been fighting in France at that) staying at the Marine, I got all sorts of calls from people and invitations from the Mayor downwards! I had to draw the line though at newspapermen, and reported one man to the military authority who published half a column of interview that I never gave him!

When we arrived at Lorenzo Marques yesterday the Consul General met the boat and introduced himself and said that friends in Durban had wired and asked him to call on me. Wasn't that decent of them? His name is McDonnall. Well he gave me a top hols time and trotted me around in his car. The Portuguese are in a fever heat of excitement over Portugal declaring war on the Germans.

That night bands were out and people marched along shouting and cheering and waving English, French and Portuguese flags. They marched to the English Club and shouted for the Consul General. MacDonnall and I went out onto the balcony whilst there was much cheering and playing of the National Anthem. Then MacD. made a speech and alluded to myself – amongst other things – result more cheering and more National Anthem. Then five fat little Officers in 'Fred Karno' uniforms came up and before

all the waiting multitudes, drank wine to the Good Health of England, France and Portugal, both jointly and severally and collectively. Then more speeches and more National Anthems and more toasting.

I gather from their antics that the five Officers had already been through this process before each of the Consulates of the Allies as well as at each street corner and before each Café of any note!

Anyway they were blind to the world. One cocky little Cavalry Colonel drew his sword and worked himself into a fury by going through sword exercises in his desire to show us what would happen to the Germans if ever he was let loose amongst them!

This nearly ended in tragedy as the Chief of Police, who was very far gone and was occupied at the time in alternately trying to make a speech from the balcony and pouring white wine all over his motor down below, got jabbed in the shoulder! There was a fearful row over it and it took others nearly half an hour to get them reconciled! Anyway it was nearly 4 o'clock in the morning before MacD and I turned our backs on the club and the last thing I remember seeing were four Officers and the Chief of Police fast asleep in armchairs!

I wonder if I shall ever see that Cavalry Colonel on the field of Glory? Anyway it will be a long day before I forget him and I keep laughing to myself when I think of his antics



Letter XVI - Africa

1st K.A.R. (King's African Rifles)

Zomba

Nyasaland

17th April 1916

My Dearest Gwennie,

I have arrived at last!!! I arrived here 3 days ago – after travelling for 10 weeks! You cannot imagine how sick I am of travelling and how mighty pleased I am that it is over at last. I was stranded in Durban for 19 days waiting for a boat and 22 days at Beira for the same reason.

At Durban I had quite a good time on the whole, as Sir Bailey gave me letters of introduction and the people there were very kind and did everything to make my stay a pleasant one. But Beira!!! I hope to God I never get stranded in that hole again.

It is a terrible place and the heat was something appalling. All day and all night one simply dropped with perspiration. And what with the skeeties that never left one alone for a second one's life was an absolute misery. I had not been there three days before I was down with two others with poisoning. The pain was simply agonising and the Portuguese had to inject Morphia as I couldn't keep medicine or anything down. I really thought my number was up at last – and I think I would have gone under if it had not been for the wife of the English Vice-Consul there. She was kindness itself and brought me beef tea etc. nearly every day.

Towards the end of my stay I was invited down to a place called Manga for some Goose shooting. Well we waded about all night up to our waists in stinking swamp and consequently the next day I and the Portuguese Officer who invited me up were laid up with fever. Mine was a very slight attack as I had been taking Quinine regularly. But the other chap was very bad and I had to bring him back on a "Machiba" – a hammock slung on poles. After I left Beira I went to Chinde - another port and from there we had a four days river journey up the Chinde and Zambezi rivers. The

river boats are something like house boats and just as comfortable. The trip was a really lovely one and we were quite merry on board. There were two lady missionaries, two parsons – three girls who were going up to Blantyre to be married and some planters.

I must say the scenery was not up to much as it was very flat. But we got some fair shooting. The only Hippo we saw I managed to bag with a good shot at 700 yards!!! He was on a sand bank and I used an ordinary .303 bullet out of a service rifle. He was badly hit, as he only just managed to struggle to the water and then sank. He never came to the surface again so we knew he was dead. However I was very sorry that we not able to get him – but as Hippos bodies do not rise till 6 hours afterwards we could not wait.

At Chindio we got out and took the train to Limbe. No words of mine could describe the lovely scenery we went through. This part of Nyasaland is simply lovely. The whole way through we went through mountains. On either side were range after range of the most beautiful mountain scenery you can imagine. Most of the high ones were lost in the clouds. Everywhere were tea, coffee, tobacco and cotton plantations. The weather was simply perfect. More like an English spring than anything else. Indeed the nights were very cold and soon we will be starting fires!!

By this mail I am sending you a draft for £22.10 (22 pounds and 10 shillings) and in a few days I will send another £12.10. After that I will pay in £12.10 monthly into Cox's. Out of the first two cheques take out the £15 you sent me and anything else you've bought me – (and please pay Lafayette for me) and pay any balance into Cox's to pay off overdrafts. My expenses have been very heavy and I've had to draw on Cox's a good bit. It cost me nearly 30 shillings a day (20 shillings = £1) in Durban and nearly £2 a day in Beira – where a Soda and Milk cost you 1/6 (one shilling and sixpence), Whisky and Soda 2/6 (two shillings and sixpence) and a Ginger Beer 1/0 (one shilling)!! However I will soon pay everything off as living is very cheap here.

I expect to be here for about two months and then expect to be sent to Karonga, where most of the regiment is and where there will be some

fighting very soon. Unfortunately Karonga is very unhealthy – still this is the best time of the year and I appear to have a good store of vitality.

When I go, I believe I am to be made Brigade Machine Gun Officer over all the South African and K. A. R. (King's African Rifle) troops. So I am on clover and am very lucky indeed. As is most likely, I shall get staff pay. Another bit of luck is that quite half of the Regiment and Officers have been sent to B. East Africa (Belgium East Africa) to form a new Regiment, so promotion will be very quick.

The Askaris – native soldiers – are really marvellous – they are smarter at their drill than any white Regiment I've seen yet. I am hard at it learning the language which is not as hard as I expected at first. The life here appears to be just the same as an Indian Station – the same little cliques, the same jealousies and bickering between the various Officers' and Civilians' wives etc. etc. I have been to tea and called on two or three Burra Memsahibs already and each one in turn has warned me that Mrs so and so is very nice etc. but is not quite in the real Zomba swim – whatever that may mean.

I am sharing a bungalow (a seven roomed one at that and rent free) with a very nice boy called Foulger. Our servants number 9. Still as their pay varies from 4/- (4 shillings) to 10/- per month and their keep costs 1d (1 pence or penny) per day each is not very costly.

Tell Humphrey I have got some interesting films for him – including two hangings of rebels and murderers and two of floggings!!

So far I have not heard from you although I've written two or three times. However one lot of mails was lost in the Channel (English), I hear. How about Muriel? I am very anxious to know if I'm an Uncle again. If so I hope it will be a wee niece. I am sending you and Muriel a silver butterfly brooch each. They are made by the natives here. I think they are wonderful considering the very crude instruments they have got.

I must say I like Zomba and Blantyre very much and am quite happy here. By the way tell not to send me any cigarettes as I can get all the brands here at the same price or even cheaper than in England! Ask him

to let me know as soon as I get my third star at home. Tell him I'll write soon – but my first mail on arriving here – an accumulation of nearly 10 weeks – was 20 letters!

Please send me some Sunday papers and any magazines and weeklies you don't want as these are hard to get.

How is mother keeping? Please thank Mrs Taylor for her kind letter and card and say I'll write to her next mail.

And now Gwennie dear Goodbye.

Best love to all at Oaklands and Purley

**Your loving brother
George**

Tell H and M I've got all sorts of curios for them and will ship them shortly.

What is the name of that magistrate at Blauters you told me to call on? If you will let me know I will motor over and call.



Zomba Nyasaland

Letter XVII - Africa

1st King's African Rifles

Karonga

Nyasaland

May 10th 1916

My Dearest Gwennie,



As you will see from the above, I'm now at Karonga – having been ordered up here the day after I 'wrote you last from Zomba. What a terrible difference from Zomba! There we were high up in the mountains amidst lovely scenery and comfort. Here we are in the heart of one of the worst fever patches in the whole of the African Continent. The Skeeties are a fearful pest and make life a misery. All day and most of the night one gets bitten all over. Of course Quinine is the order of the day and my weekly consumption (on Medical orders) is 80 grains!!

The rains ought to have stopped some weeks ago, but for some unknown reason they are still with us, consequently the conditions are very hard to bear. Fever and Rheumatism take their daily toll and batches of the South African white troops are sent down, invalided, by every other river steamer that calls. I am having a very rotten time with Rheumatism myself and am afraid I'll never be able to stick the rainy season when it comes round again – at any rate if we are likely to be in these parts.

I have been in one scrap already – it occurred about a week ago. A decent sized force of whites and Askaris – native soldiers – boarded the Lake Gun-boat "Gwendoline" – a steamer, and raided the German posts at

Whithaven and Sphinxhaven on the German Lake coast. We all got into boats just before dawn – you should have just seen the landing!!! We had to jump out up to our waists in water and then simply rush for the sandy shore. We surrounded and took a native village just on the beach – but found it empty, bar for a few cou-cous (chickens)! However our Scouts later brought in the ‘Capita’ or headman of the village and his wife – she was about the ugliest human creature I’ve ever set eyes on! Poor devils, they were simply grey with fear!

To their surprise however they were well treated and the woman was released – we took the ‘Capita’ along with us to show us the way to the Bomas – or forts. It was a ghastly day for us, as it started to rain very early in the show: And what rain! It only took about 5 minutes before the water was fairly pouring in at our necks and running out at the end of our ‘shorts’! We had to force our way through grass ten feet high that cut us to bits, and it did not take very long before our arms and knees were all cut and bleeding! Then the Skeeties and Hippo flies started to work on our cuts!!!

After about two hours of floundering about in this sort of marshy grass country we sighted the Boma on a hill – and immediately came under fire. We soon got to work with machine guns and rifles. The echo of the machine guns as it roared up and down the valleys and round the rocky heights was wonderful to listen to! Suddenly from the other side of the hill we heard bugles sounding the charge! Like lightening we were all up on our feet and plunging headlong through the grass. You never heard anything like the yell the Askaris let off as they rushed forward with bayonets fixed.

Each tribe – we recruit from three or four that are famous for their fighting powers – roared out or rather screeched out, their own blood-curdling war cry! We had to charge up about 600 yards of slope that had been cleared of all grass. A single machine gun would have made the very dickens of a mess of us – but the Huns did not stomach any hand to hand fighting and we arrived at the Boma to find that they had all bolted into the long grass and escaped – all we found was a goat, some more chickens and two very insulting messages left on a slate!

We burnt the Boma and then started off to find the other one. If the going was bad before, it was ten times worse now, as we had to climb over huge boulders that were as slippery as glass with the rain. We had to, every now and again, struggle up mountain paths that were a rushing foaming mass a foot deep in flood water that came pouring down and nearly swept us off our feet. Indeed I'm quite sure I'd have had a broken arm or leg if it had not been for the helping hand of a sure-footed Askari.

After a bit, a halt was called and we had to practically sit in this stream with our feet hitched up against boulders to prevent our being swept down – whilst Scouts went forward to investigate. Everyone looked miserable and looked more like drowned rats than soldiers. I was simply crazy for a smoke, but of course all our baccy was ruined long ago! Very soon shots were heard again and then we moved forward. Then some champion humourist gave orders for the charge to be sounded!! Charge!!? Why we could only crawl forward.

There was no cheering from the South Africans this time, they swore good and hard. The Askaris on the other hand, gave out occasional war cries, but spent most of their lung power in yelling out awful threats to the German Askaris. They called them “Tenga Tenga” – load carriers as opposed to fighting men and ‘children of pigs’ – the Askaris on both sides are Muhammadons and therefore despise the pig – and implored the Huns to wait where they were until they – our Askaris – had time to come and cut their throats like pigs!!!!

As can be imagined our Askaris got up first – we knew only too well from the hisses of disappointment that the Huns had ‘sold us a pup’ and bolted again! The remarks all round were not fit for the ears of any Bishop, and what made matters worse was that, weary as we were, we had orders from the boat – by signal – to go three miles further and try to round the Huns up at another Boma where they were supposed to have bolted to.

We knew that it was useless, as the Germans knew every nook and corner. Still ‘orders is orders’ and off we went on another wild goose chase! I need not go into details of the third capture of a Boma that day as it was much on the same lines as the other two. Anyhow we got back to the

boats at about 5 o'clock in the afternoon after 12 hours of continuous marching through really awful country.

Personally, I was so tired, I could only just climb on to the 'Gwendoline' out of the boat and was far too weary to change my wet clothes or even to eat – hungry 'tho I was – until I had about two hours lie down. That night we got back to N'cata Bay and bed never seemed so sweet to me - my last waking memories being the sound of native drums being wildly beaten in the native lines to the accompaniment of much shouting and the singing of songs of victory in the Anatorga and Angoni tongues.

We have been here in Karonga a few days and are off up country on Thursday for the 'push forward' into German territory. We cannot of course get very far in from this side, as our trouble of course is the keeping up of a sufficient supply of food for the troops. We are in the very heart of Africa here, with no railways and very few good roads within hundreds of miles of us. Every ounce of food comes to us by way of one small lake steamer per week and then for nearly 150 miles on the heads of 'Tenga Tenga' (carriers).

I have received only one mail – a double one whilst at Zomba – since I left home in January last – we expect another in on Friday next (the luck of it all is that we leave here on Thursday) and after that, I expect it will be ages before any letters or news comes through. On the other side, in British East Africa, the troops are in comparative comfort. For one thing, the climate is very healthy – in fact it is white man's country and there are plenty of fine roads – consequently transport is greatly facilitated.

When the end comes, I suppose the troops in the North will be the ones to get the kudos, whilst no one will ever give a thought about the part played by the comparatively small force that comprises the Nyasaland Field Force, who have been guarding the front and fighting the battles of the Empire in this fever stricken hole for nearly two years past. There is a wee church yard here, close by the Mission Church, that silently bears witness to the price that has been paid on this border. Most of those who lie there, however, have fallen victims to fever – either black water or malaria, contracted whilst out on days of patrol duty wading waist deep

in stinking, Skeetie-infested swamps that surround these parts during the rains. I am very lucky indeed to have come in at the fag-end of the bad season, so may escape any bad touch of fever – still very few miss their turn. The Askaris are magnificent soldiers and are absolutely to be depended on.

There is a monument at the 'Boma' at Zomba to the memory of two Officers and about 100 Askaris who fell whilst surrounded by tribesmen in Somelay. The two Officers were killed early in the fight. The rest refused to surrender (this would have been easy as the enemy was of the same religion as themselves) and died fighting to a man. Two men, who early on in the day, had been sent off with messages to neighbouring posts, committed suicide when they heard of the fate of the others – considering that it was not good that they should be alive when the others had died fighting.



Karonga Nyasaland

Although cigarettes were plentiful and cheap at Zomba they are very hard to get here, so if you could send me a tin or two of Players or Wills from time to time, they would be very acceptable. I will send you on those cheques immediately I get them – which will be by the next mail from Zomba. I am very sorry indeed for the delay, but it is not through any

fault of mine – you had better arrange with Cox's to carry over my loan over the six months as owing to the mails being very irregular and taking such an awful time coming and going to England, it will take me four or five months to clear it off. Anyway Cox's will be drawing half my salary in England regularly.

I shall have very little time to write to all the people I promised to write to – especially in Gypsy Hill, so ask Humphrey to write out any extracts that are likely to be of any interest in this letter and let the Norwood Review people have it. They can print my name and Regiment, as it doesn't matter at this great distance.

From time to time let them have any war news from this quarter that they want, as it will save me answering a lot of letters I am likely to get and which conditions out here leave no time for answering.

..... Muriel? I am very anxiously waiting to hear all the news. When I get back to Zomba – I say when – I am going to send you home six very weird native dolls carved out of wood and dressed up. They stand two feet high and are really very quaint. The people in Zomba have them mounted on iron (flat) stands and use them to keep doors wide open. I want you to keep two, give Muriel and H two, send one to Mrs Pennington and give one to the Lauders for the baby. They look ripping standing on guard by the door.

I must be closing now, as I must be getting packed up for our march. So Good bye. Best love to Mother and everybody.

Your loving brother
George

PS Write soon if you can, send me some Sunday papers. Tell Mrs Taylor I haven't forgotten her and will write shortly. If extracts of this go in the local paper – send me a copy



Letter XVIII - Africa

Old Landsberg

Thursday 21st May 1916

My Dearest Gwennie,

It has suddenly occurred to me that in about 10 days' time it will be your birthday. I should have thought of it weeks ago, but I haven't got used to doing and thinking of things English so many weeks ahead. For another thing I really think that this is about the first time I've really had time to sit down with the knowledge that I have any time in hand for writing. Indeed this is the first letter I've had even the chance of starting since we left Karonga.

What a time I've been through since I last wrote! Perhaps if I give you more or less of a diary account of all our doings since we left Karonga it will make fairly interesting reading.

Well the day after I wrote you from Karonga last, we moved out on our way to the German frontier. It was an 18 mile march and I fairly dreaded it, as of course I had not got acclimatized at the time. I was feeling absolutely washed out and was not feeling any too good from a slight touch of fever. We started off at 8.30 in the morning. The new Company that I was posted to was minus the Company Commander – a fellow named Griffiths – who was left behind in hospital with fever.

However, there was another sub in the Company and I was told that, tho' I was senior I had better let him carry on as he could speak the language. The Askari were in fine fettle and started the march singing away like good ones! We had scarcely got a couple of miles before the true character of that perishing part of the country showed itself. We came to marshes – black stagnant tracts stinking of rotting vegetation and fairly buzzing with Skeeties that bit and tormented one even in the day time.

On we went in single file winding about on native paths with tall grass waving above our heads; sometimes above our ankles in marsh water and

sometimes above our knees in it, where streams had formed, draining the water into the lane. Everywhere the villagers looked thin and miserable and on the verge of starvation. I was told however that this was due to a disease caused by a Hook worm that is very rampant in these parts – South of the Songwe.

Every now and again we came to small rivers that had been bridged by the Engineers ahead of us. It was not very long before I was dripping from every pore in my body and I was doing nothing but drink. I think I must have put away about half a gallon of water during those first few miles. You cannot realize what the heat felt like to me fresh out from home! Well, at last, when we got to a place called Pembermoto, 15 miles out, we came near the end of our journey.

Here we heard we had to go on to a flat sandy place called N'garamu. I had bucked up pretty well during the 15 mile part of that march – but oh those last 3 miles! They were over sand – every step you took forward you slipped back half a step!

At last we got to N'garamu and a more wretched looking place you never saw for a camp. As soon as we arrived, they set us digging trenches – in loose sand too! Anything had to do for that night, then bully beef and biscuits and bed. How I loved that bed that night. It was just a case of blankets and pillow in the open with a Skeetie curtain on poles over you. As if the rough journey had not been enough, it poured that night and everyone got simply sopped through.

I gave up on all ideas of sleep and just sat up for the rest of the night under my Skeetie curtain and smoked and kept my eyes on the mountains across the lake for the first signs of dawn and the coming of the hot sun to dry us. Next morning we were up early and work on the trenches started. Very soon hot tea was doled out and we soon forgot about the rain.

Talking of rain, every shower or rather downpour, was the 'last rain of the wet season' – so we told one another for a whole month and yet still it came! That first day, my boys built me a comfortable little native hut,

so the rest of our stay there I had at any rate a home. We stayed at N'garuma about ten days until such time as the Engineers were ready to



The Songwe Gorge

take us over the Songwe – what pictures that word brought to our minds. It was the river that divided German East from British territory, it was very swift flowing, it was full of crocodiles, it was well guarded etc. etc. And we were to cross it in open boats and native dugout canoes!! No one felt exactly happy about it.

Personally, I hated the idea of the native canoes and the crocodiles. Others who ‘really knew’ because ‘they’d had some’ smiled and said “you wait till you are fired on at 10 yards range in the long grass at night and don’t know where it’s coming from. That will make your hair stand on end!” Fancy being afraid of rifle fire after the 25th September last in France! I just laughed and the others looked at one another and smiled and said “you wait!” I’ve waited and I’ve been through it and all I can say is that it has never given me one second’s nerves. There is none of the roar and the terrible noise of bursting shells of the other experience in France.

But to continue, the night arrived and amidst great silence, broken only by orders and counter orders and the giving of minute details and counter minute details we started at 7.30 at night.

The Skeeties and biting insects of many varieties made that night hideous. We went through the same old stinking marshes, waded through the same streams, and then stood for about two hours in the long grass near the Songwe bank awaiting our turn to cross. The fire flies that night, I remember, were a sight, they seemed to be everywhere.

What made matters worse was that no smoking was allowed and it was the same with talking, there was nothing to be done but just think and wonder how it fared with the advance Company, who had to go over first. I remember hearing hippo blowing and grunting a little way up the river. Suddenly two shots rang out followed by the sound of men dashing through the grass and reeds. One or two hoarse shouts and war cries from Askari followed, and then plenty of shrieks followed by more stamping of grass and savage snarl like shouts and then silence again. "It's all right they're over" the word was whispered down the line.

Our men had settled the two German Askari with cold steel before they had a chance to do more than fire a shot each! And so we went over, about a dozen at a time in a sort of a boat ferry and the Songwe – the nightmare of days past was behind us!

All that night we lay in the long grass by the river side shivering with cold and wet through with dew that soaked one as badly as any rain. Remember, we were wearing just a shirt and very short knickers. Next morning we were on the move for the first German 'Boma' (or fort) that we knew of.

It was at a place called M'sessi and lay on the other side of a wide 'Dambo' or marsh covered with tall grass. After hours of blazing sun and marching through reeds and grass 8 and 9 feet high, we halted just as our 12 pdr guns got to work from a hill behind us. It seemed quite like old times to hear the familiar sound of shells passing over head! After about two hours of sitting in the long grass, off we went again.

Then darkness came. All of a sudden word was passed down and the column split up and started to 'dig in' at various points. My luck was dead out, for my particular point was in some reeds, that grew in very damp

ground, and were a mass of Skeeties! I'll never forget that night as long as I live. For mental and physical torture it beat anything I've ever been through. The cold that night was awful, and the dew drenched one until the moisture ran off one's clothes. All this time the Skeeties just bit and worried without mercy. Face, neck, arms, knees and thighs were one mass of lumps. I simply couldn't move with ague (fever) but just sat on an ammunition box from 8 o'clock that night – it's pitch dark by 7 o'clock – till next morning – about 5.30. Sometimes my teeth were chattering and my inside was shaking like a jelly and at others my face and eyes were dry and burning. I never shut my eyes once, but just looked at my watch every 10 minutes and prayed for dawn. That was the second night that I hadn't had a wink of sleep and I had had two days of marching.

Well dawn did come at last! And then to our utter surprise the news came down that the Germans had cleared off in the night and M'sessi was ours without a shot being fired! You ought to have heard the language!!! We'd all promised ourselves that we'd pay the Germans out with interest for our sufferings that night: in fact, it was a treat, when the moon came out to see the Askari lovingly wipe the dew off their bayonets every few minutes and then peer out at the trees that marked the position of the Boma. And here we'd been 'sold a pup!'

If we were surprised at the Germans clearing out without fighting, we were absolutely thunderstruck when we saw the formidable defences of the place. It sent a shudder through one when one saw the stake pits uncovered and looked down on the long sabre like pieces of sharpened bamboos that covered the bottom. There were these all over the place. And what would have happened to the first few that charged if we had been forced to storm the place – can well be imagined! Inside the stockade were beautifully made trenches and shrapnel proof huts!

Well, I felt so rotten and ill and tired that I couldn't face breakfast, but as soon as we fell out, I took a big dose of Quinine and lay down for about four hours sleep and then felt much better. In the afternoon four patrols were sent out to try and locate the enemy, and I had charge of one of them. We went off at about 2 o'clock. From that moment the whole country seemed to change.

We left the “Dambos” and the native paths behind, and came to quite wide roads through beautifully kept villages. The natives were tall and plump, the cattle were fat, and everywhere were signs of plenty of food. Banana groves and ‘Kasava’ gardens were everywhere. Our march was a triumphal procession.

The natives came out of every village and were delighted to see us. Bananas, milk and eggs were pressed on us on all sides, and what was more, everyone was anxious to lead us to where they thought the Germans were ‘not five minutes ago’. At every village I had a knot of men leading us proudly as guides and an ever increasing mob tailing off our rear. At every village I’d have to stop and order the hangers on to ‘hop it’ but, before the next village was reached, it was as bad as ever.

I had only one other white with me and he was a South African in charge of the stretcher bearer section. “They want to see Hell knocked out of those ----- Germans” he kept on saying, “and I’ll show how it’s done if I see any!” It was only then that I noticed that he’d got a rifle. And he with a red cross on his arm! “Borrowed it to defend my wounded” he said with a grin. According to the villagers there were Germans everywhere. In front, behind, to the right and to the left.

‘Would I please come and they’d lead me there!’ I soon got sick of it when I learnt – alas! - that all they wanted was a Lord Mayor’s procession through their own village with themselves proudly leading it!

However, just as I was getting fed up and was almost throwing all caution to the winds, there came four loud bangs to our left and four 11mm bullets – great big game killing ones – sang overhead.

I’d scarcely got the order out, when – so well trained are the Askari – they “left turned”, fired a volley into the thick kasava growth, and charged with yells and piercing war cries! Before we’d gone many yards, there was a triumphant yell from a scout whom I found struggling on top of a “Ruga Ruga” a German armed levy – our first prisoner!

I handed him over to three villagers as I wanted to question him and so saved his life, as at the time, the scout in his excitement was trying to ram his rifle down the Ruga's throat. I ought to mention here that about a dozen local villagers in their excitement and unarmed at that, had joined in the joyful chase. What a sight they must have been and how I laughed when I looked round and saw it!

The Askari were tearing through the plantation like mad men, whilst I, with my orderly, a scout and some village boys were bowling round the other side in order to head off any Huns that tried to break out into the open. I heard yells and curses in Dutch and English on my right, and on looking round, what did I see but my beautiful S.A. medical orderly charging along with his native stretcher bearer section! He was alternately kicking his native stretcher bearers to better effort and blasting the plantation at random!

But the sight at the rear was the most comical of the lot. The villagers had got a rope round the neck of my prisoner and were tearing along in my wake as hard as they could. Over water logged sweet potato beds and through banana groves they went. Every time the poor blighter fell he nearly got hanged and got a wallop with sticks by the kids who had joined in the chase and were determined not to be far away at the kill!!! It was more like a Fred Karno show than any fight I've ever heard of. Well, we charged up and down many times till I called a halt and then found we had bagged four out of five of that Hun patrol. So back we went to M'sessi in great glee.

The Askari with waving plumes of flowing grass in their caps roared out their songs. How they sang! Every other word was "Gerrimani". They were dogs, they were pigs, they were cowards and couldn't fight etc. etc. The singers told the truth at the start of the march, as to the numbers we'd slain and captured, but as the miles slipped by we got onto the hundreds mark. And as the miles slipped by so our column increased. First of all came the prisoner led by the villagers (with rope still round his neck) then came Bwana Cooper with a bunch of chillies in his helmet (placed there by his orderly as a sign that he was 'some hot stuff' no doubt), afterwards 22 Askari, next my long legged Afrikaner with his staff carrying our only

casualty, and lastly a variegated mob of yelping villagers leading goats and calves and carrying bunches of Bananas and Gourds of milk (“prizes” for the deliverers).

June 22nd

I thought it wouldn't be long before I had to break off in this long and voluminous account, and now it is over a month since I started it! I've been in some weird times since I wrote last, still I think it is better to finish this diary (or rather continue with it) now I have started.

To continue, what was my huge delight on arriving in camp at M'sessi to discover that the other patrols had drawn a blank! You see, I being a newcomer, and knowing nothing at all in consequence, was given a very easy patrol, the difficult and interesting ones being taken by hardy veterans of some 9 months to a year's service in the force – prior to that some of them had been junior residents and had reached the mature age of 22 or 24 years and consequently knew all there was to know about fighting, anyway they thought so.

You can imagine the irony of fate that sent the Germans to the wrong patrol and decreed that a newcomer should mop it up and that the Colonel should be very pleased and say so and that the only prisoner who could give information should be brought in by that self-same newcomer who after all had only experienced European fighting which isn't half so difficult! I could hardly sleep that night for laughing to myself. My luck was really in that time. And although I've had some rough and wearisome times since, my luck has been very much in ways that count – as you will read later.

Ipiana – at one time a German Mission Station, but now a strongly fortified Boma – was our next objective. We marched out of M'sessi a very strong force, for others had joined us and we had a good proportion of white troops from South Africa with us then, at 2 o'clock in the afternoon. I couldn't help wondering, as we went along, how on earth we were going to cross the river which raced by like a mill stream before it. Still on we went through country that was lovely by comparison with the “dog-hole” country we'd passed through. It was like the Israelites marching into the

country that flowed with milk and honey. Strangely enough the Skeeties – the bane of our lives – were not nearly so bad here. Well, we arrived in front of “Jericho” at 5.30 and couldn’t make out why we weren’t fired on. Taking no risks, we dug ourselves in and waited for the Engineers to play the next card. They played trumps, for though the Huns had destroyed the suspension bridge across, they left one wire cable intact and to this the Engineers fixed a ferry made of a platform on two canoes! And on this frail affair we took over our 12 pdr guns! The guns are drawn by trek oxen and these we had to swim over. It was a wonderful sight to see two local natives drive an ox down the steep bank and plunge with it into the foaming river that fairly raced by. A native swam on either side of the ox and guided it over taking a horn each.

This river, by the way, swarms with “cros” (crocodiles)! One seized an ox and got away with it. The poor old ox put up a wonderful fight, and the last we saw of them was the ox and the croc rolling over and over one another and being carried down by the rushing waters.

6

Again when we got in, we found the place empty and the birds flown. I can never make out why they never put up a show. The place was very strongly fortified and was a network of trenches and stake pits, and moreover, they had planted whole acres of grass with horrible little sharp bamboo spikes. Certainly the German missionaries know how to make themselves comfortable!!!

There were two brick buildings with huge rooms and verandahs, and they even had a bowling alley! You ought to have seen the Askari and the white troops rushing about for souvenirs and loot as soon as the “fall out” was given. Groups of three or four were tearing about chasing a chicken here or a duck there, in fact any kind of ‘Inyama’ (meat) left behind by the Huns. As soon as a chicken was caught, off came his head in a flash, the body being thrown down out of the way and the head popped into a pocket, then off they’d go again after something else. I may here mention that it is a native custom that, by cutting off the head, that particular Askari establishes his claim to that particular chicken and nobody else thinks of interfering with the body.

Later on after two or three heads have been got, the Askari will sort out his own birds by the simple expedient of fitting the heads to the bodies and pointing out that it is against all the laws of nature for a black head to grow, say on a yellow body etc. ad infinitum.

Two sheep strolled into the Boma, but to the disgust of the soldier men these were claimed by the O.C. Supplies, as were one cow and a calf. However, about an hour after we got in, two tame bush buck rolled up, and you never heard anything like the yells and howls that greeted them! "Inyama! Inyama!" yelled the Askari "look at that Buck", roared the S.A. contingent – and a fine chase followed.

A struggling and sprawling mob with sticks, stones, knives and bayonets chased them all over the camp. In and out of huts, over trenches and then the barbed wire stopped the Buck, and oh joy the prize was theirs! The Buck just hesitated for a second and then cleared the wire beautifully and off they went to disappear into the long grass! About 40 perspiring and dust covered men stopped and kept on looking at the 5 foot wire fence and then one another till it dawned on them that the Buck had really escaped them! Then, how they swore!!!

Ipiana was considered an important base through which all the supplies would pass on their way to the column, which was to march towards New Langenberg, away up in the mountains some 37 miles away. So it was decided to leave one Officer behind with half a company of Askari to garrison it, and also to recruit all the local natives he could for tenga-tenga (carrier) work, as well as buy cattle and supplies.

I remember we, the officers of C Company and one or two who had dropped in for a chat – were just having some tea, bully beef and biscuits on a cool verandah, preparatory to moving off very shortly, when we heard that Ipiana was to be garrisoned. How I envied the lucky blighter who'd get the job – how we all envied him and wondered and reckoned on whom the choice would fall. This Captain couldn't be spared and that one would be wanted for later on for this or that.

The merits of all were discussed, bar those of yours truly! I was green to the country, didn't know the language, was a stranger to the native ways etc. etc. Personally I had come to a very modest estimation of my own worth after so continually hearing the particular virtues of all the others. Anyway, we boiled all the available down to four and two of these had taken the precaution to write "chits" all ready to the Supply Officer behind to send on all their belongings, in case the choice fell on them – when I got a chit from Major Barton of ours, who is Chief Staff Officer, requesting my attendance before Colonel Hawthorne at once. The others continued the discussion imagining that I was wanted probably for some patrol or advance guard work.

All the Colonel said was "Cooper you'll take over command here when we move off. Major Barton will hand you your special orders and for the rest, you'll use your own discretion as you will have the authority of an Officer Commanding a Base Depot"!! I tried not to look surprised and not laugh, but I couldn't help doing the latter. "What's amusing you Cooper?" he asked with a smile. "Nothing Sir" I said "only I know one or two people who'll feel very sore about it".

I wish I could have seen my own face as I strolled very casually over to the group I'd left and just sat down. My boy brought me bully beef and with a drawl I waved it away. "Take it away 'Carriage' I hate the sight of that damned stuff". "You're a silly ass Cooper" chipped in one of the young hopefuls, "you've got a devil of a march in front of you and my experience of this country" etc. etc. "All the same", I said, turning away so that they couldn't see my grin, "I have a sort of craving for Mutton, roast Mutton, and I think I'll just wait and have some tonight with fried potatoes and a couple of vegetables"!

And so I started my career as Officer commanding Ipiana by drawing my company to attention whilst the column marched out on its long weary march in the heat of the afternoon's sun!

You really can't imagine how delighted I was at my new job. I'd got a ton of work before me and long hours of it to do, but I was practically my own master. A whole district under my control and I was "Bwana Kubra"

of it all. A Transport Officer and a Supply Officer were left behind under me. At five o'clock every morning my work began, the court yard before the house would be full of hundreds of "tenga-tenga" waiting for their loads and over my early morning cup of coffee I'd write reports and orders, give instructions for escorts for the day's supply column and see to things generally.

By about 7 o'clock the loads would be ready and amidst a perfect uproar of shouting and singing the tenga would move off. Then, breakfast on the verandah – our mess was generally about 4 strong, when Officers arrived on their way up it was more – and a very cheery meal it was. Eggs and bacon, chops or steaks and fresh fish from the river! What a difference from the hard tack of the past few weeks. After breakfast, over my shaving, I'd receive the local chiefs and headmen who had come to report themselves and bring presents.

Through my interpreter, I'd make long speeches, pointing out all the blessings that would fall on their heads under the glory of British rule etc. etc. Return speeches from the chiefs expressing unbounded joy at the coming of the British and of the final departure of those first cousins of pigs, to wit the "Gerrymans"! That being ended, to business, our brave soldiers need full bellies so that they may be brave in the face of the hated "Gerrymans" and up to now we have had plenty of tenga, but the cowardly "Gerrymans" – as they have seen for themselves – ran so fast and so far that our tenga had grown tired. Would they bring some more and so help the good cause?

All sorts of excuses would be offered, the men were old or else the men had been taken away by the Gerrymans etc. etc. Final speech, 50 men must be at the Boma at sunrise on the morrow or else – "chubwino!" (Good) they will send them. Acceptance of presents on all sides.

Then would come the job that would try the wits and wisdom of old Soloman himself. Crowds of natives would arrive with disputes to be settled. Such cases too! I'd carry on to the best of my ability. At first I'd consult as to the usual custom from one 'yclept McDouglas a native interpreter, a by birth and a rogue by profession and hobby. But I

found McDouglas' advice so astounding at times that I refused to take it and instead searched that gentleman's hut!!! It was, as I thought, absolutely full of all the good things of this life – bribes from litigants requiring a favourable verdict. Result a most humiliating and painful five minutes for the Douglas man. Held on the ground face downwards by Askari and received 15 of the best with a chikoti wielded by a stout hearted Sergeant.

After that I'd inspect all the grounds and European and native quarters followed by a pack of 4 Hun dogs – who seemed delighted at the fuss made over them by their new masters. Then back to the verandah and more writing work. After which a bath to wash away the sweat and dust and a light lunch followed by a couple of hours siesta. At 2 o'clock a walk through the neighbouring country to inspect the villages and at the same time to strafe any game that strolled across one's way. Then back for tea and a chat at sundown over the quinine and the "Sundowner" or whisky tot. Then, dinner by lamplight followed by bed at about half past eight.

There would be nothing else to do so it was always early to bed. There one could lay and smoke and think and listen to the weird night sounds; the singing of the Askari and tenga in their lines, the eternal chirruping of thousands of crickets and at intervals to the almost human like wail of a Hyena. Gradually the sounds seem to become more indistinct and quietly drop away in company with your last smoked cigarette and then dreams.

Unless absolutely limb weary, insomnia in a mild form is prevalent in this part of the world. A sharp "ema!" Halt! From the sentry, and you're wide awake. You just listen until the "Chubwino!" reassures you and you roll over and doze again until the telegraph operator wakes you round about midnight with wires that have come through from the column. That means crawling out from under your Skeetie curtain and lighting a light. Sometimes the messages are important and need attending to at once, at others you read them, swear softly to yourself and retire again to your bunk and lay awake and wonder what on earth some fellows you know of are doing with a bit of red flannel on the lapels of their jackets.

In this way the days passed very pleasantly for me, I learnt more of the natives and the country and language than I would have done in months spent with the Regiment. The only blot was, the lack of news of the

outside world and the absence of any mails. No mails coming in and none going out. Everything has to be carried on carriers' heads and so the most important of all things – food – is the only commodity that comes up from far beyond. I have never received a parcel since I arrived though I know that quite a few must be waiting for me at Zomba or at the Bar.

After about ten days of this ideal time I was ordered to 'clear' Ipiana and move off to Mwaya a port on the north end of the Lake and 8 miles from Ipiana. (**Iringa?**)

So off to Mwaya I went with all my followers and became Officer commanding that. Here we were a busy centre, I had about 30 whites – principally engaged in the supplies and transport work – under my charge. I also had two white men – ex-planters – handed on to me as sort of subs to look after the Askari. On arrival I found a wire awaiting me, telling me that I had to proceed at once to Eulende to a place about 8 miles N.E. of Mwaya and clear up some Germans there.

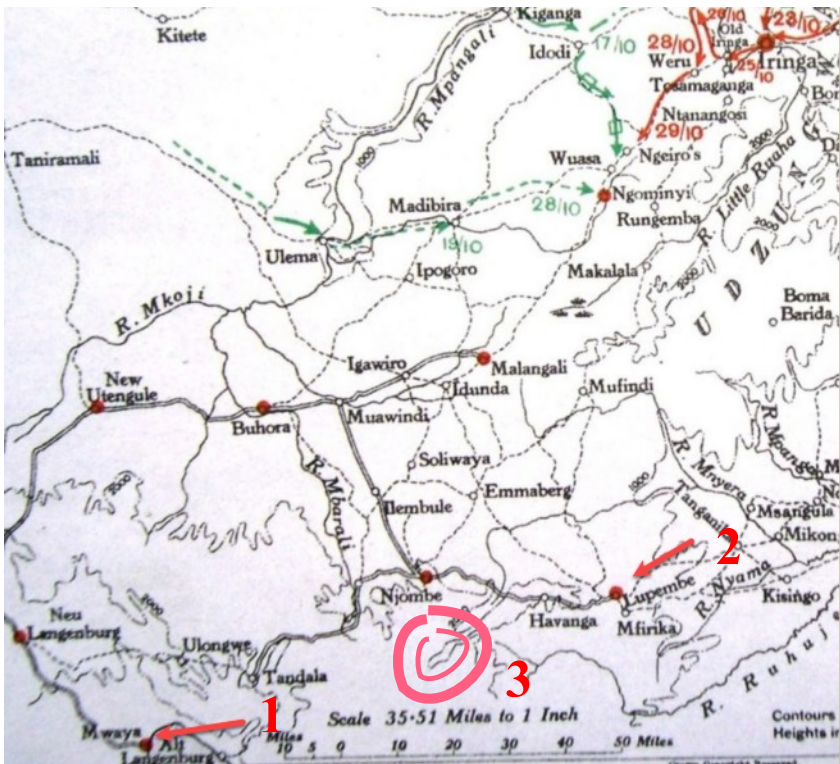
Well it sounded so nice and easy – especially as the Intelligence Officer – an ex-missionary – brought me a pretty looking sketch map of the district and told me that though I had two rivers to cross, he had arranged for canoes to be there etc. etc. Next day was all bustle and arranging things and, I, having calculated distances from the Intelligence Officer's map, decided to start at dark, at 6 in the evening, so as to be at M'sassu's village about dawn. So at 6 o'clock off we marched I and Dunning – one of my henchmen – leading, about 60 Askari behind us and about 25 tenga carrying food and ammunition bringing up the rear.

We were all in great form at the start, humming tunes to ourselves as we marched along.

This unfinished letter is the last correspondence. Sadly, Edward George Cooper was killed in action at Lupembe on the 4th August 1916. An account of the action is contained in the following letter dated 03/12/16 from his Commanding Officer.

His Commanding Officer was wounded early in the action and sent a message for E.G. Cooper to take over Command but, unfortunately,

George Cooper had already been killed – first a bullet through his arm and then one through his chest killing him instantaneously.



Above: Arrow 1 Mawya George Cooper's from whence his company set out for Lupembe (arrow 2) where on the 4th August 1916, he was fatally wounded. It's not clear was at the town of Lupembe or peninsular of that name (red circle 3) with its 3 hills marked A, B and C. Picture below.



Letter XIX Official Notification to His Mother of George Cooper's Death in Action

Nyasaland Field Force,
East Africa,
September 3rd., 1916

Dear Mrs Cooper,

It was with great regret that I heard of the death of your son, who was killed in action at Lupembe on the 4th August.

During the short time he was with the regiment, he had shown himself to be an excellent Officer and a fearless leader. The Native Colour Sergeant of the Company he was with at the time he was killed, by name Maulance, told me that his courage was splendid, and that by his behaviour, he inspired confidence in the men, who were being subjected to a heavy fire.

On a previous occasion, he carried out with great credit to himself a Patrol to Lupembe, with a force largely composed of recruits he engaged, and defeated with loss a superior enemy force.

He is an acknowledged loss to the Regiment. Lupembe, where we are now, is a mission station on the Neu Langenburg-Mahenge Road. He was buried close to where he fell, and the place has been bricked in.

I wish to extend to you my great sympathy in your loss.

From
Officer Commanding 1st King's African Rifles

Letter XX Account of George Cooper's Death

Lupembe
3rd December 1916

Dear

In answer to yours of 03/10/16 received last mail, I am writing at once so that you can inform Mrs Cooper all particulars which I believe have already been sent by C.O. K.A.R. (Commanding Officer, King's African Rifles) but as I was in command of the show she most likely would like my details as well.

E.G. Cooper had been, for some time before the Lupembe show, working on the Line of Communication and I only knew him for a few days at the end of July when I was sent back to take over Command of the force on the Line of Communication round Njambi. Just before my arrival Cooper had a small show in which he utterly routed the enemy and had reported a large force which he could not deal with with the force under his Command, this being the reason for my arrival.

On the 29th July Cooper went with 1st Coy (Company) to patrol on my Right Flank and clear the Mission Station at Pangira re-joining the main body in the evening of the 2nd August. The night of the 3rd August we slept 7 miles West of Lupembe and sent reconnoitring parties who reported only 7 enemy scouts at Lupembe.

On the morning of the 4th August we left to reconnoitre in force Lupembe knowing that a force of about 150 to 200 Germans were in the neighbourhood. About 3,000 yards from Lupembe news came that a large force of the enemy had arrived and taken up position during the night 3rd/4th. The news got to me too late and the enemy opened fire about the same time.

Firing started about 10 a.m. and the fight continued till 1 p.m. when I ordered a retirement.

Cooper was in Command of Advance Guard and I did not see him during fighting as I was wounded early in the show.

At 11.30 a.m. I sent message to Cooper to take over Command and I got the report that he had been killed. He was hit twice, once through the arm and second through his chest; he died instantaneously. His body was brought out by my Colour Sergeant and his orderly, Private Anderson and was buried during the retirement by Rev. Young of the Mission who was acting as Transport Officer.

Unfortunately I was not able to see to the burial myself and the articles, watch, locket and ring were buried with the body. In the excitement Young forgot about them.

The Germans had great respect for Cooper and after we left the people at the Mission built a brick wall round the grave and a cross has now been added.

I visited the grave on my return here and found flowers had been placed there by our people.

Cooper during his short period with the K.A.R. had made himself exceedingly popular with all ranks. His Askari would go anywhere with him. He was a great loss to us.

If there are any details wanted or Mrs Cooper would like me to do anything I will do all that is in my power or that is possible.

.....

ADDENDUM I

Military Operations East Africa. Volume I. August 1914 – September 1916. (Extract - George Cooper's last battle)

ON THE 12TH JUNE BRIG.-GENERAL NORTHEY RECONSTITUTED A COLUMN UNDER MAJOR FLINDT, with orders to move eastwards from Masoko on Úlongwe[1]. Next day a detachment of the 1 K.A.R. under **Lieut. E. G. Cooper**, sent from Mwaya by steamer, and occupied Alt Langenburg on the eastern shore of Lake Nyasa. This was the point of departure of the steep track running up to Tandala, 13 miles east of Ulongwe, a route destined to become the line of communication with Njombe.

On the 15th, in order to cut off the enemy's retreat from Ulongwe north-eastwards through the hills, Hawthorn was ordered from New Utengule to Njombe, [2] Flindt's new column reached Neu Wangenannshöhe, much delayed by flooded rivers and steep and difficult tracks, on the 15th, gathering in the two detached companies of the 1 K.A.R. on the way.

Leaving his guns to follow, he reached Ulongwe three days later, the enemy departing as he approached. Continuing an arduous though unopposed march eastwards for 13 miles to Mwakete, he turned south to Tandala, another 3 miles, driving off small German rear-parties there on the 22nd.

At Tandala Flindt was held up for some days. His men were exhausted by their march through the hills in biting cold and wet; his guns had not yet come up; food was unobtainable locally, and his carriers were deserting [3].

It was not until the 30th that his weary column, fortunately still unopposed on its way north-eastwards across the hills, reached Kidugala and gained touch with Hawthorn, then 12 miles farther east at Njombe.

In the meantime Hawthorn's march south-eastwards from New Utengule was uneventful until on the 20th he reached the Mbarali river near Kidugala, where minor skirmishes occurred with a German force of unknown strength. Next morning the familiar discovery was made that the Germans had withdrawn.

On the 22nd Hawthorn entered Kidugala, to learn from native reports that the retreating enemy, about 20 Germans and 220 Askari, (irrespective of any that might be retiring from Ulongwe before Flindt) had left Njombe by the route running north to Iringa. By the following evening his force had reached its destination at Njombe. Here he was for some days out of touch, his wireless failing to gain communication either with Flindt or with headquarters. As some consolation he found, abandoned by the enemy, 10 tons of wheat and 3 tons of maize to replenish his now nearly exhausted supplies.

On the 24th, shortly after sending a reconnoitring detachment eastwards towards Lupembe in the hope of cutting off parties retreating by that route to Mahenge, he had word from local native headmen of a German concentration near Malangali (**Sketch 65**), about 45 miles north of Njombe. The force was said to be 1,000 strong, and the report strongly suggested the approach of some, at any rate, of the enemy's troops from farther north. The detachment was at once recalled, Njombe was put in a state of defence, and on the 29th, when communication with headquarters was re-established, Hawthorn was ordered to stand fast. Next day Brig.-General Northey telegraphed again:

“No general advance will be made beyond line Njombe-Kidugala-Brandt(**Sketch 64**) until the situation as regards enemy is clearer or further intimation received from General Smuts. Os.C. columns will threaten enemy by active patrolling and lose no opportunity of striking. —Meanwhile stores will be accumulated at Njombe, Kidugala and Brandt preparatory to further advance.”

On the 3rd July Flindt's column, from Tandala, reached Njombe and came under Hawthorn's orders. Meanwhile, to the north-west, Rodger, sent

forward from Brandt, reached Buhora on the 1st, with Murray following from Rungwe. Brig.-General Northey's forces were thus, at the beginning of July, disposed in two groups some 40 miles apart, about Njombe and Buhora respectively.

The Advance to Malangali

During the first week of July information from various sources confirmed the report (**Sketch 65**), received first by Hawthorn, that a considerable body of German troops was approaching from the north, said to consist of some 200 Germans, including a detachment of the Königsberg's crew, and 700 to 800 Askari, including 10 F.K., with at least one 10-5-cm. howitzer, the German force was reported to have organized defensive positions at Madibira and Malangali, respectively 45 miles north-east and 40 miles slightly north of east from Buhora on the two alternative routes from that place to Iringa.

South of Malangali the enemy was said to have outpost detachments at Emmaberg and Soliwaya on the alternative approaches from Njombe, respectively 20 miles north-east and 25 miles north of that place[4].

To have diverted these enemy reinforcements from the main theatre of war was in itself a success for Brig-General Northey, who was now completing supply arrangements for the further move northwards which his columns were now to make[5].

On the 4th July Hawthorn, now reinforced by Flindt as already described, left Njombe for Soliwaya, detaching to his right flank a small force which next day found that the German post at Emmaberg — variously reported as 100 to 300 strong - had been withdrawn two days earlier. The main column, meeting no opposition, camped on the 6th about 3 miles beyond Soliwaya, which had similarly been vacated by the enemy before its arrival.

After a day's halt to bring up supplies, Hawthorn reached Idunda, 6 miles south-west of Malangali, on the 8th ; here his flank column rejoined from Emmaberg, having had on the way a successful skirmish on the 6th with

a German rearguard[6]. Reconnaissance on the 10th showed that Malangali was strongly held, and for the next fortnight Hawthorn stood fast in his entrenched camp at Idunda, accumulating supplies and reconnoitring in preparation for the combined attack on Malangali which was to follow.

During this period occasional patrol encounters resulted in captures of German seamen[7] and Askari whose statements made it plain that the bulk of the German forces was at Malangali and had every intention of standing there.

Meanwhile by the 9th July the columns of both Rodger and Murray were assembled at Buhora, whence they could be moved either to Malangali or to Madibira.

At this juncture reliable reports that the enemy was bridging the Ruaha at Ulema, 20 miles west of Madibira, suggested the possibility that further enemy forces might be approaching from Tabora[8]. Murray was therefore ordered to reconnoitre in that direction[9], while on the 11th July Brig.-General Northey offered co-operation by Rodger to Hawthorn, should the latter not consider himself strong enough "to attack and capture Malangali position".

Hawthorn's reply— "Think I have enough to attack and capture position but not the garrison" —went on to suggest that while Rodger's co-operation might make his attack more effective it might alternatively cause the enemy to withdraw from both Malangali and Madibira and concentrate in rear at the junction of the Madibira-Iringa and Malangali-Iringa roads at Wuasa (Sketch 66), 45 miles north-east of Malangali.

This exchange of views was decisive. On the 13th July Brig.-General Northey ordered Rodger, together with Murray's two South African guns, to Igawiro, 26 miles along the Malangali route, where he would come under Hawthorn's orders ; the remainder of Murray's force would remain in reserve at Buhora, patrolling towards Madibira[10]; and Hawthorn, informed to this effect, was ordered to attack Malangali as soon as Rodger could cooperate. Leaving Buhora on the 14th and passing through Igawiro next day, Rodger's column, unopposed but somewhat hampered

by a shortage of carriers, reached the neighbourhood of Malangali on the 20th and gained touch with Hawthorn, now ready to move as soon as Rodger's necessary reconnaissance were completed[11].

Concurrently with Rodger's move, Murray's column went forward to Madibira to contain whatever German troops might still be there, it being Brig.-General Northey's opinion that the enemy was more likely to call upon Madibira to reinforce Malangali than to withdraw, as Hawthorn had seemed to expect, from both places.

Action of Malangali, 24th July 1916

Hawthorn's reconnaissance (**Sketch 65**) had located the German position on a broad ridge some 3 miles long lying roughly east and west between the parallel streams of the Ruaha river and its small southern tributary stream the Mgega[12]

Along the crest, passing through Malangali, runs the main route from Igawiro to Iringa. At the eastern end of the ridge, dominating the undulating bush-clad steppe country to the south and west, and affording perfect observation, stands a rocky outcrop known as the Pakene rocks (now better known as Lihomero) about which the Germans had prepared a well entrenched defensive system covering the Iringa road, which passes some 500 yards south of the position.

Against an enemy estimated to number not far short of 1,000 thus strongly posted, with a 10-5-cm. Howitzer outmatching the light British guns, the combined forces of Hawthorn and Rodger, approaching from the south and west respectively, totalled about 1,200: by no means an encouraging superiority[13].

In his operation orders issued on the 23rd July[14] Hawthorn stated his intention in the first instance to gain a footing on the ridge with a view to enveloping gradually the whole position, and directed that while Rodger approached from the west his own column would move round eastwards across country so as to attack the enemy's left and rear. Both columns were at attack at 8 a.m. on the 24th July.

Moving off on the 23rd, Hawthorn bivouacked for the night in the bush about 10 miles east of Idunda. His route early next morning followed the eastern side of a long valley which runs northward to join that of the Mgega; into this valley run numerous deep and precipitous rocky lateral ravines, across a series of which with no small difficulty his column made its way.

One such ravine in particular caused serious delay in the darkness before dawn. Consequently by the time Rodger's advanced guard — his 1 /K.A.R. company, under Captain A. C. Masters, approaching from the west into the eye of the rising sun along the open ridge came under the enemy's fire, Hawthorn was still moving along high ground a considerable distance east of the German position and separated from it by another deep valley.

German carriers could be seen retiring eastwards from the ridge, and Hawthorn's leading troops, a squadron of the 1 /South African Rifles and two companies of the 1 /K.A.R. under Major Baxter, were hastened across the final ravine and up the steep slopes leading to the Iringa road in the hope of cutting off at least the withdrawal of the enemy's howitzer, which was already in action against Rodger.

The difficulties of the ground made progress slow. Soon after 11 a.m. Baxter's units gained the road and formed outwards, one company of the 1 /K.A.R. north-eastwards to bar the approach from Iringa, with detachments facing north, and the bulk of his force directed westward against the enemy's main position. In close support came another 1/K.A.R. company and two 75-mm. guns, while Flindt with a squadron of the 2 /S. African Rifles and a company of the 1/K.A.R. remained in rear, to be followed by the remainder of the column.

Baxter's force on the ridge was soon heavily engaged. Disposed roughly on three sides of a square, some of its units found themselves under enfilade and oblique fire from advanced detachments of the enemy which fell back gradually on the German main position. Meanwhile Rodger's smaller force attacking from the west was held up, unable to advance across relatively open ground in full view of the central rocks ; a situation

by which the enemy was quick to profit in order to reinforce resistance to Hawthorn[15].

One attempt by the enemy to counter- attack the latter was effectively broken up; but hardly had Hawthorn's two 75-mm. Guns opened fire when the German howitzer, promptly switching from west to east, put them out of action, knocking out half the detachments and wounding among others Major Barton, Colonel Hawthorn's principal staff officer[16].

Early in the afternoon Baxter's action in disposing part of his force towards the approaches from Iringa was justified. His company on that flank was now heavily attacked by a force which must have left Malangali earlier to withdraw to Iringa and turned back on hearing the firing[17].

No support to this company appeared possible until the arrival of Flindt with the rest of the column, and its situation caused some anxiety[18].

Fortunately, the other companies becoming less heavily engaged, Baxter was presently able to reinforce his eastern flank, and on the arrival of Flindt soon afterwards this flank was cleared and the enemy driven off. Nevertheless in the course of some hours of confused fighting no decisive result was obtained, and when darkness fell the fortunes of the day still seemed uncertain.

In the absence of all contemporary records kept by Rodger's column it is impossible to say how that force fared; but it seems certain that, with all the advantages of ground and observation, the enemy was able to hold Rodger in check with but a small part of his own forces until late in the afternoon. Eventually Rodger's one company of the 1 / K.A.R. worked its way forward into the western face of the German position , which the enemy then abandoned.

Both the German howitzer and Rodger's guns kept up an intermittent fire until the evening; and by nightfall Hawthorn, still ignorant of Rodger's situation and aware only of indications that some at any rate of the enemy might have moved eastwards along the lower slopes between him and the

Ruaha, had no option but to dig in and await events. The night was bitterly cold , but quiet; and at dawn it was found, as on so many other occasions, that the Germans had slipped away across country under cover of darkness.

They left, however, the 10-5-cm. howitzer, of course rendered unserviceable, which its ox-team had not been able to get away.

At first sight the German retreat from Malangali is not easily to be explained ; but it may be supposed that the German commander, Braunschweig, over-estimated the numbers opposed to him, and that being attacked on both sides he was apprehensive of envelopment. He had, as Lettow tells us[19], been sent at the end of June from Dodoma through Iringa to stay the retreat of the border garrisons; at Malangali he was already far afield, and he was doubtless aware of Murray's move to Madibira in his rear.

The direction from which Hawthorn attacked appears to have come as a surprise, and quite probably this threat to the German line of retreat towards Iringa was decisive.

There was at any rate little doubt that the enemy had suffered considerably[20]. Pursuit, though ordered by Brig. General Northey on the 25th July, was not immediately practicable, since supplies had to be brought up, and it was not until the 29th that Hawthorn , preceded by Rodger, pushed on north-eastwards some 10 miles up the Iringa road.

By this time it was known that the German force had fallen back to Wuasa, the road - junction already **Sketch 66** mentioned; and while Brig .-General Northey came in person from Buhora to confer with Hawthorn at Malangali, Murray -who had reached Madibira unopposed on the 25th —was directed to remain at the latter place, patrolling in the direction of Wuasa[21]. On the 30th Rodger reached Bueni, 25 miles from Malangali and 20 miles short of Wuasa, where he too came to a halt.

Brig .-General Northey had now to deal with the situation on his increasingly exposed right flank and rear.

Operations round Lupembe

In the course of his operations so far, which, in addition to assisting Lieut.-General Smuts by drawing away an appreciable force of the enemy, had secured possession of the southern granary of the German protectorate, Brig.-General Northey had been fully aware of the risks he ran.

“I have realized all along”, he wrote, “that at any time the bulk of the German forces retiring before General Smuts may come on the top of me —if so, we will do our best to act as a buffer while General Smuts comes down after them.[22]”

Whilst pushing forward from Njombe he had hoped that in the wide tract of German territory between Mahenge[23] and Songea, to the east of his line of advance, into which the main German forces retreating before Smuts might fall back, he would have the support of a parallel movement by Portuguese troops. Our Allies, however, as we have seen, were not at this time in a position to render any such aid, and consequently Northey's long, thin line of communication lay open to attack from the east.

Soon after the occupation of Njombe information had begun to come in pointing to the move of German units from Iringa and Mahenge (**Sketch 66**) towards Lupembe, 40 miles east of Njombe on the route to Mahenge. Lupembe was of importance to the enemy, situated as it was in the rice growing Masagati district between the Ruhuje and Mnyera rivers, one of the principal sources of supply for the Mahenge area, and in it a large crop would soon be ready for harvesting. Following on the brief reconnaissance in that direction already mentioned[24], a patrol of the 1 /K.A.R. under **Lieut. Cooper**, sent from Njombe after Hawthorn's departure for Malangali, had on the 14th July had a skirmish near Lupembe in which it captured the German ex-Governor of the Neu Langenburg district, Dr. Stier[25], and returned without casualty.

On the 26th, with the threat from the eastward in mind, Brig.-General Northey detached the company of the 1 /K.A.R. under Captain Masters,

then with Rodger's force at Malangali, to return with Hawthorn's four 7-pdr. M.L. guns and two machine guns to Njombe with a view to reconnaissance towards Lupembe. Moving eastwards from Njombe with about 150 men, Masters encountered near Lupembe on the 4th August a well-posted force of the enemy whose strength he estimated at from 300 to 400. His force suffered somewhat heavily before being withdrawn, **Lieut. Cooper being killed and he himself wounded**[26].

This confirmation of the enemy's presence on his flank, coupled with the wishes of Lieut.-General Smuts, which since the fight at Malangali Brig.-General Northey had been impatient to learn, led to a change of the latter's dispositions.

The Commander-in-Chief, telegraphing on the 5th, informed him that until a further advance by van Deventer—then concentrating in readiness about Nyangalo[27]—on Kilosa cleared up the situation the enemy's intentions could not be ascertained; it could not be said whether any retirement towards Iringa was taking place. Lieut.-General Smuts therefore suggested that Northey should not at present advance farther towards Iringa, but should make himself secure at Madibira and Bueni and meanwhile deal with the enemy in the direction of Lupembe.

Acting on this, on the 7th August Brig.-General Northey recalled Hawthorn, leaving Rodger and Murray to confront the Germans then at Wuasa[28]: a decision which meant weakening his striking force against the enemy's main concentration, but which was necessary in the absence of other support on the eastern flank. Hawthorn began his return journey next day, was back at Njombe on the 12th and without delay moved out eastwards towards Lupembe[29].

No opposition was encountered. On Hawthorn's approach the Germans retreated, allowing him to occupy the mission station at Lupembe on the 18th, and next day the enemy surprisingly evacuated also a commanding natural position at Mfirika, 5 miles to the south - east, on the edge of the high plateau of open grass steppe across which the column had come. At Mfirika the whole character of the country suddenly changes. The ground falls eastwards abruptly, for a thousand feet or more, to the densely

wooded valleys of the River Mugwe and other streams draining eventually into the wide low-lying valley of the Ruhuje and Rufiri rivers, beyond which rise out of the haze the uplands of Mahenge over 100 miles away to the north-eastward.

Descending into the bush in the broken ravines beyond Mfirika, patrols followed up the enemy during the ensuing week, taking a few prisoners, while the column established itself at Lupembe and Mfirika[30].

The Advance to Iringa

The uncertainty as to the enemy's intentions which had led the Commander-in-Chief to suggest, on the 5th August, that Northey should go no farther towards Iringa, began to give place to a clearer picture as the main British operations developed. By the 19th, when Hawthorn's occupation of Mfirika had reasonably secured Northey's right flank, Lettow's forces opposing Smuts were in retreat from the Wami towards Morogoro, while along the Central Railway Kraut was falling back before van Deventer on Kilosa.

Farther west the Belgians, in possession of the railway terminus at Kigoma, had begun their convergent march on Tabora from the west and north with the support of Crewe's force from Mwanza. From Tabora as yet no danger was to be expected: between that place and Iringa lay some 250 miles of barren, thinly populated country by no means easy to traverse even if Wahle's relatively small forces — cut off from Lettow by van Deventer—should eventually choose to come that way.

From Kilosa, and even from Morogoro, a German retreat to the healthier area about Iringa was still a possibility; but its direction seemed more and more likely to be towards Mahenge, and in that case Brig.-General Northey, if he moved to Iringa, would be well placed on the enemy's flank. For such a move, if it could reasonably be ventured, he was prepared and eager.

On the 21st August Rodger, from Bueni (**Sketch 66**), drove the enemy out of an advanced post at Ngominyi, 12 miles to the northward on the

route to Wuasa, and Brig.-General Northey issued orders preparatory to an attack on the main German position at Wuasa six miles beyond. Rodger, leaving a detachment to watch that position, was directed to occupy Rungemba, 10 miles east of Ngominyi, while Murray from the westward was to gain the high ground between Lutego and Wuasa.

On the same day Northey telegraphed to Lieut.-General Smuts his readiness to attack Wuasa and advance on Iringa; and when, on the 22nd, he learned that van Deventer was in Kilosa and Kraut retiring south-eastwards towards Kisaki, it seemed clear that his moment had arrived. It had also, however, already arrived for the enemy.

In the course of the 21st and 22nd the Germans evacuated Wuasa, retiring towards Iringa. This news, together with information that Rodger and Murray had on the 22nd carried out their tasks unopposed, reached Northey on the 23rd, upon which he ordered the former to establish himself strongly between Rungemba and Ngominyi, patrolling eastwards, and Murray to send strong patrol which will occupy Iringa if possible[31]. To both he emphasized the essential need of information as to the direction of the German retirement.

Following up north-eastwards by parallel routes during the 24th and 25th, Rodger established himself some 10 miles north of Rungemba, while Murray, sending forward a strong detachment from Wuasa, on the 26th located the retiring enemy in position at Weru, some 23 miles ahead and 15 miles short of Iringa[31].

On the 27th August there came, crossing a further enquiry by Northey whether he should push on, a welcome telegram sent two days earlier from G.H.Q. One third of Kraut's force from Kilosa, said the Commander-in-Chief, which had retired towards Iringa, was likely to diverge towards Mahenge, "giving Iringa a wide berth"; but, he added, "if you delay too long, enemy may elect to proceed to Iringa and make your work more difficult."

He there fore approved an attempt to reach Iringa at an early date. No more was needed. Northey's information already tended to show that the

Germans about Iringa, if forced to retire, would go south-eastwards towards Mahenge, crossing the Udzungwa range by way of Boma Himbu and Muhanga, respectively 12 and 35 miles from Iringa ; and on the 28th, with this in view, he ordered Rodger and Murray forward to Iringa, the former at the same time to detach a mobile force to move by the most direct route to seize the crossing of the Little Ruaha at Boma Himbu, so as to cut the German line of retreat.

He was not to know that in this latter design he had been forestalled by the timely withdrawal of the enemy, and it was not until late on the 29th August that Rodger - apparently not realizing the need for speed - left his camp north of Rungemba, heading north-eastward[33].

Murray, meanwhile, had gone on hotfoot, meeting no opposition, and at 11 a.m. on the 29th his advanced guard, "C" Company, Northern Rhodesia Police, under Captain Dickinson, entered Iringa[34].

It was quickly verified that the bulk of the enemy's force had retreated south-eastwards, heading for Mahenge as Northey had expected. There can be little doubt that Northey's occupation of Iringa, the northernmost point of his great thrust into the enemy's territory, in the words of his war diary, decided the Germans in front of van Deventer to retire direct on Mahenge, and not via Iringa.

Equally van Deventer's advance forced the enemy from Iringa to go eastwards and not northwards. In this fact lies the full strategic justification of Brig.-General Northey's bold and successful contribution, by his penetration north-eastwards, to the conduct of the campaign as a whole. More remained, however, for him to do.

Footnotes

1 Composition: 2 sqdns. S.A. Rifles ; 2 coys. 1 K.A.R. . (Galbraith and Beaumont); 1 sect. 12-pdr. Q.F. guns ; four 7-pdr. M.L. guns; 2 m.g.; det. S. African. Engineers.

2 An attempt by the enemy on the night 14th/15th to retake Alt Langenburg was easily repulsed.

3 On 24th June Flindt telegraphed: "All foraging patrols report" no food in district. Have informed Hawthorn cannot move." Asking for carriers for his guns to be sent up from Alt Langenburg, he added: "These boys must have blankets; cold intense up here: probable cause of desertion cold and no food.

4 It is now known that on 6th June , Lettow ordered the Königsberg detachment (4 officers, 110 O.r.), 10.F.K., and a 10.5 -cm . howitzer to Iringa, to oppose the British advance from Neu Langenburg, and that on 25th June, Capt. Braunschweig was placed in command of the German troops in the Iringa area . This officer ordered 2. F.K. from Mufindi (20 m. S.E. of Malangali) to Lupembe, and concentrated the rest of his force at Malangali. The howitzer was one of four landed at Sudi in March 1916 (see p. 287).

5 Details are unfortunately lacking. Although the rainy season proper ended in May, heavy rain at times continued to make even carrier transport difficult along the lengthening L. of C. Well deserved tribute is paid by Brig.-General Northey in his War Diary to the work of the S. African Engineers and Nyasaland Public Works Dept. on roads and bridges: "Motor - cars can now (5th July) run through from Mwaya via Neu Langenburg and New Utengule to Brandt —where there were only a month ago only native hoed roads; this road starts at 1,500 feet above the sea and crosses the Poroto mountains at "8,000." Fortunately most of the country afforded grain and cattle in abundance, while the local natives, as the advance proceeded, welcomed the British and willingly supplied both food and information.

6 The enemy lost 1 killed, 5 wounded and captured, including a petty officer of the Königsberg. (53912)

7 Among others the master-at-arms of the Königsberg was captured with a nominal roll of the detachment. The patrols of German seamen, naturally unfamiliar with African warfare, and with a preference for sleeping in villages, were no match for the trained K. A. R. Askari in night work in the bush.

8 As in fact happened a few months later (see Vol. II). This contingency is not mentioned in Brig.-General Northey's war diary until the end of August (The already exhausted condition of Lieut.-General Smuts's troops does not seem as yet to have been taken into account).

9 On 15th Murray reported that construction of a bridge at Ulema had been begun, but had been abandoned.

10 No details are available as to Murray's movements between 9th July, when he was at Buhora, and 25th July, when he was at Madibira. One of his patrols had the best of a skirmish with a German patrol at Kiwere (15 m. NE of Buhora) on 11th July.

11 The difficulty of controlling these operations at a distance is shown by a telegram on 20th July from Northey to Hawthorn: "Wire date you propose attack Malangali position as I wish move Murray accordingly." The reply was: "Am waiting till Rodger reports he is satisfied with reconnaissance. Will wire date as soon as he reports." At 4.20 p.m. on the 21st Hawthorn telegraphed that he proposed leaving Idunda on the 23rd and attacking next day.

12 The name Ruaha is a local generic term for a river and is given to several different streams in this neighbourhood. The river here referred to eventually runs into the Great Ruaha. (53912 R)

13 The composition of the British columns was:

Rodger	Hawthorn
1 Coy. 1/K.A.R	1 /K.A.R., 5 coys.
2 sqdns. 2/. Afr. Rifles	1 sqdn 1 /S. Afr. Rifles.
4 75-mm. Q.F. Guns (5/S. Afr. Md. Rifles)	2 sqdns. 2 /S. Afr. Rifles. 2 75-mm . Q.F. guns (5/S. Afr. Md. Rifles)
6 m.g.	4 7 - pdr. M.L. Guns. 11 m.g.

The German strength appears to have been somewhat over-estimated by Brig.-General Northey. A German account gives it approximately as 550 (Königsberg detachment 100; three F.K. about 150 each) with 6 m.g., one 10.5-cm. howitzer. (Krieg zur See, Kämpfe d. kais. Marine in d. deutschen Kolonien, p. 239.) These figures, however, may be based on peace strengths.

14 No copy of these orders can be traced. They are referred to in an unofficial record of the 1 / K.A.R .

15 The telegraph line to Iringa ran along the ridge and it has been stated by survivors that the Germans had a concealed observer, who tapped into the line, west of their position, reporting Rodger's movements with great accuracy.

16 The fire of the howitzer, even allowing for the shortness of the range (1,000 to 1,200 yards), was exceedingly accurate. The two guns were disabled, and 10 out of 12 of their detachments hit, by the howitzer's third and fourth shots.

17 It seems that the Germans had already decided to abandon the Malangali position before the British attack. There is evidence that one of the three F.K. had left for Iringa on the previous day, and that a further detachment withdrew some 3 miles to the northward on Rodger opening fire. The first counter-attack on Hawthorn was presumably made by this latter force.

18 At one moment the Germans contrived to work a machine gun detachment into the K.A.R. position at point-blank range, and were frustrated only by the immediate action of Lieut. E. K. Borthwick, machine gun officer of the 1 /K.A.R., who came suddenly upon them in the bush, mounted his own gun and got in first blow, killed the two German gunners and rushed and captured the enemy's gun. For this act he was awarded the M.C. In this part of the engagement "AR" Coy., 1 /K.A.R., suffered heavily, losing its commander, Capt. B. D. Mackintosh, killed, and two of its three subalterns wounded.

19 "My Reminiscences", op. cit., pp. 149, 182. It seems also to have been believed that the Wahehe tribe in rear of the Germans was being incited to rise against them. On this point Brig.-General Northey wrote: "The defeat of the enemy at Malangali and loss of their big gun has had an enormous effect on the Wahehe tribe, whose territory we are just penetrating: they would rise at once if they thought they could help us drive the enemy out, but as they are only armed with spears they cannot do much." (War Diary, 24th July.)

20 German losses were reported as: killed, 2 Germans, 8 Askari; wounded, 1 German, 10 Askari; missing, 10 Germans, 55 Askari. Brig.-General Northey's War Diary (24th July 1916) records 13 Germans, 19 Askari, buried on the field of battle; 2 Germans, 6 Askari taken prisoner; and the enemy's estimated total loss at from 100 to 150. British casualties were: killed, 3 officers, 3 European o.r., 8 Askari; wounded, 7 officers, 29 European o.r., 27 Askari; total 14 killed, 63 wounded.

21 On 28th July, Murray drove the enemy out of Lutego (midway between Madibira and Wuasa), and established himself there. He also sent "A" Coy., N.R.P., 30 miles northwards to the crossing of the Great Ruaha at Kiganga, where it remained for about a week, intercepting the enemy's mails between Iringa and Tabora and gaining much useful information.

22 War Diary, July 1916.

23 In particular, 2.F.K. from Iringa and the small garrison of Songea. See also Chap. XXVIII, Note, p. 510.

24 See p. 473.

25 Later died of wounds. Another German was also captured and 3 Askari killed, 2 wounded.

26 Casualties: killed, 1 officer, 6 o.r.; wounded, 1 officer, 21 o.r. The German strength is given by Arning (op. cit., p. 228) as 250.

27 See p. 349.

28 Rodger, with the 2/S. Afr. Rifles, 1 coy. 1/K.A.R. and 2 sections 75-mm. guns, was to remain at Bueni directly under Brig.-General Northey's orders.

29 Hawthorn's force now comprised the 1/K.A.R. (5 Coys., about 500 with 12 m.g.), 1 /S.Afr.Rifles (reduced by sickness to about 80, with 8 m.g.), one section 75-mm. guns (5/S. Afr. M.R.), four 7-pdr. M.L. Guns.

30 At this time Hawthorn was reinforced at Njombe by a draft for the 1 /K.A.R. of about 450 recruits completing training, whose depot was now brought forward to Lupembe, and who were used to guard his line of communication when his column subsequently went forward.

31 The further proviso "only if weakly held", added on 25th August, had already been fully understood by Murray.

32 Prisoners and captured documents confirmed that the German units were the Königsberg detachment, L. K., and 2., 5., and 10. F. K., under Captain Braunschweig, totalling about 120 Germans, 640 Askari, with 12 m.g.

33 Brig.-General Northey's orders of 28th August laid down: "Advance must be immediate and rapid." In the absence of any record, the details of Rodger's movements cannot now be ascertained. But telegrams exchanged between him and Brig.-General Northey show that he waited for information from his reconnoitring patrols, who reported the enemy already across the Little Ruaha moving south-eastwards. On the 29th, Murray being then already in Iringa, Rodger was ordered to pursue eastwards with his whole force, keeping touch by wireless with Murray. Brig.-General Northey gives his opinion (War Diary, 29th August) that "it was probably the threat of Rodger's column moving on to their line of retreat which caused (the enemy) to evacuate Iringa without fighting." German sources — which are meagre - suggest as more probable causes the threat of van Deventer from the north -east, and eagerness to join hands with Kraut about Mahenge. In any case 28th August was probably too late for a coup by Rodger. But it is worth noting that on the 25th, when the C.-in-C.'s telegram on which Northey acted was sent, the German force was still at Weru, on the wrong side of Iringa. Had the telegram not been two days on the way and Northey's orders been given correspondingly earlier, the enemy might well have been intercepted by the immediate and rapid move of Rodger to Boma Himbu which Northey ordered but Rodger did not make.

34 At Iringa Murray freed 16 Indians captured by the enemy, and took over a hospital with a German doctor in charge and several wounded

patients. He found some 50 German women and children, and also freed 42 interned British Indians and others. Such food and stores as could not be removed having been destroyed by the enemy, food shortage among the inhabitants gave rise to some anxiety, but was not allowed to delay pursuit.



The Opposing Forces in the Southern Area, May 1916 British Forces

The composition and strengths of Brig.-General Northey's mobile columns were as follows:

(a) Based on Karonga, under Lieut.-Colonel G. M. P. Hawthorn, 1 /K.A.R.

One sqdn. 1 /S. African Rifles	200 British
1 / K.A.R. , H.Q. and 4 coys.	600 Askari

Total 800 rifles

2 12- pdr. naval guns (salved from H. M. S, Pegasus).

1 7-pdr. M.L. gun.

8 m.g.

Field Wireless Section.

(b) Based on Fort Hill, under Major R. L. Flindt, 2 /S. African Rifles.

One sqdn. 2 / S. African Rifles	170 British
1 / K.A.R., 2 coys.	

223 Askari

Total 393 rifles

WWI Seen Through Captain George Cooper's Letters

2 75-mm. Q.F. mountain guns (see below).

2 7-pdr. M.L. guns.

2 m.g.

Field Wireless Section.

(c) Based on Fife, under Lieut. - Colonel E. Rodger, 2 /S. African Rifles.

2 /S. African Rifles (less 1 sqdn.) 462 British

E Coy. Northern Rhodesia Police: 138 Askari

Total 600 rifles

2 75-mm . Q.F. mountain guns (see below) .

2 7-pdr. M.L. guns.

6 m.g.

Field Wireless Section

(d) Based on Abercorn , under Lieut. - Colonel R. E. Murray, B.S.A. Police.

2 coys. ("special service") B.S.A. Police 260 British .

4 coys. (" A , " " B , " " C , " " D "), 540 Askari.

N. Rhodesia Police.

Total 600 rifles

2 75-mm . Q.F. mountain guns (see below)

1 123-pdr. gun (B.S.A.P.).

1 7-pdr. M.L. gun (from Saisi).

Total: 2,593 rifles, 14 guns, 26 m.g.

The six 75-mm. Q.F. mountain guns with the force were German guns, captured in German S.W. Africa and brought by S. African contingent.

Use was made for the first time in this area of transport by pack-oxen, food for which could always be found locally. It will be noted that there was no general reserve. On this point, forestalling possible criticism, Brig .-General Northey gave his reasons, substantially as follows:

(a) The distances involved. There could be no possibility of throwing in a reserve at a point possibly 100 to 200 miles away.

(b) The two strong columns were on the flanks, covering the lines of communication back to Zomba and Livingstone respectively.

(c) Hawthorn's column had so little in front of it that part of it could at any time be detached if necessary. (Despatch, 2nd June 1916.)

Few details are available as to the administrative side of Brig.-General Northey's operations. Some idea of the amount of organization required is given by the fact that his main base was Durban, his Lines of Communication forward from that point being as follows:

Lines of Communication

SECTION	MODE	MILES
Durban - Beira	Ocean Steamer	767
Beira - Chinde	Coasting Steamer	141
Chinde-Chindio R Zambezi	Stern Wheeler	120
Chindio - Blantyre	Rail	174
Blantyre - Zomba	Lorry	43
Advanced Base		
Zomba - Fort Johnson	Carriers (Cars Later)	80
Fort Johnson - Karonga	Lake Steamer	300
Karonga - Mwaya (After 31 st May	Lake Steamer	20

Total Miles 1,645



German Forces in May 1916

In addition, the Lines of Communication in Northern Rhodesia, from Livingstone forward to Fife and Abercorn, was over 750 miles long, more than 500 miles of which lay across barren and almost undeveloped country.

German Forces

British information on 22nd May 1916 gave the distribution of the German forces as follows:

<i>Station</i>	<i>Germans</i>	<i>Askari</i>	<i>Irregulars</i>	<i>m.g.</i>	<i>Guns</i>
On the border :					
Namema	40	350	—	2	1
Luwiwa	23	250	100	4	1
Igamba	15	200	—	3	1
Ipiana	10	80	—	4	2
Neu Langenburg	12	60	—	2	3
Other small posts	50	150	200	—	—
	150	1,090	300	15	8
Lake Nyasa :					
Wiedhaven ..	4	60	—	—	—
Sphinxhaven ..	—	10	—	—	—
Mtimoni	2	150	—	3	—
	6	220	—	3	—

This estimate was undoubtedly too high. Arning, (*Vier Jahre Weltkrieg*, Four Year World War p. 224) gives the German numbers at this time probably more accurately, as follows:

<i>Station</i>	<i>Principal unit</i>	<i>Germans</i>	<i>Askari</i>	<i>m.g.</i>	<i>guns</i>
Namema	29 F.K.	30	200	3	—
Luwiwa	" L " Coy.	20	180	3	—
Ipiana	5 F. K.	20	200	2	1
Advanced posts	—	7	60	—	—
		77	640	8	1

with about 100 irregulars.

The latter estimate agrees substantially with the figures assumed by Brig.-General Northey in his preliminary instructions to his subordinate commanders, viz ., 30 Germans and 300 natives each at Namema and Luwiwa, 10 Germans and 100 natives each at Ipiana and Igamba.

As most of the German carriers had had some military training, casualties could usually be replaced from them.

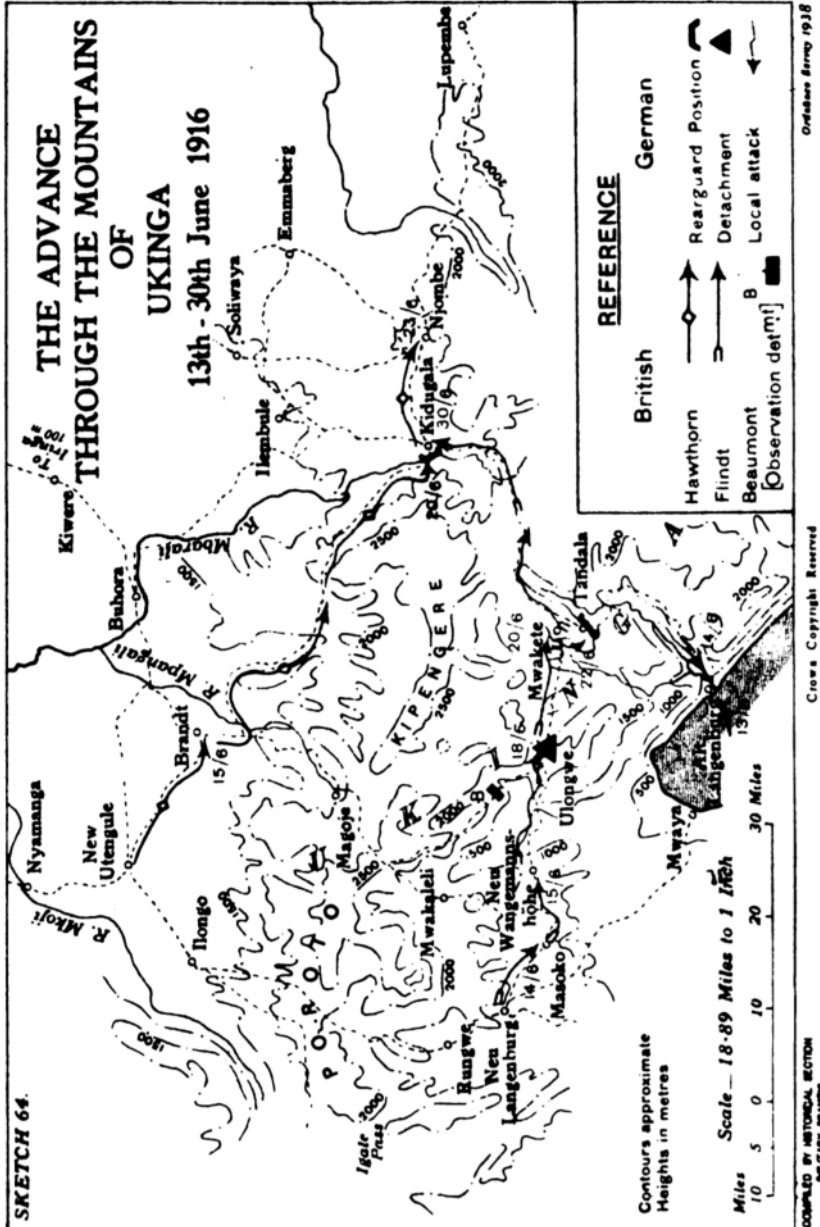
German East Africa: The Forgotten WWI Campaign - Ian McCall

In the story of WWI, the campaigns in Africa tend to be overlooked, and even those who have a familiarity with the war tend to be unaware of the battles fought south of Mesopotamia. This is because almost all these military campaigns involved native colonial forces backed up by a small number of regular army troops and usually ended with a swift and decisive victory in favour of the Entente. The British, French, and Belgians simply had too many colonies and too many forces in Africa for the Germans to put up much of a fight-with one exception. In German East Africa a guerrilla war would be fought like nothing else the war would see.

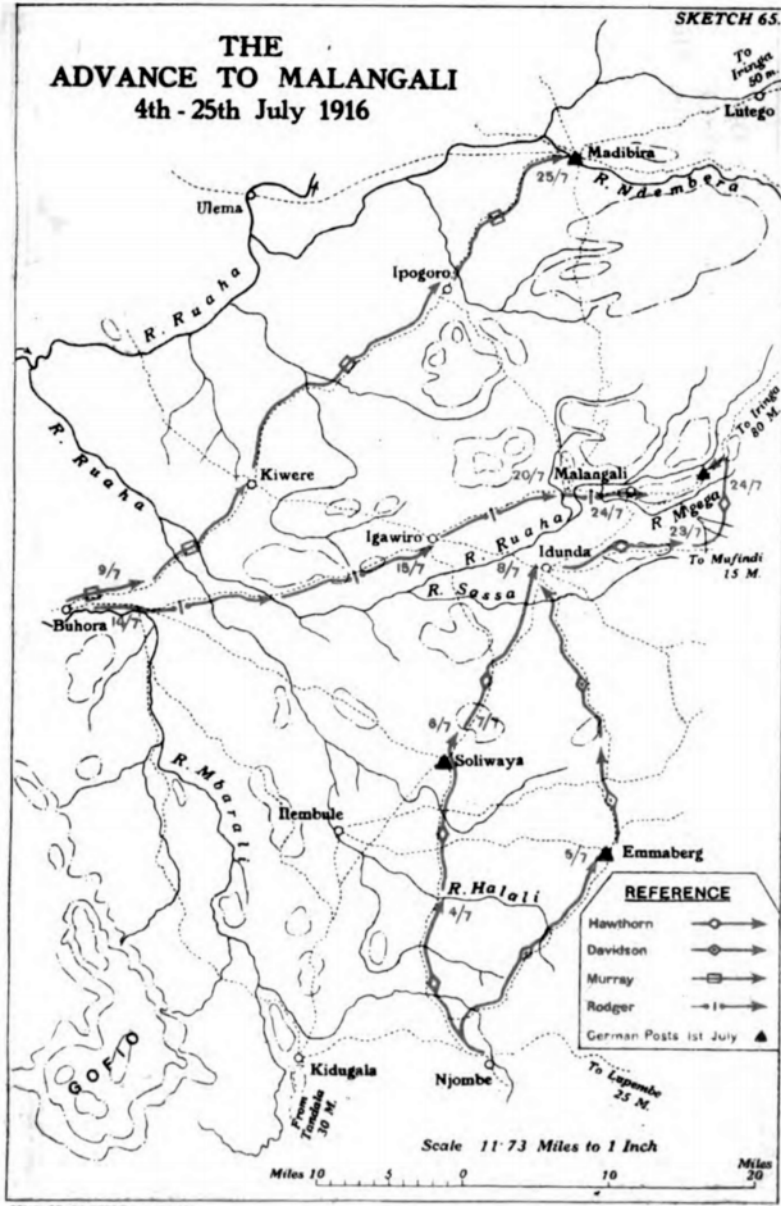
This guerrilla action was fought by a force of well-trained Askaris, native troops, and regular German infantry numbering about 12,000 at the onset of the war. This relatively small garrison would, throughout the war, tie-down over 300,000 Entente troops coasting the collation over 10,000 killed. 1 These forces would even continue the fight after the armistice had been signed and the war officially ended. This was all thanks to the actions of one man, Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck. Called the loin of Africa, Lettow-Vorbeck would lead his troops on a campaign that would go down as one of the most successful of WWI and earn him a place as a hero to the German people.

After being hidden, the true facts of the war against German E. Africa are only now coming to light, for the Government were fearful of the consequences of using British troops on behalf of the private British East India Company to take control of German assets in Africa especially after the great losses suffered in the trenches of Europe!

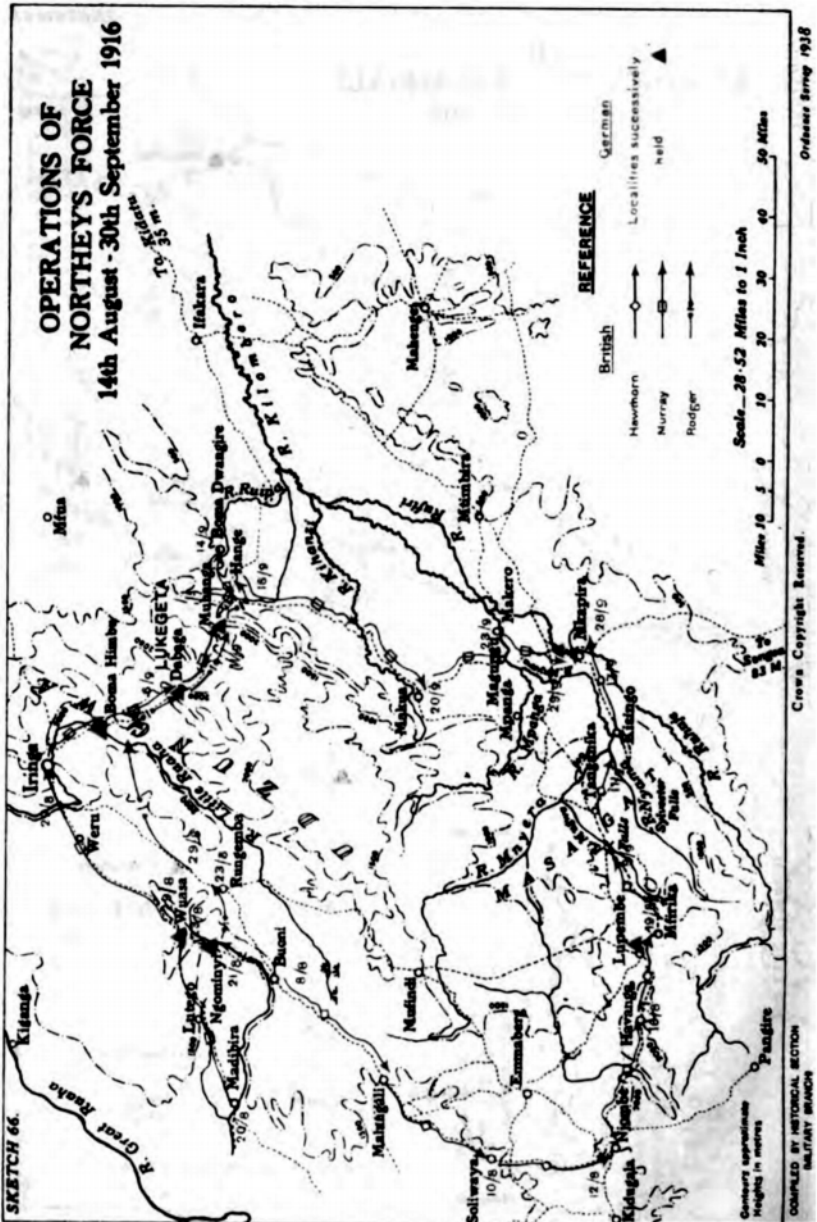
Sketch 64



Sketch 65



Sketch 66



ADDENDUM II

EXTRACT FROM BRITISH ROLL OF HONOUR THE PERSONAL TRIBUTE

Captain Edward George Cooper, of the King's African Rifles



WHEN THE EMINENT SURGEON, SIR ASTLEY COOPER, was once asked if he was connected with the family of the brilliant and daring Anthony Astley Cooper, whom King Charles II. created Earl of Shaftesbury, he answered: "We are all akin, we Coopers, and we all do credit to our name."

The latter part of the remark might well be applied to Captain Edward George Cooper, of the King's African Rifles.

It is a name, indeed, which has been borne with honour in the past, for the Coopers have produced great lawyers, artists divines, and merchant princes— notably that Couper Cooper merchant of the City of London in the days of William III., who adventured fortune and life in the cause of Liberty.

There have been gallant soldiers of the name, too. And, indeed, if ancestry counts for anything, Captain Cooper was treading the path which seemed the only one for him to tread when he left everything to serve King and Empire. **Continued next page.....**

ADDENDUM I (CONTINUED)

He was the grandson of a soldier, General George Cooper, whose name has an honoured place in the Indian Wars of Queen Victoria's reign, and was a nephew of the late Sir George Lewes Cooper, V.C., and cousin of Brigadier General Charles Cooper, C.B., D.S.O.

Born at Fategarh, United Provinces, India, he was the son of the late Samuel Cooper, Esq., and Mrs. Cooper, of Oaklands, Gipsy Hill, Norwood, London

Educated at Epsom College and Emmanuel College, Cambridge, he became machine gun officer in the King's Liverpool Regiment, and distinguished himself by his thoroughness and devotion to duty. Unostentatious in character, always ready to help his men to become true soldiers, he was one of the most popular officers the famous Regiment ever had.

During the advance in Flanders, in the latter part of 1915, he displayed a quiet courage and readiness to expose himself to danger which were most marked, even amongst a Company of heroes. He was wounded on September 25th, and invalided home, but his intense anxiety was to resume his place in the firing line ; and immediately upon his recovery he exchanged into the King's African Rifles, in the expectation of once more seeing active service.

Fate allowed him to serve but a few months under General Smuts -of whom his cousin had been a chivalrous opponent at the relief of Springbok, at the end of the South African war—but those few months were sufficient to confirm the reputation he had already won in Flanders, and indeed to augment it. He met a soldier's death, being killed in action in German East Africa, on August 4th, 1916. **Continued next page:.....**

ADDENDUM I (CONTINUED)

At the time of his death Captain Cooper was thirty-four years of age. He has left many friends to mourn him, for lie was a true sportsman in the best sense of the words. While at Emmanuel he “ coxed ” his college boat in the Lent races ; and did so with an efficiency which foretold, even in those early days, the nature of his ultimate career—one of those careers in examples of which the great war abounds, so sadly and yet so gloriously short.



CAPTAIN EDWARD GEORGE COOPER
Kings African Rifles



Addendum I (Continued)



Edward George Cooper's birth place was at, Fatehgarh, Uttar Pradesh, India, where his father was in the employ of the East India Company.

The place derives its name from an old fort. Fatehgarh remained a military station of considerable importance, since when in 1777 Fatehgarh Camp came into existence on the arrival of the temporary brigade, mobilized by the East India Company, for the defence of the Oudh.

It was camp in the sense that living arrangements were temporary, officers and men living with their families in huts instead of tents. In 1781 houses in Fatehgarh camp were being erected. It was not until 1790 that it became permanent as a consequence of the mutiny when forces drawn from the Camp were used to deal with it. The station, by then had begun to assume its present shape. Bungalows were strung in a line along the bank of the Ganges, and infantry lines formed along the edge of the parade ground.

In 1802 it became the headquarters of the Governor General's Agent for the ceded provinces. In 1818 a gun carriage factory was established there. It is still today an important centre of the Indian army today.

ADDENDUM I (CONTINUED)



ABOVE:

Dead Man's Penny' or 'Death Penny'

Over a century ago, British soldiers such as George Cooper were involved in the fierce fighting of the First World War's Battle of the Somme in northern France. The battle was one of the conflict's bloodiest, lasting for 141 days over a 15-mile front.

After the war, the family of every serviceman killed received a bronze plaque of condolence, also known as the 'Dead Man's Penny' or 'Death Penny' because of its resemblance to the coin.

1,355,000 were issued, made from 450 tons of bronze. No rank was stated, because there was no distinction made between the sacrifice of individuals.

ADDENDUM I



Above Captain E. G. Cooper's Name on War Memorial in Christ Church, Gypsy Hill, London - Below



ADDENDUM I (CONTINUED)

Captain E. G. Cooper's Name on War Memorial in
Christ Church, Gypsy Hill, London - Below

<i>1st Regiment.</i>	<i>2nd Regiment.</i>	<i>3rd Regiment.</i>	<i>4th Regiment.</i>
MAJOR J.H. VUICHAN	COL. A. L. TRIBE	COL. B. R. GRAHAM	MAJOR P. GARRARD DCM.
CAPT. W. J. CLACHAN	MAJ. A. C. HARDYMAN MC.	COL. H. C. DICKINSON	MAJOR R. H. LEEKE
CAPT. C. B. CLARK	CAPT. F. A. BACHELOR MC.	MAJ. E. A. R. CORE-BROWNE	MAJOR E. A. G. SNELL
CAPT. K. M. DOUGLAS	CAPT. A. CALDICOTT	MAJOR R. M. T. ROSE	MAJOR H. E. VETTER
CAPT. A. G. FOWLER	CAPT. A. J. R. DYER	CAPT. K. J. R. GARDNER	CAPT. D. A. HUNT D.S.O.
CAPT. P. GRAHAM	CAPT. H. W. MELLOR	CAPT. R. H. HUGGINS	CAPT. R. E. POWER
CAPT. C. P. M. GRANVILLE	CAPT. A. G. RAMSAY	CAPT. A. C. JERVIS	CAPT. E. G. W. THORNEYCROFT
CAPT. D. B. MACKINTOSH	CAPT. T. L. RUSSELL	CAPT. S. J. LOVECROVE	LIEUT. W. H. CALDER
CAPT. M. A. MUIR	CAPT. C. L. TROTTER	CAPT. J. S. M th MILLAN	LIEUT. A. C. H. FOSTER
CAPT. J. A. W. D. WYLES	CAPT. T. J. WELD M.C.	CAPT. H. B. POPPLEWELL	LT. H. GRESHOLD-WELLS
CAPT. J. W. PRYDE	CAPT. W. J. WOODS	CAPT. G. S. STIRLING M.C.	LIEUT. C. S. HARDING
CAPT. E. R. PUGH	LIEUT. F. ALCOCK	LIEUT. P. V. BIDDULPH	LIEUT. W. F. HARRISON
CAPT. B. H. SMITH	LIEUT. C. J. BROWN	LIEUT. M. C. DANSON	LIEUT. R. S. HORNE
CAPT. W. C. M. SPARROW	LIEUT. D. R. BRYANT	LIEUT. A. J. FORBES	LIEUT. W. E. HOSEGOOD
LIEUT. B. L. ANGELL	LIEUT. R. CHADWICK	LIEUT. H. GORDON-SALE	LT. C. B. HUDSON-KIRKMAN
LIEUT. D. MARCHALE	LIEUT. G. CHAMPION	LIEUT. C. C. HART	LIEUT. C. HUME-COKE
LIEUT. F. H. BLACKIE	LIEUT. H. E. CLINES-ROSS	LIEUT. G. R. HEALY	LIEUT. J. D. MICHELL
LIEUT. A. M. BONES	LIEUT. W. S. G. COXWELL	LIEUT. J. M. C. HOFFA	LIEUT. G. C. O. OLOFIELD
LIEUT. W. G. S. BOOTY	LIEUT. J. Y. CRAIG	LIEUT. C. P. HUTCHINS	LIEUT. G. E. H. REID
LIEUT. E. G. COOPER	LIEUT. T. W. CUNDEE	LIEUT. H. F. IRELAND	LIEUT. A. G. SHEPARD
LIEUT. R. DAVEY	LIEUT. V. W. DUNMAN	LIEUT. G. A. KEMP	LIEUT. A. D. THOMPSON
LIEUT. P. N. GARNETT	LIEUT. L. A. ECKSTEIN	LIEUT. H. LLOYD	LIEUT. C. W. WALSER
LIEUT. A. C. GORDRICK	LIEUT. E. B. EVERSHED	LIEUT. R. LYON-CLARK	LIEUT. A. F. WOODHOUSE
LIEUT. R. G. HILL DCM.	LIEUT. G. H. B. GOING	LIEUT. A. M th DONALD M.C.	LIEUT. W. A. WROTH
LIEUT. F. J. HODGSON	LIEUT. A. GREEN	LIEUT. DGM M th DORCALL	
LIEUT. R. E. HUGGAN	LIEUT. F. C. HAWKINS	LIEUT. S. STERN	<i>5th Regiment.</i>
LIEUT. E. T. JURGENSON	LIEUT. P. R. HEATON DCM.	LIEUT. W. S. WEDD	LIEUT. H. J. C. WIRD
LIEUT. J. H. KELLY	LIEUT. H. G. HODGKINSON	LIEUT. E. V. WYLLY	LIEUT. L. H. LE MAY
LIEUT. A. P. KENDERICK	LIEUT. C. H. JARDINE	<i>Mounted Infantry</i>	<i>6th Regiment.</i>
LIEUT. L. E. LESLIE	LIEUT. R. M th OREGOR	LIEUT. H. C. CURRIE	CAPT. C. F. M th KINNON
LIEUT. R. M. MACIVER	LIEUT. D. MOIR M.C.	<i>7th Regiment.</i>	LIEUT. A. W. R. CLAYDON
LIEUT. H. MANN	LIEUT. F. S. MURRAY	LIEUT. T. N. BROWETT	LIEUT. J. H. CROSLAND
LIEUT. H. V. P. THERBIDGE	LIEUT. P. M. PASCALL M.C.	LIEUT. W. A. WILSON	LIEUT. S. A. MADDICK
LIEUT. A. D. POWLEY	LIEUT. C. V. ROSE		
LIEUT. C. O. RAINFORD	LIEUT. J. L. SIEBER	<i>8th Regiment.</i>	
LIEUT. S. T. R. AD	LIEUT. G. H. WATTS	LIEUT. J. E. M th MICHAEL	
LIEUT. L. M. RITCHIE	LIEUT. G. WILLIAMS		
LIEUT. E. SHARP	LIEUT. H. K. WOOD		
LIEUT. C. F. TOFTS	CAPT. H. C. GOULDSBURY		



ADDENDUM II

Background to The Nyasaland Battles Against German East Africa

Unfortunately, photos taken by George Cooper did not survive, so the ones on the following pages taken by others will give one an accurate idea of the difficult Terrain in which he operated.

At that time Nyasaland was one of the most inaccessible parts of the world. Lake Nyasa, one of the deepest lakes in the world, and the surrounding area with no roads, it was a key transport route and therefore of immense strategic importance!

The Germans had the only large boat on the lake with a gun, which was of great concern to the British, so they rigged one up on a smaller boat. They went with this boat to inspect the German one and found it moored up for repair, and promptly fired upon it, whereupon the German Captain came across to remonstrate with the British Captain, wanting to know why he had been fired upon, whereupon he was arrested. He did not know that Germany was at war with Britain!! Evidently German East Africa HQ in Zanzibar, either neglected to inform him or because of the remoteness the message had not yet arrived! [Click HERE](#)

The background to the war in this part of the world is well covered in a short a video [HERE](#).





German East Africa



Uniforms of the German Empire's colonial troops, German East Africa

Overview of The East African Theatre in World War I.

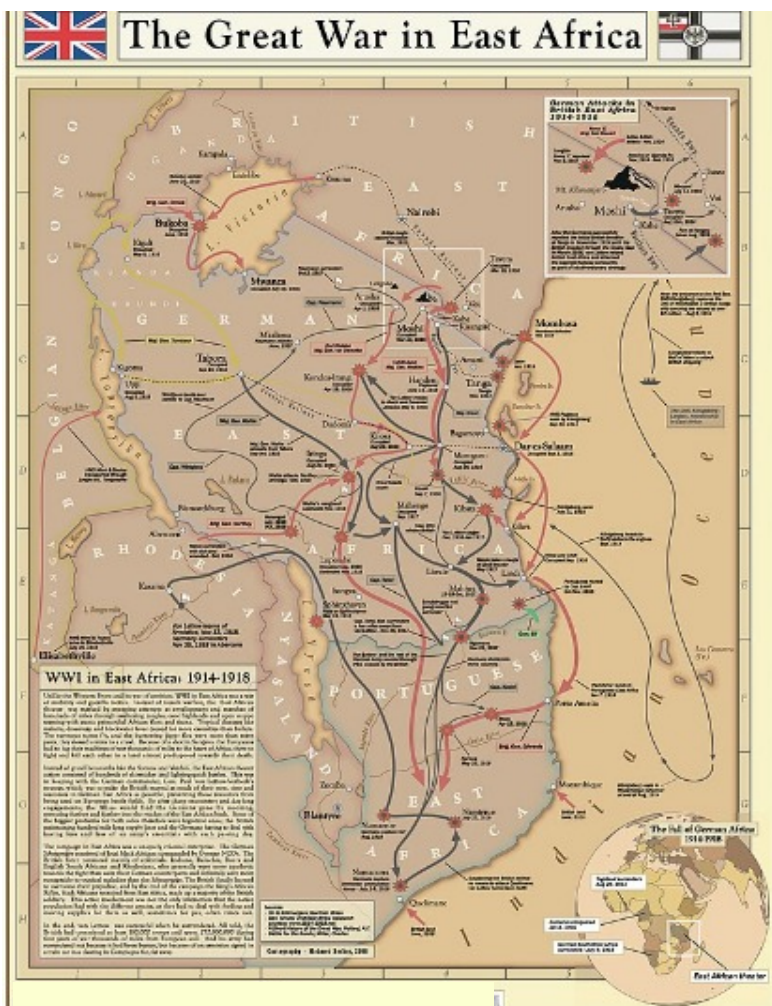
General Horace Smith-Dorrien was assigned with orders to find and fight the Schutztruppe but he contracted pneumonia during the voyage to South Africa, which prevented him from taking command. In 1916, General Jan Smuts was given the task of defeating Lettow-Vorbeck. Smuts had a large army (for the area), some 13,000 South Africans including Boers, British, Rhodesians and 7,000 Indian and African troops, a ration strength of 73,300 men.

There was a Belgian force and a larger but ineffective group of Portuguese military units based in Mozambique. A large Carrier Corps composed of African porters under British command, carried supplies into the interior. Despite the Allied nature of the effort, it was a South African operation of the British Empire. During the previous year, Lettow-Vorbeck had also gained personnel and his army was now 13,800 strong.

Smuts attacked from several directions, the main attack coming from British East Africa (Kenya) in the north, while substantial forces from the Belgian Congo advanced from the west in two columns, crossing Lake Victoria on the British troop ships SS Rusinga and SS Usoga and into the Rift Valley.

Another contingent advanced over Lake Nyasa (Lake Malawi) from the south-east. All these forces failed to capture Lettow-Vorbeck and they all suffered from disease along the march. The 9th South African Infantry, started with 1,135 men in February, and by October its strength was reduced to 116 fit troops, with little fighting. The Germans nearly always retreated from the larger British troop concentrations and by September 1916, the German Central Railway from the coast at Dar es Salaam to Ujiji was fully under British control.

With Lettow-Vorbeck confined to the southern part of German East Africa, Smuts began to withdraw the South African, Rhodesian and Indian troops and replace them with Askari of the King's African Rifles (KAR), which by November 1918 had 35,424 men. By the start of 1917, more than half the British Army in the theatre was composed of Africans and by the end of the war, it was nearly all-African. Smuts left the area in January 1917, to join the Imperial War Cabinet at London.





King's African Rifles (1/4 KAR) were in Fort Johnstone, Nyasaland (now Malawi). The battalion had marched down through German East Africa (GEA – now Tanzania) from Mwanza on Lake Victoria via Iringa to Old Langenberg, now named Lumbira, on Lake Nyasa. 1/4 KAR had fought and skirmished against ...



Above: Crossing the Luambala River. These rafts were made up of reeds, waterproof rice bags and 'tree cotton' collected nearby



Above: Guns being drawn by native carriers.





Above: Preparing to embark at Old Langenberg, Lake Nyasa.



Above: Section leaving 'The Bar' for Portuguese East Africa to relieve Bomas captured by the Germans east of Lake Nyasa.





**Above: Mountain gun in action. Left to right:
Bdr Liddell, Sgt H. Fish, Gnr W. Tolmie,
Bdr van Aswegen, Gnr Hickey, Gnr White**



Through swamps. Bdr de Villiers and Gnr van Blerk.



**The Kings African Rifles on the march, 1916
Photograph, World War One, East Africa.**

During the First World War German forces in East Africa commanded by Colonel Paul von Lettow-Vorbeck conducted successful raids against the neighbouring Allied territories. This forced the Allies to mount a large-scale campaign in this region. The King's African Rifles played a major part and by 1918 had expanded from three to 22 battalions and had established a formidable reputation for bush fighting.





German East African Campaign. No. 10 Workshop Unit moving forward on Line of Communication in Portuguese Nyasaland - about to trek a small part of their journey through a swamp, transport other than porters being impossible.

Below: Advancing though the East African bush, 1916



An Account By Another Captain of A Similar Engagement in Which Captain E. G. Cooper Was Fatally Shot.

When marching along the road the Germans opened on us with maxims. Our "cow" guns as they are called – because they are pulled by cattle – came up and after about 40 shells shifted the Germans... I went out afterwards and brought in two wounded German Askaris... The country here is so mountainous that it is very easy for the Germans to leave a small rearguard to hold us up... The scenery is magnificent. Huge tree ferns all along the valleys and the hills covered with thick bush which you can't get through without cutting down... We also marched through a succession of swamps... and pushed on up a steep pass through the mountains. Our men had just got to the top when they were fired on and for a time there was a regular duel... We had two men hit. Altogether in three days scrapping we have had about 40 casualties.

'We pushed on another two miles, the Germans trying to stop us. We had to lie down every now and again when they were firing... We then went on and got to a small mission flying a Red Cross flag. In it we found 15 Germans and 34 Askaris, most of them sick... All the Germans said they were tired of the war but that they were going to hold out until the very end. Most were from the crew of the Konigsberg. I never dreamt we should have this sort of warfare here... We get lots of queer food (beans etc) which we raid from the surrounding villages – the inhabitants having all cleared out.'

Letter from Captain Alexander Wallace to his fiancée, 6-13
September 1916





Above: Feeding 'Tenga-Tenga' (carriers).



A map of the proposed Mittelfrika with German territory in brown, British in pink.

East Africa Nor-Force Postal Communications



The Nyasaland Rhodesian Field Forces in German East Africa 1916-1918

The Nyasaland Rhodesian Field Forces, under the command of Brigadier General [Edward Northey](#), began their offensive in East Africa on 20 May 1916. Northey's forces crossed into German East Africa on 25 May 1916. On May 30 they had occupied Neu Langenburg. On June 6 they captured Neu Utengulc. Alt Langenburg was occupied on June 13. Ubena was captured on June 30. The colony's military commander, General Paul Emil von Lettow-Vorbeck, spent the war harrying 40,000 Allied forces with his band of 3,500 Europeans and 12,000 native Askaris. He surrendered only after receiving news of the armistice on 25 November 1918.

The Nyasaland Rhodesian Field Forces troops could send normal letters without stamps via the field post office. If there was any additional postage required, such as for registration or for parcels, it required prepayment. At first un-overprinted Nyasaland stamps were used. Later at the request of Brigadier General Northey, to the Governor of Nyasaland, Nyasaland stamps were overprinted

“N.F.” Northey had requested the overprint to be “N.F.F.” but the telegraph operator omitted one “F.” when sending the request to the Governor. Northey always denied that the issue was philatelically inspired; correspondence written by Northey clearly shows that he was an enthusiastic stamp collector. There is no evidence that these stamps were really needed. The overprinting was sanctioned by the Governor of Nyasaland and most of the stamps did see genuine postal usage.

These stamps were only available for use by troops of the Nyasaland Rhodesian Field Force. Sale of these stamps in large quantities, for dealing purposes, was forbidden. The stamps were available only from Field Post Offices of the Nyasaland Rhodesian Field Force. Most of these offices were in German East Africa. The Nyasaland Rhodesian Field Force also had FPOs in Nyasaland and in Portuguese East Africa. The stamps were not available at any civilian post office or for civilian use.

The totals quantities overprinted, by the Government Printers in Zomba, based on a statement made by Northey, were as follows:-

½d – 60,000
1d – 120,000
3d – 12,000
4d – 6,000
1s – 6,000

The only major variety is the double overprint on the 3d stamp. All available evidence suggests that only a bottom row of six stamps on one pane was overprinted in this way. To date only four certificates have been issued by The Royal Philatelic Society for this double overprint in used condition. Two of the stamps show FPO 8, on the others only the FPO part remains on the stamp. Three are postmarked 3 March 1918 and one on 2 March 1918. The copy, which is in the Royal Collection, is postmarked 3 March 1918 from FPO 8, which at the time was in Mbamba

Bay. The earliest known usage of the ½d and the 1d is 7 August 1916. The 3d on 15 September 1916. The 4d on 13 September 1916. The 1s on 18 September 1916. When supplies of these overprint stamps were exhausted the field post offices used un-overprinted stamps of Nyasaland.

During the temporary stay in Mtangula, Mozambique, by one of the columns of the field force, stamps of Portuguese Nyassa (1911 Republica series) were used by the Field Post Office (FPO 2).

List of Field Post Offices, Locations and Dates

FPO	LOCATION	Date	Date
1	Neu Langenburg, GEA	04 06 16	26.12.16
“	Old Njombe, GEA	16 12 16	17 12 16
“	Songea, GEA	01 07 17	
“	Limbe, Nyasaland	02 08 18	31 12 18
2	Rungwe, GEA	20 09 16	03 12 16
“	Wiedhafen, GEA	28 02 17	09 03 17
“	Likuya, GEA	19 05 17	23 11 17
“	Mtangula, Mozambique	01 01 18	28 08 18
3	Mwaya, GEA	01 06 16	01 10 16
“	?? GEA	23 12 16	30 11 16
“	Tandala, GEA	30 11 16	?? ?? 18
4	Mwaya, GEA	01 09 16	30 11 16
“	Old Langenburg, GEA	01 12 16	11 03 17
“	Wiedhafen, GEA	12 03 17	22 03 18
5	Lupembe, GEA	01 12 16	01 12 17
“	Songea, GEA	01 03 17	01 07 17
“	Mpurukasese, GEA	01 07 17	01 12 17
“	Fort Johnston, GEA	01 12 17	01 05 18

FPO	LOCATION	Date	Date
5	Nameras, GEA	25 05 18	01 12 17
6	Mwaya, GEA	12 03 17	10 06 17
“	Limbe, Nyasaland	10 09 17	?? 02 18
“	Malokotera, Mozambique	?? 03 18	23 05 18
7	Old Langenburg, GEA	03 03 17	?? 07 18
“	Reone, Mozambique	20 08 18	?? ?? ??
8	Fort Johnston, Nyasaland	11 04 17	01 12 17
“	Mbamba Bay, GEA	01 12 17	08 08 18
9	Zomba, Nyasaland	05 04 17	05 02 19
10	Neu Langenburg, GEA	39 07 17	31 03 18
11	Songea, GEA	06 08 18	13 10 18



An example of a letter sent from Nyasaland to London in 1916 via the British Military Post Service from base 6



ADDENDUM III

Chemical Warfare 1915



IT WAS FIRST USED IN AUGUST 1914 BY THE FRENCH. It was used to strike fear in the enemy soldiers. They also used it to temporarily incapacitate the enemy so they could go over no man's land and attack the trenches.

One major battle was the battle of the Somme, it was used on the eastern front a lot. Neuve Chapelle was another battle that they used gas. It wasn't the most effective weapon considering that there you could only fire it when the wind was at your back instead of coming toward you. The machine gun actually had more deaths than poison gas. At the Loos when British gas companies released their chlorine gas the wind changed causing the British to suffer more casualties than the Germans did. Sept. 24th 1915

At the Loos when British gas companies released their chlorine gas the wind changed causing the British to suffer more casualties than the Germans did. Sept. 24th 1915.

A range of different chemicals were used as weapons throughout WWI. The French were actually the first to utilise them in conflict, when they attempted to use tear gas against the German army in August 1914.



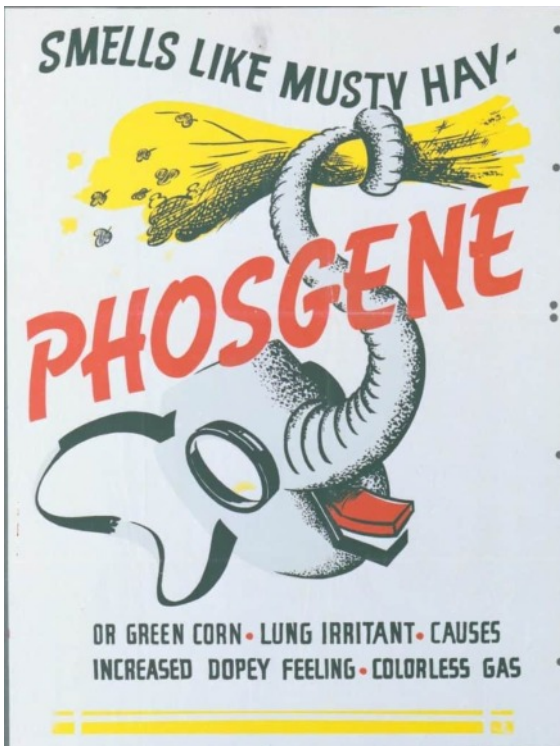
These tear gases weren't designed to kill; rather, to incapacitate the enemy and render them unable to defend their positions. They are all lachrymatory agents – they cause crying. They also irritate the mouth, throat and lungs, leading to breathing difficulties. Exposure to larger concentrations can lead to temporary blindness, but symptoms commonly resolved within 30 minutes of leaving affected areas.

In practice, the use of tear gas on the battlefield wasn't extraordinarily effective. However, it opened the door to the use of more harmful gases. The first of these was chlorine, first used on a large scale by the German forces at Ypres in April 1915. Chlorine is a diatomic gas, about two and a half times denser than air, with a pale green colour and a strong, bleach-like odour which soldier described as a 'mix of pineapple and pepper.' It reacts with water in the lungs to form hydrochloric acid, which can quickly lead to death. At lower concentrations, it can cause coughing, vomiting, and irritation to the eyes.

In its first uses, chlorine was deadly, Against soldiers not yet equipped with gas masks, it wreaked havoc, and it's estimated around 5,000 were killed in the first large scale attack at Ypres. The German forces weren't prepared for just how effective it would prove, and

their delay in pressing into the gap formed in enemy lines actually meant they gained very little ground initially.

However, chlorine's obvious appearance and strong odour made it easy to spot, and since it's water-soluble, even soldiers without gas masks could minimise its effectiveness by placing water-soaked rags over their mouth and nose. Additionally, the initial method of its release posed problems, as the British learnt to their detriment when they attempted to use chlorine at Loos in France. The released gas changed direction as the wind changed, engulfing the British lines instead of those of the enemy, and leading to a large number of self-inflicted casualties.



Phosgene was the next major agent employed. It was again used first at Ypres by the Germans in December 1915 (although some sources state the French were the first to employ it). Phosgene is a colourless gas, with an odour likened to that of 'musty hay.' For this odour to be detectable, the concentration of phosgene actually had to be at 0.4 parts per million, which is several times the concentration where health effects could be expected. It is highly

toxic due to its ability to react with proteins in the alveoli of the lungs and disrupt the blood-air barrier, leading to suffocation.

Phosgene was much more effective and deadly than chlorine, but the symptoms could sometimes take up to 48 hours to manifest. Its immediate effects are coughing and irritation to the eyes and respiratory tract. It can cause the build-up of fluid in the lungs, leading to death. It's estimated that as many as 85% of the 91,000 deaths attributed to gas in World War 1 were a result of phosgene. It's hard to put a precise number on it, since it was commonly used in combination with chlorine gas, along with the related chemical diphosgene. Combinations of gases became more common as the war went on. For example, chloropicrin was often used for its irritant effects and ability to bypass gas masks, causing sneezing fits which made soldiers remove their masks, exposing them to poison gases.

Along with chlorine, the most commonly known poison gas used in the conflict is mustard gas. Sulphur mustards are actually a class containing several different compounds; in their pure forms, they are colourless liquids, but the impure forms used in warfare have a yellow-brown colour and odour akin to garlic or horseradish. Mustard gas is an irritant, and also a strong vesicant (blister-forming agent). It causes chemical burns on contact with the skin, leading to large blisters with yellow fluid. Initially, exposure is symptomless. By the time skin irritation begins, it's too late to take preventative measures.

Mustard gas was effective because it was debilitating. Its mortality rate was only around 2-3% of casualties, but those who suffered chemical burns and respiratory problems due to exposure were unable to return to the front and required extensive care for their recovery. Those who did recover were at higher risk of developing cancers in later life.

Though the psychological factor of poison gas was formidable, it accounted for less than 1% of the total deaths in World War I. Their use was feared in World War II and they were sometimes employed, but never on as large and as frequent a scale as seen in World War I.

First attempt was a disaster as wind blew gas back into British Trenches. Also many British troops were not equipped with gas masks.

Use of poison gas as a weapon was later prohibited by the Geneva Protocol in 1925, which most countries involved in the First World War signed.

The chemicals still have their uses. For example, phosgene is an important industrial reagent in the synthesis of pharmaceuticals and other important organic compounds.



Before gas masks soldiers used socks soaked in urine to filter out poison gas!

Commander of British II Corps, Lt. Gen. Ferguson (officially said of gas: "It is a cowardly form of warfare which does not commend itself to me or other English soldiers.... We cannot win this war unless we kill or incapacitate more of our enemies than they do of us, and if this can only be done by our copying the enemy in his choice of weapons, we must not refuse to do so"



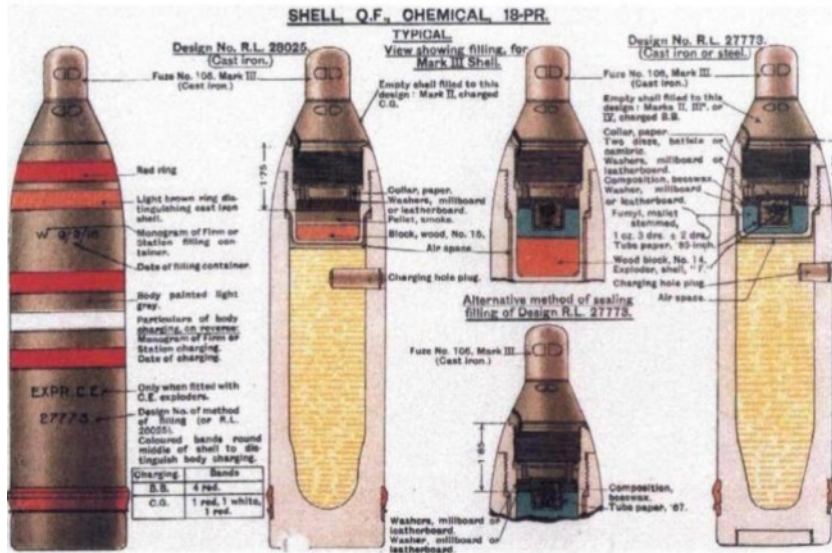


**LEARN TO ADJUST YOUR RESPIRATOR
CORRECT and QUICK**
Don't breathe while doing it, and this
won't happen to you.

Issued by the Chemical Warfare Service

WWI Propaganda Poster

One of the most gruesome aspects of World War I was the use of poison gas as a weapon.



Above - A British Poison Shell

Around 36,600 tons of phosgene were manufactured during the war, out of a total of 190,000 tons for all chemical weapons, making it second only to chlorine (93,800 tons) in the quantity manufactured:

- Germany 18,100 tons
- France 15,700 tons
- United Kingdom 1,400 tons (although they also used French stocks)
- United States 1,400 tons (although they also used French stocks)

The Sting In The Tail!

Few people know that following the end of WWI and WWII that there was a large surplus of gases mostly chlorine and phosgene. The surplus arose, because very little poison gas was used in WWII as the military were able to persuade their political masters, with hindsight from WWI, that it would be just as dangerous to their

own men if the wind was to change suddenly. What better way to save a financial loss than to sell it off for another use!!

First of all, chlorine became the standard way of disinfecting drinking water in 1904. However, it was not because it was the safest or most effective. Rather, it was because chlorine was the cheapest to make.

FACT: The U.S. Council Of Environmental Quality has admitted that drinking chlorinated water can increase your cancer risk by a whopping 93%!

Yes, 93%! Notably, chlorine's purpose is to kill bacteria and parasites which are micro-organisms. Yet, aren't **WE** living organisms ourselves?!

When you drink chlorinated, sure it kills off some of the harmful bacteria. However, its by-products may then slowly harm the living cells and tissues inside your own body.

Most noteworthy, chlorine is actually not the deadliest chemical in your water. In fact, it's its by-products of which we need to be cautious.

WWI Chemical Weapon in Public Water Supply – What Most People Don't Know:

Additionally, chlorine reacts with organic matters such as leaves to create deadly compounds. These compounds are called trihalomethanes (THMs) and haloacetic acids (HAA5s). In fact, they are actually 100 times more toxic than chlorine itself!

In addition, the Environmental Defence Fund said, "Although concentrations of these carcinogens (THMs) are low, it is precisely these low levels that cancer scientists believe are

responsible for the majority of human cancers in the United Kingdom and USA.” Furthermore, these disinfectant by-products are not only present in your drinking water. Notably, they can be found in your kitchen faucet and your bathtub faucet. Hence, each time you’re taking a hot steamy shower or bath, you are actually welcoming those toxins into your body!

So, think twice before you take a hot shower. Think thrice before you pour yourself a glass of fresh chlorinated water!

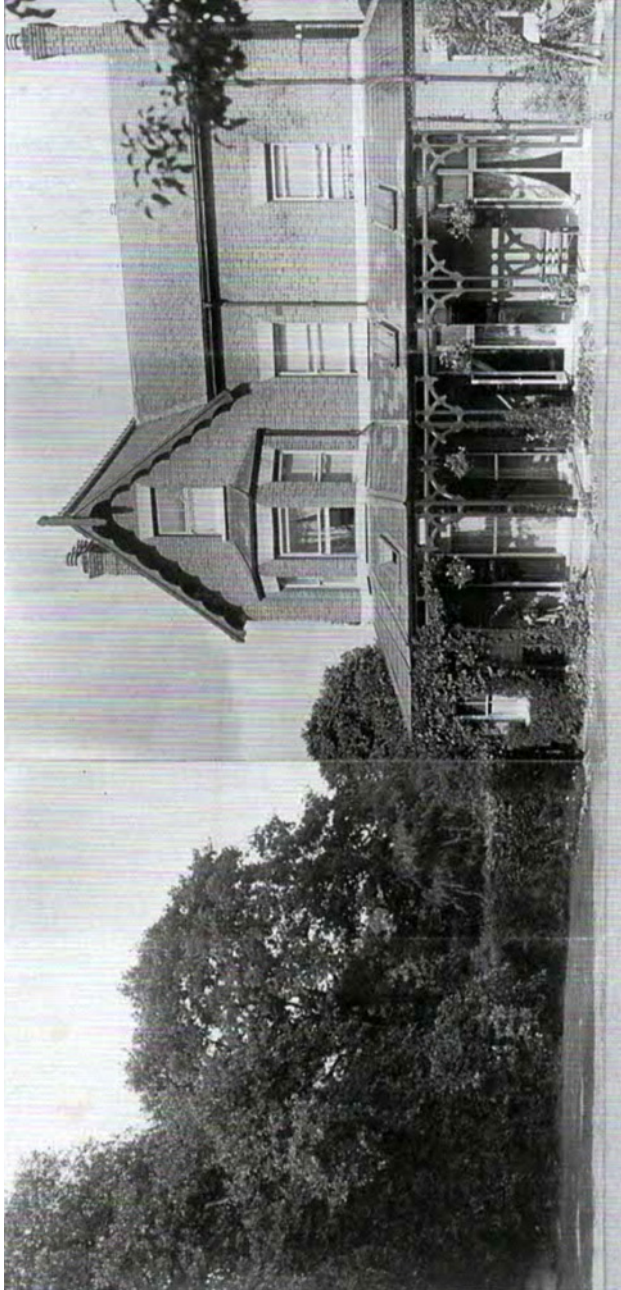
References

“Chlorinated Water ————— Canadian Cancer Society.”
www.cancer.ca. N.p., n.d. Web. 09 Jan. 2017.

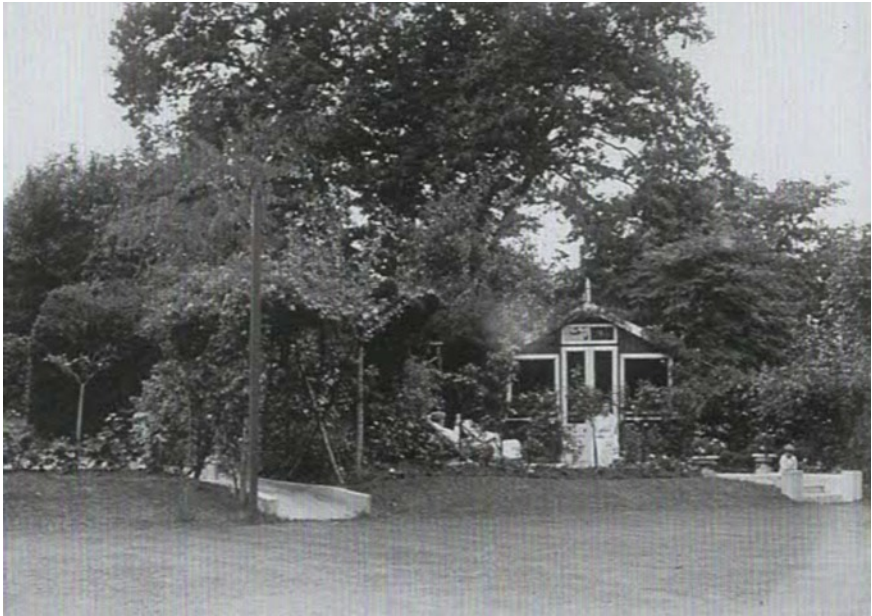
Group, Edward. “Chlorine, Cancer, and Heart Disease.”
Global Healing Center. N.p., 14 Sept. 2015. Web. 09 Jan. 2017

Jones, Robert, Brandon Wills, and Christopher Kang.
“Chlorine Gas: An Evolving Hazardous Material Threat and Unconventional Weapon.” Western Journal of Emergency Medicine. Department of Emergency Medicine, University of California, Irvine School of Medicine, May 2010. Web. 09 Jan. 2017. - Karl Lentz 015402540318.





**George Cooper's Home - Oaklands, Gypsy Hill, London
Rear View**



**George Cooper's Home Oaklands,
Gypsy Hill, London
Garden Summerhouse**





**Emily Studd Mother of George
Cooper**



**To the left is
“Gwennie”
George Cooper’s
Sister to whom
he addressed
most of his
letters while
abroad fighting
in France and
later German
East Africa**



**George Cooper's Married Sister Muriel
with her son Gerald whom he often
asked after.**



Gerald, Muriel's son in a fancy dress outfit



Muriel with her daughter Doreen sitting on her lap (not mentioned in the letters) with Gerald on a stool

