

EXTRACT FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY SERGEANT H.F. BRIGGS.

Mena Camp,

Egypt,

Saturday, March 27th '15

Dearest Mother,

.....The Turks made another attack last week but as usual it ended in failure, their force consisted of a mixed Artillery Cavalry and Infantry Bgde about 1,000 strong, they were driven back and finally polished off. The forcing of the Dardenalls will mean an end of these foolish attacks. Turkey will want all her Forces shortly. The main army that was engaged against Egypt has encamped about 4 days march from the canal. No doubt they are awaiting orders. We have not yet seen signs of Shifting. The Brigade of Infantry (Queenslanders) which left Egypt a month ago have not been heard of. Rumours say they have been landed in England. If so we should follow. Perhaps you have read about same. They did not know themselves where they were going but thought it was for Asia Minor. Anyway we shall soon know if they are in England.

Several of our officers have been given leave so our departure will not be just yet. There is nothing in the way of fresh news as usual. Hope all are keeping well at home. Ede tells me your Billeted soldiers have left for Shoreham, have they gone for good? Things seem at a deadlock in France, the Spring ought to make things move quicker, reckon the summer will mean the end. Once the Allies reach German soil they will find her ready for peace. I personally do not think Germany will let her country be devastated like Belgium and once the Allies get into the enemys Country they will avenge some of the wanton destruction in France and Belgium. In my opinion Germany knows she cannot win and these Blockades and the general disregard for International laws is for the purpose of doing as much damage as possible in the hope of obtaining a Peace Treaty as favourable to herself as possible.

They had strange ideas before the war as to how the Colonies would act. This struggle has shewn that the Empire is united when the time came to help the Mother Country.

The Australian Force is costing the Government £200,000 a week to keep it going and she is sending another 10,000 more. Considering the scarcity of the male population in Australia I think she has done remarably well in raising such a force, and they have sent the pick of those who offered themselves.



There is a Bton fellow in our Battalion whose Father is in Jacks company, I have mentioned him to Jacks who no doubt knows him. Almond is the name. The Bton Herald when it has been read is passed round to several of our chaps who have visited the old town some time or other. Of course there are a good many English born men in the force. 60 per cent are native born Australians.

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Fondest love to all,

from your loving Son,

HARRY.



EXTRACT FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY SERGEANT H.F. BRIGGS, July 19th 1925.

Gallipoli Peninsula,

DARDANELLS,

July, 19th 1915.

Dearest Mother,

..... Things are still quiet round our quarter although the Artillery have their daily Bombardment's. This is so consistent that we are getting quite used to it, always gets a bit exciting during meal times as no doubt they hope to get the men together in Groups. One never knows when or where they are going to send a "Johnston" so its not much use looking for cover - thats one big disadvantage of our position, there is no part of the Trenches or Base that is immune to shell fire. Can't get a dip in the sea without getting a few splashing round.

As I have previously mentioned for absolute deadening monotony there is nothing to compare with Trench life when there is not much doing, makes one thankful it is summer time as the wet winter months must play the devil with a mans nerves. Still winter or Summer I don't think this part of the World has much rain. In fact the water supply is causing a lot of stinting and trouble, we are only allowed 1 water bottle full per day, for all purposes. To wash in fresh water is considered a crime, although I usually manage to get a bath, shave, etc. out of a small tobacco tin. Both sides have been busy mining each others lines. so one gets quite used to Earthquake tremor. There is no sign of gas here yet, although being so near the Sea, the changeable breezes might cause more trouble to the senders than us. Of course we are quite prepared for any samples they may send in the way of Gas Shells.

Yoursloving son

HARRY.



COPY OF LETTER WRITTEN BY SERGEANT H. F. BRIGGS, Aug. 15th 1915.

"In the Turks Trenches",

Gallipoli Peninsula,

DARDANELLS,

Aug. 15th 1915.

Dearest Mother,

The usual few lines, am still going strong although things here are still busy. We are now feeling quite at home in our newly captured quarters although the stench from the Dead lying in the open is awful whilst the sun is streaming on them. One has to be continually smoking to deaden it and of course you can't enjoy your Tucker amidst such sights. We have found hundreds of Dead Turks buried beneath the Trenches, the heavy Bombardment previous to the attack knocked the Trenches about a lot. That was our worst job for we couldn't deepen them unless we dug out the remains. We had an Officer attached to us specially for these operations but he was wounded before the attack really commenced so I had to take charge again. As I have no N.C.O's to give assistance, they being either sick or wounded, it makes things a bit worrying, but as you know I am not a very worrying type that accounts for my health keeping so good.

You have to take things as they come these times, and one can only do his best so why turn Grey over it.

I have been told that in the sweet bye and bye we shall be relieved for a good long spell, reckon those that are lucky enough to be here since the first day deserve a change of air. 17 weeks in the trenches under shell fire the whole time is an experience that gets a bit trying on the nerves. Still don't think I have got many to upset, otherwise I should have been amongst the hundreds that have been broken up under the strain. One of the advantages of being "delicate" eh?

Am now acting O.C. to the section as before. Whilst writing have just received 3 letters from mail, one from yourself Jack and Dolly. Pleased to read all are going along O.K. so Trask thinks he may come this way. Pleased to hear that letters have been received perhaps Dads Biscuit P.Card got broken in transit. Pleased to hear that his health is better Jack seems to be going along satisfactorily.



Florrie Walker sent a parcel containing Hdkf, Cigarettes and some Chocolates, quite a shower of gifts etc. Can't help smiling when I recall her visit to us that time she proved so totally different to what we would i/magine. So some of my little experiences surprised you eh, must leave the full story until the family group meets again, extraordinary escapes and experiences occur daily here but one is so used to them that it becomes part of the business. Must close, Fondest love to all,

From Your loving son,

HARRY.



COPY OF LETTER RECEIVED FROM SERGEANT H.F. BRIGGS by his Mother.

GALLIPOLI PENINSULA,

DARDANELLES.

Sept. 6th 1915.

Dearest Mother,

Just a few lines, am still going along A.I., and am pleased we are at last getting a spell, where we are going is not yet Public, but as long as its away from this Hole any old place will do. I may not be able to send another line for a few days so you will know the reason if I miss a mail.

As usual news is scarce have not received a mail since last writing. Hope you are all going along satisfactory and keeping well. The weather still continues fine here never a sign of rain. I think they make up for it in the winter. Suppose there is no chance of Jack paying you a visit. Shouldn't mind a trip myself will have to see this job through I expect before they parade us in the Old Country.

Things are going very satisfactory here its turning out rather a slower process than they thought, its a pity they gave the Turks all those months to prepare for us, every hill is a fortress. I think I mentioned in a previous letter that we captured Turko-German Machine Gun. You would have laughed when we first opened fire with it. At the first burst of lead there was absolute silence from the Enemies lines for about 5 minutes, when they suddenly discovered they were receiving a dose of their own medicine. Then every rifle and M. Gun near by opened up without success. Will Close,

Fondest love to all from

Your loving son,

HARRY.



EXTRACT FROM LETTER WRITTEN BY SERGEANT H.F. BRIGGS, Sept 19th 1915.

"Tarti Camp",

Island of Lemnos,

Aegean Sea,

Sept. 19th 1915.

Dearest Mother,

At last can find time for a line. As address will show we are at last away from Gallipoli and enjoying a spell. This is the Island from which we started off 5 months ago to make the Landing, and one cannot help comparing the size of the Division then to the remnant that is now here getting its "second wind".

We have thoroughly deserved the rest, as we stuck in those trenches longer than any division in France and we were always under fire, there being no place on the Peninsula that cannot be swept by the enemies guns. We have been here 5 days and have been kept busy erecting tents etc. It has been raining heavens hardest these last 2 days which made things a bit damp, still we are away from the excitement which in itself is a big thing. When we go back nobody knows, we shall be here a month anyway. Of course there are rumours that we may not return to Gallipoli again, so everything is quite uncertain. As regards myself the rest came at a very opportune time for I was feeling a bit run down had a touch of Diarrh -- cant spell the word but you know the complaint. It made me feel a bit washed out, but am feeling myself again here, as we can obtain little extras from natives, Fruit etc. They are feeding us much better, we get 1 pint bottle English Stout (Guinness) for each two men per day. Am sure you will not have any misgivings as to my sobriety when I mention that the little tonic is very welcome.....

Fondest love from your loving son

HARRY.



17/4/40

EXTRACTS FROM LETTERS WRITTEN BY SERGEANT H.F. BRIGGS serving with the Australian Forces.

EGYPT,

1st April, 1916,

Dearest Mother,

We have shipped from our old camp, marched for 40 miles to our present spot. We are now quite near our "Old Friends" but they don't shew any signs of activity yet. The march down was very trying owing to the heavy sand and the heat which is particularly solid at this time of the year, there was also a shortage of water. Anyway that is over thank Goodness, so now for the next piece of information.

You will no doubt be surprised and pleased to hear that I have received a 2nd/Lieut Commission. The appointment came out in last Army Orders dated March 12th. Of course I had an idea it was coming, a few days ago. For I was sent for by the General and told that I had been recommended by the Colonel of the 55th Bn. and that he would also be pleased to sign the recommendation and so it eventually arrived about 8 days ago.

I was first recommended at "Lone Pine Charge" but the Col. was killed shortly afterwards and the affair dropped. However, on the Second in Command who is now Col. of the 55th Bn, arriving from Hospital another recommendation was sent through. I was sent to the school, no doubt to make sure that I was qualified to hold the position.

I am in the same Machine Gun Company as before but will give address again to make sure, far more privileges and more comfort, am allowed a batman or servant to do the extra jobs. There is a big difference in the pay also.

I now receive 21/- per day and Dress allowance of £15, which does not cover the actual kit expenses in ordinary times but is sufficient for Service Clothing. On receiving a commission you are first appointed second Lieutenant, the full rank of Lieut. automatically arrives after a few months service. Am afraid shall have to close this time to catch the mail. Herbert in his letter mentioned he was going to Persian Gulf or somewhere in that direction. The School I am at now is Machine Gun School, Ismallia, Egypt. It is not far from our present camp, the exact position of which I cannot give. Sand is very troublesome so forgive scribble. Flies absolutely eat you here.

Fondest love to all,

Your loving son, HARRY.



THE LAST LETTER RECEIVED FROM SERGEANT H.F. BRIGGS before notice that he was missing.

FRANCE,

12/7/16.

Dearest Mother,

Just a few lines giving news. I am at last amongst the Ironmongery again.

We moved into here early yesterday morning, I am with my section in the Front line of Trenches, Seems quite like old times again. But there is one exception, the conditions are far better here than at Anzac. After a reasonable period we get relieved for a spell in Billetts which soon takes away the Tired feeling. Of course the shell fire is heavier but this place is a Home compared with Gallipoli. We have only been here 24 hrs. but from what the previous Battalion tell us things are always fairly quiet. They are rather fond of using Gas here but we are well protected from anything of that description. We in the Company take turn about in the 1st, 2nd and 3rd lines and I have been the lucky one to be in the 1st. When I say Lucky I really mean it.

There is no doubt there is some sort of fascination in dodging bullets etc. and to me it is really quite a welcome change to have a bit of real excitement again. Of course at the other place we had too much of a good thing, but here things are different.

I have been told by the Brigadier there is sure to be leave granted in a week or so. Then I get 1st chance and its something to look forward to. I dont want you to worry yourself on my account, am as full of confidence as before. Am going strong and feeling A.1. There is plenty of water, too much in fact, so it is not necessary to worry over the "little creatures" for you can always get underwear cleaned. The Trenches here are far better than the other spot, Stronger Dugouts, better food and above all you are in touch with Civilization almost in the Firing line.

In fact there are families living as per usual in the 3rd line trenches, perhaps they are too poor to leave the Houses but there they are, taking shells etc., as quite a daily event even small children are running about the different Farm Houses which have not been entirely destroyed.

They did not keep us long in Billetts after landing for we were in the fire Zone 14 days after arrival at Marsailles.



Weather is of course very unsettled has been fine last two days but seems to rain more times than not. The Trenches absolutely swarm with rats. Huge creatures like kittens, they get very hungry, and often need a boot to shift them. Most of the firing is done by night here, so there is not much sleep to be got only during the day. Will close for this time. Trust alls well as usual. Have not yet received a mail but looking forward to same.

Fondest love ,

Your loving son,

HARRY.



### SPIRITED LETTER FROM THE DARDANELLES.

Letter written by Sergeant H.F. Briggs serving with the Australian Forces at the Dardanelles, to his father Mr. W. Briggs.

Dear Dad,

Thought you might like a few lines reporting progress. I will not burden you with details of the landing, etc., as I see the press has done that for us in language we should be too modest to use.

Anyway it was a tough job, and our chaps proved just the boys for it. It required a large pair of lungs and plenty of stamina to storm those heights as we did; but after that hard, strenuous work on the desert we felt fit for anything. The casualty list was a large one, but that was to be expected; and when one considered the fact that the enemy had been expecting and preparing for us for months, it is a wonder we forced a landing here at all.

Our section was in the first tow, as the machine guns were required to cover the advance of the infantry.

We had to jump from the boats and rush forward for cover. I stepped from the boat into a deep hole and went under straight away. I was carrying a box of mechanism weighing thirty pounds, besides rifle and equipment. So all I could do was to walk ashore along the bottom like a diver. It had its funny side. The Navy did great work, especially the landing parties in charge of the towing. They had to work under a perfect hail of shrapnel.

### THREE LUCKY ESCAPES.

The first day we were absolutely at the mercy of the enemy's artillery, as, with the exception of a few Indian mountain guns, there were no batteries landed until the second day. It was a continual hail of lead, and I had some lucky escapes. The nearest was a bullet through my service cap-sent it spinning. I had another through my boot; while a spent bullet struck my pack at the back. So with such a lucky list I am confident I shall see this through safely.

Our section has lost rather; out of that group you have there are only five and myself left. The first man to be killed was the fellow from Murdocks that I joined with (the New Zealander). He was struck by shrapnel, and never uttered a word. He was my best pal, and a white man through and through.



I saw red when he went down. We lost our officer next day, and the second one was wounded a month ago. The sooner the third arrives the easier for me, as I have been in sole charge since he was sent away, and it comes a bit heavy doing sergeant's work as well. I might mention re my promotion that with the exception of my shop mate who was a lance-corporal we have lost no N.C.O's,

We are expecting another two guns per battalion; so are busy training fresh men in spare time. Of course it is a risky job at times, for the artillery always try to get you when you open up. Still there are always plenty of volunteers.

During the first day I had a splendid view of our men storming one of the surrounding hills. We were covering their advance from an opposite hill; and it was a splendid sight to see them driving back the Turks. They were opposed to such overwhelming numbers of the enemy that they were forced to give ground occasionally; but each time they retreated they would rally up the hill again with bayonets fixed, until at last reinforcements arrived and they made a final rush and stayed there.

Since the first four days when we drove them back, every time they charged our position the Turks have refused to face our bayonets. I think the size of our chaps worries them.

The Turk as a fighting man is a big surprise. He is a plucky, tough customer to tackle, and they have the reputation of being the finest trench fighters in the world. Nothing only cold steel will shift them from their trenches. Being almost fanatical in their religion, when worked up they will charge against a stone wall; and so with German officers at their head they make a more formidable foe than some people imagine. Their snipers are also dead shots, as we found to our sorrow at first; but now we have the upper hand in that line of business, for the man from Way Back is hard to equal as a shot.

#### SHOOTING BY QUEEN ELIZABETH.

The shooting of the Queen Elizabeth is marvellous. She fires special shrapnel for this occasion out of her 15inch guns. The shells weigh over a ton and will carry eighteen miles. They contain 20,000 bullets. She swept out of existence entire regiments of Turks the day we landed. And yet the Turks face such awful firing as this without budging an inch.

Of course we have the old German tricks - hoisting of white flags, etc. They also use dum-dum and explosive bullets. We have also seen evidence of their mutilating games. But after all, I would rather be fighting Germans, as we feel the poor old Turks have been forced into it.



I am glad the cable relieved your anxiety. There were a good many mistakes made in the first casualty list, and a report went about that I was killed. I thought it advisable to cable straight away. Mistakes often occur in the first few days when they are making the lists, and I know of several cases where men have been put down as wounded or missing, instead of which they have been well and on duty.

So Johnson and Alf Simons have joined the Army. Can't understand any able-bodied fellow without ties keeping out of this. It is no place for the married man, and it's a shame they should be accepted.

By the way, I received Herald safely; also sheet of News of the World. They seem to have given us a lot of praise. Still it was a tough job, and our chaps behaved splendidly; and highly paid as they say we are it has been the hardest-earnt money I've handled.

The Canadians also have made a great name, I hear. By the time this is delivered I suppose Ede will be married and settled down. Hope they both have the best of luck. Sorry I couldn't be there; although, as I said previously, it won't be long, in my opinion before we see the white cliffs again.