

1  
Grentham.

30 - 6 - 18.

My Dear Mother,

Now, don't think that I'm back here for a while, I'm not. I'm only here for a few days. Measles have become very prevalent in Ireland at present, and all leave has been cancelled to them, by the War Office, so, I've been seeing a bit of this country during my fourteen days furlough, I went to Bournemouth for a day, and didn't care much for the place, it's not near as nice as Wexham, so I moved on to Portsmouth, with the same result as the other place. I happened to be in hospital just four miles from the best place, so had to pay a visit there. I then came on to London, and was there a few days. and then went and got a Warrant to go to Nottingham. I got there one night, and the next morning I came down here to see a few friends, and sure here I am still, was invited to stay a few days, the nearest approach to home, I've had for eighteen months.

When we come on leave, we're issued with a sugar card. entitling us to 1/2 oz per day. and meat coupons, as it is. where I'm staying is a meat shop. so, I've no need for the coupons. how I came to know the people, was when I was in the hospital - dear me, nearly two years ago now. there were four of us in town, and felt like taking some sausages back for supper, and this is where we came for them. since then, we were invited for tea, and afterwards became quite mutual friends.

I mean, am not here in camp.



2

The fruit is terribly dear here. how would you like to pay 2/- (two shillings) each for peaches. that you would think twice about paying sixpence a dozen for at Mr. Cohen's - to wit - bananas & such barely worth eating. and yet they say we're winning. I suppose we are too, very slowly though, by slow exhaustion - so to speak.

I suppose you're wondering how I am myself. well, I'm as fit now as ever I was. enjoying life to its utmost - as far as I can - the wound has left a scar just under my eye. not very big one. and perhaps will grow out more in time.

Well Mother to give you a little news, I'll relate how and when and where I was knocked - excuse expression - viz. accompanying illustration.

You will note at No. 1. a lonely little tree, one dark rainy night we were brought to that place. it was an awfully dark night, it took about fifteen of us to locate a speck driven into the ground, about twenty yards distance, no one knew where the gun was, he was supposed to have been in the village, and consequently we had to dig positions facing the place. Morning broke, finding a handful of men weary, worn, and worried. wet to the skin by the rain, and sweating much owing to the exertion, and the gun nowhere near the village, miles from it. then during the day we had to dig more positions for the guns facing the right hand side of the cart. we were there three days and had to move to No. 2. which formed our reserve line. practically speaking, no line at all. up to the present we had very little fire



3

fire from the gun. we then moved to No 3. and here died six days in the support line, ~~the~~ much better one than the reserve, his fire began to get quite unhealthy, settled quite a few fellows around us. We then moved up to No 4. and died our three days in the front line, things were very quiet here except for a few 'Mortars' which paid a visit now and again. we then came back to a communication line No 5. and died three more days and now the story begins.

During our last night in that line, three large field guns, were brought, to within 150 yards of our position. and began blazing away at a terrific rate, we hardly knew what was happening. after an hour or so, they pulled out - lucky for them -, and then we could hear an occasional crack, which grew and grew, till the row was deepening, our planes had evidently spotted one of his dumps, and these guns, won settled it. however that must have angered the Hun, at eleven P.M. 20<sup>th</sup> March. April, the enemy began his preparations which undoubtedly, were to ultimately find him in Aunens. He started by sending over 'heavies', 5.9's, and 8.1's shells, on to our batteries, further back still we sent over gas. to stop all assistance being sent up to the line. towards morning the noise increased, and at 3 P.M. 21<sup>st</sup> April, he opened out all his smaller guns on to the line, simply a hail storm of shells, the German happened to be holding the village V.B. and against this he launched his attack, resulting in the German being driven out, and the road you can see coming from 2 into the village was where he established his new front line, only to be driven out soon after. At 9 P.M. a runner came up to us.

x



who has since been killed. and told us that we had to go back to Corp.  
 H'26, with the gun. as no <sup>one knew</sup> ~~new~~ where exactly the him had got to. everything  
 was a mix up that day. no one knew which way to turn. at 10 AM.  
 the Jommies tried to hit him back, but he was too well consolidated.  
 and they failed. Night came, and also orders that we were to retake the  
 village. without an artillery preparations. at 12 AM. 24-5<sup>th</sup> April we  
 started from No 7. All went quietly until we got near his line, and the  
 yelling and shrieking began. we got into little holes about No 8. and  
 I never expected to get out alive, felt as though I would have to give  
 up the ghost at any time. Things quietened a little, and the infantry  
 went on, we following fifty yards, <sup>they</sup> got to his next line, more  
 howling and yelling began, our chaps to frighten him, <sup>and</sup> he in his  
 fright. he again called for support from his artillery, which was  
 promptly delivered unto us, in no small measure.  
 however this time we were too close upon him that his fire, dropped  
 behind us, for which we were very thankful. No 9. when things had again  
 resumed order we went to a trench No 10, and here made a place to  
 mount the gun. by 5 AM, 25<sup>th</sup> April the Australians had surrounded  
 the village, and began sniping - not a small factor with them. -  
 about 7 AM, the Jommies were sent in to 'Mop up' the house, who began  
 fighting with them, not knowing they were surrounded, by 10 AM,  
 we had the grand total of 1,000 prisoners, not a bad little bag full  
 for a silent raid!



You may be sure he wasn't going to rest contented after being so nicely pushed out of the town, at 3.30 PM, 25<sup>th</sup>, he began his artillery fire prior to his counter-attack, imagin a tornado, or typhoon to pass over a place, at the same time all the crickery in a hardware shop, crashing to the ground, and you have a very vague idea of what a decent bombardment is. The order was sent round to 'stand to', as he was coming over, and an hour afterwards he was reported to have attacked, and was repulsed leaving behind numerous dead and dying, and 6 PM, he again attacked with the same result as the first, and during this I got a piece in my face, at No 10. Such was the William Bretteville stunt of which no doubt you have all heard.

And how is everyone at home, and arrival. I hope they are all still keeping well. I have not had a letter from home for about a month now, Will is still keeping well, up till I last heard from him about three weeks ago. I met Handel W. in London a few weeks ago, he was looking 'top whole'.

Well I think I'll say Good-bye for the present.

Your loving son.

Yours . . . . .

P.S. How is Bill still keeping?

I'm enclosing my sugar bowl for a souvenir. Incidentally I had more sugar where I was than I could have got with my cash.



J.E. HARRIS  
Australian Memorial  
FOUILLOY 80800 CORBIE.  
FRANCE.

4th of Dec. 1978.

*Dear Jim,*

Sorry to have been such a long time to write to you but I have been away a few days on leave to recover after the Armistice day.

As you will see, I have the pleasure to enclose the letter lost in Villers; the person who handed it to me is the lady at the pub where the letter had fallen on the floor and was found after your departure. The name of the lady is Mrs DIDERICHE, CAFE DES SPORTS, Route d'Amiens 80380 VILLERS BRETONNEUX.

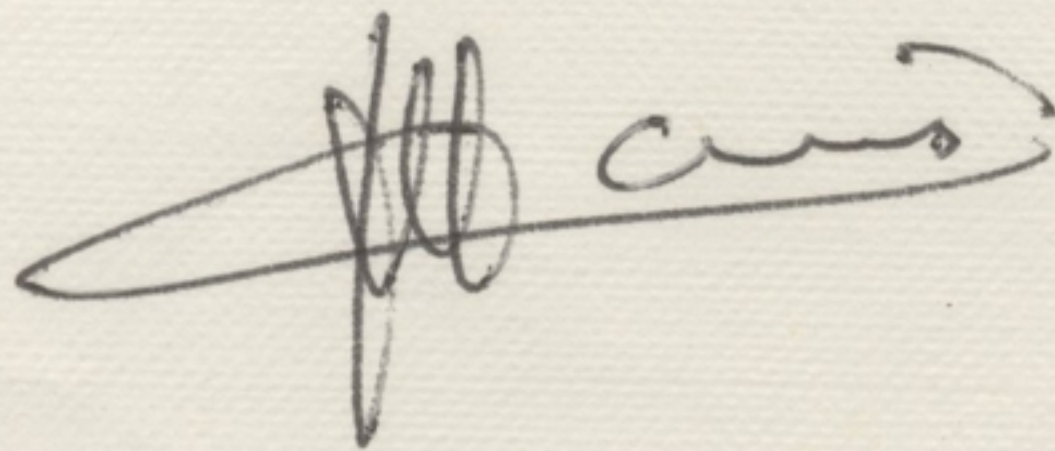
I tried to pass on the message to you in London with the Embassy in Paris to let you know; did you get it?

Hope you got home safely after this wonderful voyage in Europe; all the people here in Villers shall never forget the memorable day that you spent in the town.

I will close now sending you my very best wishes for a merry Christmas and a happy New Year.

*Yours Sincerely,*

Mr. J. HODGEN  
50 Herbert Street  
ROCKDALE N.S.W.2216  
Australia.



*Answered 10-1-79*



VILLERS-BRETONNEUX. - Vue générale



J. Duehaussé, éditeur



# CARTE POSTALE

CORRESPONDANCE

New New Church erected 1920

ADRESSE

M

M<sup>re</sup> Welgen.

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Sydney.

PR. 83/16  
(2)

AUSTRALIAN  
WAR MEMORIAL