

Copy of letter from Harry at the front -

Jan. 17th 1915

My dear Fanny,

I have been trying to find time to write to you ever since leaving Rouen, but have not been successful so far. We left Rouen about 5pm last Monday, arriving at our destination, which we will call "B" at 9-30 the next morning. I never spent a more uncomfortable night than that night in the train, packed as we were 55 in a horse-truck with no possibility of lying down. It is amusing to see written up on the vans Hommes 36-40

Chevaux (en long) 8

I dont know how many horses they could get in broadways on!

We spent one night at "B" and the next day had a terrible march of 8 miles in pouring rain to "K", or what is known as the close billet, one and a half miles from the ~~fighting~~^T line, where we stop during the four days we are in the trenches. We go in two companies at a time for 24 hours, so that during those four days in close billets each company has 48 hours in the trenches. Of course on the other days there are always plenty of fatigues going. After the four days in close billets we move about three miles back to a small village "L" where we have four days rest, so that you are actually in the trenches 48 hours a week, which is as much as most men can stand. I am writing from "L" now, having marched back last night. We have joined the 1st Battalion now and shall go into the trenches with them after this four days. ----- is actually under shell fire and we hear the German shells screaming over and dropping on the hill side about half a mile behind the village, and trying to silence our guns which are pounding away all day long. One gets quite used to the firing

and I have only heard a few men complain that it gets on their nerves. This village --- is one that the Germans have been through and one out of every ten houses is in ruins from shell fire. Almost the only things to be got in the village are coffee and bread, and those inhabitants who are still there are doing a roaring trade with us in that line. It is extraordinary how safe one feels out here in the middle of everything, a hundred times more than you imagine at home. People say that it is only through recklessness, carelessness or pure bad luck that any one gets picked off.

Hurrah! have just had your first two packets of socks and the first news I have had since leaving. I had a letter from Aunt Louey yesterday, addressed by you, one from Aunt Edith and a card from Miss Hurter. Please thank every one for all their letters and tell them that I cant write myself as we are only allowed to write once a week now, which will of course be home. We are allowed to send those field post-cards, but cannot get any until we are drafted on to the main lot.

Please thank Dorothy very much for the socks. I have just put them on and find them very comfortable. They are all the better thick as they fill up the boot better and make a softer pad for walking on. I was in despair at not having received any till today, as I have been wearing my last pair till they were like a board with the wet, and consequently, I have had an awful blister on one of my heels. It was like Paradise to get a clean dry pair on.

It seemed like Xmas Day today, every one in good spirits with their letters and parcels from home. By the way, you might number your letters in future so that I know how many have missed. I hope you are

receiving mine. I will number this 1, and so on in the future.

----- By the way, how is it that you are not back at the Hospital?-----

Thank you all ever so much for the socks.

P. S. Your two letters I received today are dated 7th and 9th. Have had no others.

Monday 18th.

I finished this too late to post last night, so am adding some today. It has turned much colder and has been snowing heavily off and on since early morning. The whole country is now under snow, but of a very wet nature and the slush is all the more appalling.

By the way, I wish you would send me out Punch every week. It would be a perfect Godsend, as we get nothing to read here except stale papers; in fact we hear hardly any news of what is going on elsewhere. You might also send me out some sort of writing block or pad and envelopes, nothing large. I believe there are all sorts of things to be had especially designed for soldiers.

By the way I dont believe I told you that I found Kenneth Powell when we joined up with the others. He had a very bad throat and could not speak above a whisper, but has been perfectly fit he says up till then.

Alfred please forward to Harold W. Jones -
Harold 12 Roslyn Hill
Hampstead
Miss F.D. Jones
"Castro"
Reigate

Letter from H. Dukinfield Jones
at the Front. 25th Jan. 1915.

Here we are again on our four days' rest in the village three miles back. I was in the trenches yesterday for the first time. We went in at ^{Censored}----- and were relieved at ^{Censored}---pm yesterday, after which we marched back here, and pretty dead we were at the end of it. It seemed like Paradise to lie down on a stone floor, and we slept like tops all night. We had awful billets this time during our four days, up in the roof of an old barn with half the tiles off and huge holes everywhere letting in rain and wind. You are not even allowed to take your boots off during the four days in close billets, so you get very little sleep what with the cold and all the other discomforts. On the days when we are not actually in the trenches we have to go up after dark, carrying sandbags, coke etc up to the trenches, and very hard work it is splashing through about two miles of liquid mud sometimes up to your knees, with bullets whizzing about in all directions. Being in the trenches is no joke, though we were lucky enough to get a fairly dry one, but the cold was awful and we kept huddled up together in the dug-out as much as possible. This is the most awful kind of warfare; there is no thrill about it. You sneak up to the trenches in the dark like ^{Censored}----- and sit in the cold and dreariness, being potted (at) all round from an unseen enemy. They were putting their shells very near us yesterday and the mud they kicked up came splashing down all over us. You cant think how we relish these four days' rest, when we can at least chuck ourselves down on the floor and get a bit of sleep, though even here there are plenty of fatigues to do and you never know when you are going to be disturbed to do a guard or something equally annoying. I am feeling as fit as can be expected. Of course nearly everyone has colds, but they are thought nothing of. I have nearly got rid of a hacking cough I have had for a week or so.

Please thank Mr Wicksteed very much for the book, which I shall value immensely, and explain to him that we are only allowed to write letters once a week, which of course must be home. Also please thank Aunt Emily for her letter and say that I should love to get some illustrated papers as she suggested; we hear no news of any kind here and you can imagine what a joy it is to get papers from home. Also please thank Nancy and Dorothy for their socks and letters and say that the former are a perfect Godsend. They fit beautifully. Please tell everyone that we love getting letters, but explain that as we

can only write once a week replies can only be scarce.

Your letters seem to be coming through splendidly now and I got them all eventually. Dont alter the address whatever you do; I should probably never get the letters if you addressed them to head quarters. I hope you are getting my letters all right. I try and send off a field post-card every day during our stay here, but of course cannot do even that when we are up at the firing line.

The box of things arrived in splendid condition. The cigarettes and tobacco were well chosen, just what I like. You needn't send any more baccy as it is supplied now as army rations, but the cigarettes are awful as a rule, so a small packet from home ^{occasionally} would be most acceptable. Your last pair of socks has not arrived yet, but I expect it will come either today or tomorrow.

Extracts from letter from H. Dukinfield Jones,
at the Front, dated 28th Jan. 1915 to Feb 2nd

We are asked not to make our letters too long, because of censoring them, so I think the best way is to write in the form of a brief diary and send it to you when we get back to our four days' rest.

Jan. 28th.

Did an hour's billet guard from 11 to 12 at night. Very cold and frosty. Cleared up in the morning, preparatory to moving off to the close billets in the afternoon. Was on baggage fatigue after dinner moving stores from the quarter-blokes store-room to the square outside the church. Moved off at 5-15pm and arrived at the close billets after a very pleasant march along the frosty roads with a brilliant moon. Our company were lucky enough to get a very comfy billet this time in the chapel of the schools. Someone is strumming Bach fugues on the harmonium while others are having whatever supper they happen to have with them, or smoking and yarning away, perfectly oblivious of the music of Bach, sketchy though it is. It is a funny life, listening to Bach one moment and the next marching to the trenches to the sound of the bullets whistling around! (bow-wow). Am going to turn in now, 9pm.

Jan. 29th.

Did nothing till 5pm when we paraded for the trenches. I went into a separate trench with six men and a corporal as listening patrol. We stopped there for the night and came up to the front line trenches at day-break.

Jan. 30th.

Very cold in the trenches where I am writing now. Frost and snow, nothing doing. We sit still and eat all day and watch the German shells bursting. Were relieved about 6-30pm and were glad to get back to our billets and have a good night's rest.

Jan. 31st.

Had to parade in full marching order at 6-30am to be ready in

case of attack. We stood by till daylight, but were not wanted. Spent the morning cleaning rifle, bayonet etc.; incidentally cut my thumb opening a jam tin for breakfast, which caused much inconvenience for the morning's work. There is a driving east wind with snow, but it is just on the thaw. Have just been speaking to Mr Stone who I think I told you has got a commission and is one of No 3 Coy's officers. He is an awfully good sort and would do anything for our comfort.

By the way one of the men in our platoon who has been out here is Morgan who plays footer for the Priory and knows all the Thompsons; isn't it funny? He is quite a nice chap. Went on a fatigue to the trenches in the evening, carrying empty sandbags; a lovely moonlit evening.

Feb. 1st.

On sanitary fatigue all day burying rubbish. Had a lovely wash under the pump in the sunshine. We marched back for our four days' rest in the evening. Have got a rotten billet in an old barn this time.

Feb. 2nd

Went on a fatigue before breakfast, digging holes for rubbish. Had a slack day seeing friends, drinking coffee and eating all day. I have never felt fitter in my life than I have felt the last few days; I have not been really fit till now, and by Jove what a difference it makes. I am enjoying myself as much as anyone now. This life is all right when you are fit but awful when you are not. The last day I was in the trenches I had a lovely doze with the sun blazing down on us. We play cards, eat and yarn all day in the trenches when it is fine, and in fact have quite a good time.

By the way it quite the thing to get parcels of food-stuffs sent out and I will give you a list of things that are most acceptable. Although we are well fed there is not much variety and a few delicacies are much appreciated.

Cake of any description. Biscuits. Cocoa (specially prepared with milk in paste I believe) Bivouack cocoa and milk. This is invaluable in the trenches. Potted meats. Condensed milk. Camp pies. The following jams; honey, marmalade, strawberry. Almonds and raisins, dates, etc. Toffee, caramels, peppermints, any other kinds of sweets.

Horlick's malted milk tablets, ginger, sausages, starboard lights. Any other kinds of things you think would do. These are just some suggestions. We have great feeds when we get back here with the contents of parcels from home. If you are too busy to make up a parcel, perhaps you could get Adams or somebody to send one out. -----
----- Other things I am much in need of are: a couple of pairs of loofa socks for boots, size 8. Half a dozen good strong bootlaces. A tube of Kolynos tooth-paste.

The writing pad has arrived, also Punch and No 12 letter; many thanks for them all and please thank Father for his letter. I really must stop now or the sergeants who have to read this letter will curse me.

P.S. You neednt put " draft " on my letters any more as we are joined up with the 1st Batt. now

Letter from F. Dagilfield Jones. 21st Feb. 1915

I have just received Father's letter telling me of your sad plight. What have you seen and gone and done it for? It is rotten luck, and I am awfully sorry for you. You must take great care of yourself and get all right as quickly as possible. I shall have to be content as Father says with a smaller mail bag for the time being. I cant tell you very much news except that we have had a very hard time in the trenches this time, owing to the frightful weather.

Going up the other night I fell into a ditch; I had a little swim and on getting out found I had lost my rifle; however I discovered it on the bank half buried in the mud. It was not a pleasant experience sitting in my wet things for twenty four hours during the whole of which time it poured with rain and snow. The fact that we were very heavily shelled during the day did not add to our comfort. However we are most of us none the worse for our experience. I am afraid I cannot go into details because of the censor, otherwise I might tell you one or two interesting incidents; but you must wait till I get home to tell you everything. You will have heard by now of the terribly sad death of Kenneth Powell. It is too awful to think of that fine fellow cut off in the prime of his life. I was talking to him only the day before his death and I never saw him looking fitter. He was just going to take a commission, but I dont know what in. There was no-one in the regiment who won greater admiration or who was better loved by all who knew him. He was always ready to do his share and more than his share of work without a grumble. He was shot by a stray bullet while on a fatigue, carrying things up to the trenches. The bullet went through his arm and entered his stomach and he died on his way ~~back~~ to the hospital. I have just been to see his grave in the church yard here, marked like all the others with a plain wooden cross, with the inscription

Pte Kenneth Powell
Killed in Action
Feb. 13th '15

Well, it is all in the fortunes of war and it is no good being morbid about it. As a matter of fact we get extraordinarily callous out here. I am at present wearing a pair of boots belonging to a man in our company who died of shock during the shelling the other day. He was the only man who died though there were about fifteen wounded with shrapnel. Of course in comparison to the number of men in the trenches this is a very small per centage.

It was nice seeing Clive the other day. He looked very fit and he was telling me all about his Canadian trip and his stay with Frank and Mona. Willy is coming out here shortly in the ----- so I hope to see him before long. I have just had a long letter from Mary. She has been down with flu, but is recoveing now. -----

Yours and Mrs Mac's socks have just arrived, also various newspapers etc for which many thanks. The parcel of food-stuffis was grand. We did enjoy the cocoa in the trenches. Am much looking forward to the next parcel. I find Horlick's malted milk excellent stuff on all sorts of occasions. Well I must stop now or this will not go off. Mr Stone has just been in for the letters.

Letter from H. Dukinfield Jones dated 3rd March 1915

Dear Father,

I hope you have got my last letter by now. Please dont worry if you dont get my letters regularly. It is quite likely that now that things are beginning to make a move the transports etc will not be able to keep going quite smoothly, owing to all the pressure. It is marvellous to see all the troops that are passing this way daily in preparation for the general advance. We are still here on our rest and return to the trenches tomorrow. The weather has improved during the last few days and the wind we have had ought to have done something towards drying up the mud. This has been the nicest rest that we have had so far. We are billeted in a little cottage inhabited by an old man and his wife and son (who is a tailor). We have the use of their front room (with a fire!) where we can sit and read and write letters. I am actually writing this at a table, a rare luxury for us!.

The contents of my last parcel are being much appreciated, we are going to have the camp pie for dinner today. By the by you might send me out one of those unbreakable pocket shaving-mirrors, I think they call them the " soldiers', and sailors'" mirror. They are polished nickel or something of that sort, and are the very thing for this life.

This is not half a bad little place and you can get quite a lot in the way of comforts etc if you look for it, even hot baths ! I am going to have one tonight at a steam laundry run by the nuns of a convent now used as a field hospital. You have your bath in the great concrete tanks that the clothes are washed in, after the work is finished at half past eight. It is ripping to feel clean if only for a few hours. We can get our own clothes washed regularly too, but we have to take the risk of leaving them behind if we should happen to be moved somewhere else while they are at the wash.

Of course we are always hearing wild rumours as to where we are going to be sent to and what is going to be done with us, but no-one knows from one day to another. We have had no close fighting yet in the way of attacks or anything of that sort, but we are quite likely to get some before we have finished. I, for one, am not pining for any bayonet scuffles, but I hope I shall get mine in first if we do have one !

In the way of recreations we have foot-ball matches and concerts during rest. The concerts consist almost entirely of comic songs, and as nobody carries his repertoire about with him and can only sing what he happens to remember, there is not much variety, but that does not matter and the songs gradually become old favourites.

By the way, I should like to see the account of Kenneth Powell in the Surrey Mirror, you might send it when you get this. That Damned

Daily Mirror or Sketch, I forget which, published an entirely wrong report of his death, in which it said that he was shot in the throat and died instantaneously. It is wicked the way these papers will publish anything, regardless of its authenticity.-----

We have just heard a rumour of a big Russian victory on a larger scale than any yet. They say that the Germans instead of converging back have been scattered and had to retreat in open order so to speak. I shall be glad if it is true, but I have lost faith in these damned Russian victories. There have been too many of them.

I personally am feeling very cheerful about things, not that I know anything more than you or anyone knows, but it gives one confidence to see all these thousands of troops coming through. Old French knows what he is about. The news of Constantinople is good, but I cant see how it is going to affect the war, except that we shall not have to bother about the Turks any more.

I have just been turned away from the table as the old man and his wife want to have their dinner on it, so

Good bye for the present.

15/10
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Copy of letter from H. Dukinfield Jones at the Front
dated April 18th 1915 recd. April 21st

My dear Fanny

I am writing this sitting on a crate in a very muddy yard - the only place we can get to-day where there is any sun, as we are standing by & are not allowed to leave our billets. This is our second day of rest (4 days) or so called rest, as we have to go up to the trenches nearly every night either digging trenches or carrying things up. As it is 3 miles from the trenches you can imagine how tired we are after carrying heavy loads such as barbed wire, corrugated iron planks etc. all that distance, in any weather & over all kinds of obstacles such as ditches, hedges, shell-holes etc. sometimes not getting back till dawn. The other night we left here at 7pm, got to the trenches at 9pm, dug trenches in heavy ground till 2.30am without a stop & got back here at 4.30am in daylight. It seems to suit me anyhow, for I never felt better in my life. It is the discomfort & filth that get so monotonous after a time. We absolutely long for a comfortable bed, a fire to dry our things by, a good sit-down meal, and above all, facilities for keeping clothes and body clean. You've no idea what the filth and smell are, and what the summer will bring forth in that respect is awful to contemplate. I am trying all sorts of remedies for lice & as soon as I have found the most effective one I will get you to send it out to me at regular intervals. At present I am wearing a little bag of flower of sulphur which seems to be fairly good and I got some good sleep this morning. The stuff you sent out kept the beasts off me for a day but I don't think it is strong enough to kill them - I should like a new set of clothes as mine are getting rather vile now with none too good washing & not too often. I have worn this last set for over a month now without a change as the washing facilities are very bad here. Don't it disgusting to think of? I threw my last shirt away yesterday as it was so full of lice and eggs, & am at present wearing none.

We are sadly dwindling down in numbers now as so many go down sick with all this hard work. A great friend of mine went down to one of the bases yesterday & it seems rotten here without him.

I see Blive occasionally. His regiment relieves ours, & the other night while I was taking a wounded man to the dressing station I suddenly heard his voice giving orders to his men. It seemed quite uncanny. Willy is also out here but I have not seen him yet - he was in the trenches next to ours the other day.

So long

Letter from E. Dunrofield Jones at the Front 25th April 1915

My dear Fanny,

Many thanks for the clothing and tin opener just arrived, (pretty quick work). I expect there will be a letter coming along, but they have not been distributed yet. We arrived back from the trenches last night after four days on end in the trenches, but fortunately without a drop of rain, so it was not so bad.

Things are livening up tremendously now. All those things you read about in the papers as taking place we can hear going on. The big guns are going hard and the roar of bombardments is pretty frequent now. We know something of the meaning of "taking a trench" as you read of it in the papers, though we have not had to do it ourselves yet. Nevertheless things are very busy now and everyone is on the alert. Events are daily taking place round here which will become famous when they are known afterwards. I have great hopes myself that something of a decisive nature will occur during the next few weeks. If the Germans are going to achieve anything they'll have to do it now or never. I don't see how they can go on hurling their thousands against us only to be slain in masses, while every day our positions are getting stronger and stronger. I don't know any more than you do, but I can't help feeling very hopeful myself. We are getting very fed up with this trench work and shall all of us be glad when it is over.

I have quite got rid of my "close enemies" for the present with "blue ointment". Will you send me a small tin of it say once a fortnight until I find out how long it lasts. I think it is mercuric ointment, but any chemist will know what you mean by "blue ointment".

I have just seen Willy Gaskell who is a lieutenant in one of the regiments in our brigade. He is looking very fit and cheery.

Ross, I believe, has been in some hard fighting round here, but I have not heard of him lately. I hope he got through all right. Blive is very fit. Isn't it funny our all being so near each other?

It is awful to see all the ~~villages~~ - ruin of the villages and the country round by the shells and the fires they cause. There are glares from fires all round the horizon at night, and it is a sight to see the flashes from the guns and to hear the roar when there is a bombardment. It does not look as if we or the Germans are short of ammunition yet. All this firing gets on ones nerves after a time and you long to get right away somewhere for a day or two out of sight and sound of the guns

It is said that the Germans fired 300 shells into a certain town not far from here the other day, and when you come to consider that each shell costs somewhere about £1000 (I think I am right) you can get some idea of the cost. They seem to regard human life in the same callous way. They lost 3000 men in attacking one position the other day. They certainly are the most marvellous fighters

we've got some jolly good chaps to avenge if they ever

we are put into a charge (which I very much

for officers) I hope we shall give it

I do envy you all. It is awful not
and enjoy life this glorious
day, for we do get plenty of fun

Letter from Mr Stone at the Front, 17th June 1915

Dear Mr Jones,

I deeply regret to inform you that your son H.D. Jones was killed in action on the 16th instant at about 4 am. We were taking part in an attack. Our company had just advanced into the front German trench which had been taken, and as we were reversing the parapet your son got a bullet through his mouth instantaneously killing him. I think it was from a machine gun they turned on to us.

I know this will be a terrible shock to you as you were hoping to see him home soon with a commission. I am terribly sorry to lose him as he was such a good fellow and always so cheerful. He was always ready to do anything that was wanted and to do it well.

He was one of many others I am afraid whom we lost on that day and the following day. We buried him behind the trench without any chance of proper ceremony, as we had great difficulty in getting the wounded away. However he died a soldier's death and has a soldier's grave. I will try and find out where the spot was as the part of the line was quite new to us; all I can say is that it was a little to the west of the Chateau at Hooze.

His section commander will be writing to you also I think.

I am very sorry to have to give you such bad news. May God give you all comfort and strength to endure the great loss and grant your son everlasting life.

Believe me

Yours very sincerely,

William. A. Stone.

2nd Lieut. H.A.C.

Letter from Corporal T.H.Fowler at the Front. 18th June 1915

No 3 Comp.

My dear Sir,

I am sure I need make no apologies for writing this letter to express my deepest sorrow at the loss of your son. Since last October I have been in the same section and for the last four months I have been his section commander. I was next to him when he was killed. The only consolation is (I know what a small one it is) that he did not suffer, death being instantaneous. I cannot possibly explain to you how we all admired and loved him. During these six months he was absolutely splendid; he never complained and did more than his share. As you must know we have been through terrible hardships. He bore them all so cheerfully and met his death doing his duty to the last.

It seems so sad as he was hoping to go home with his commission. Our section was terribly cut up. I do think he was happy out here, we all pulled together so well and he was always so good tempered and big hearted. The whole regiment was so fond of him. I feel it terribly as I shall always reckon him one of my staunchest friends. We were both at Lancing College, though I was senior to him.

We hope to put up a cross on his grave at the first opportunity and if I can possibly manage it I will get a photo of it.

We had nearly 200 casualties in the regiment yesterday.

I enclose the money I found in his pocket, also a few photos etc If there is anything I can do to help you in your great sorrow please do not fail to let me know. I am afraid this is a poor letter and fails to express what I really feel. I can only again express my deepest

and Miss Jones in your terrible trial.

are spared to come through this horrible war)

friend and loyal comrade.

rely,

er.

corporal)