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**Wartime letters written by Edmund George Oswald to Oswald Family**  
1915-1918  
Transcripts by Wendy Mackintosh

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PRG 1626  
Series 2

Wartime letters from Edmund (Edward) George Oswald in date order from 10 June 1915 to 24 April 1918. Most are to his mother (Alice) but some are to his brothers (Bertie, Norman and Geof) and sisters (Ivy, Hazel and Myrtle). He mentions Flo (Florence Green) who became his wife in 1919.

George mentions 'Gordon' frequently throughout the letters: this was his brother-in-law, husband of his sister Myrtle, Lance Corporal Gordon Cromwell Simmons, no. 922, 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion, who was killed in action in France on 27 June 1916.

### **Active Service (dates of letters)**

PRG 1626/2/1            Fremantle – 10 June 1915

PRG 1626/2/2-8        Egypt – 21 July 1915 – Oct 1915

PRG 1626/2/9-14      Gallipoli – 14 October 1915 – 2 December 1915

PRG 1626/2/15-19    Hospital Ship to No. 3 Auxiliary Hospital –10 December 1915 –  
19 February 1916

PRG 1626/2/20-43    “Somewhere in France” – 15 June 1916 – 22 April 1917

PRG 1626/2/44-48    London – 13 December 1917 – 24 April 1918

### Note on the transcripts:

These have been copied by Wendy Mackintosh (grand daughter) in May 2013.

The originals are very difficult to read, and mostly written in lead pencil. A maximum of two pages were allowed in Service Letters.

[.....] Where it is impossible to read, generally due to creasing of folded pages.

(?) Where I have copied what I think is correct.

Kisses at bottom generally filled in the spaces left at bottom of page.

There were no paragraphs in originals (all space being used)

Spelling, grammar and punctuation as in original has not been altered (mostly the misspelling of “recieved” and lack of apostrophes).

PRG 1626/2/1

YMCA Letterhead  
Association Headquarters  
123 Murray Street  
Perth WA.  
“Talk clean, Live clean, Fight clean, Play the game”

This is my second letter.

From E.G. Oswald  
No. 888

June 10<sup>th</sup> 1915

Dear Mother.

I am writing from the above address, for this is where myself and about 50 others are at the present time. I'll tell you why we are here.

When we arrived at Fremantle they anchored about 50 yards from the wharf and they would grant no-one any leave, that was on the Sunday night. So on Monday they brought the ship up along side the wharf, to take on some Western Australians. The they told us we were going to stay out in midstream till Thursday. So being so close to the wharf and knowing that we would have to stay on board in sight of the city, we could not resist the temptation to jump ashore. So about 30 of us got over the side onto the wharf. About ½ hour later about 300 of the boys on the boat went mad and they swore that they would go ashore. So a couple of the blokes dived off the boat into the water. Just then a couple of kids in a rowing boat came along, and one of the officers ordered them too pick the soldiers up. Course they didn't take any notice of him.

So with that he drew his revolver and threatened too shoot the kids. Well that started the mob. They told him too lower his revolver but he wouldn't. So one big W. Australian went up and hit him under the jaw and knocked him out. With that the mob started to lower the boats and they went ashore.

To go on with myself, I chummed up with one of the boys he had plenty of money. We visited all the places of interest in Fremantle. Then we caught a train up to Perth that's the capital of W.A. We stayed two days in Perth. So on the Thursday we went back to join the boat. And found out that it was gone. So we took a train back to Blackboy-Hill Camp, and reported ourselves. The majority of the S.A. boys went aboard again after they had a look at Fremantle, because they had no money. Well at any rate we reported ourselves about 50 of us. So on the Friday, the 28<sup>th</sup> Battalion from here were embarking on the Ascanias, a transport with some Queenslanders aboard. They were going to put us aboard this boat but they had no room. So they took us back to Blackboy Camp and fixed us up with blankets and tents. We are to wait here till the

[pages missing]

PRG 1626/2/2

YMCA LETTERHEAD

This is my 4<sup>th</sup> letter

No. 888 Private  
E.G.Oswald  
D. Company  
27<sup>th</sup> Batt.  
7<sup>th</sup> Brigade  
A.I.F  
Egypt  
1915

Abbassia July 21<sup>st</sup>

Dear Mum,

You can see by our new address that we are now in Egypt. We arrived here on my birthday. (18...) July 17<sup>th</sup>, a fortnight later than Gordon. You take my word it's a place to open your eyes. Well I'll start from when we arrived at Aden. We got into Aden about 6 o'clock in the morning and it was a strange sight. An enormous big rock or mountain sticking straight up out of the water surrounded by searchlights and big warships laying around. As soon as it got daylight the niggers came swarming around to sell everything from a watermelon to a needle. They throw up a long rope made of reeds with a basket on the end and you put your money in first and then they send your stuff up. They are dressed in every imaginable colour you can think off, and they jabber and get excited over anything that is thrown to them. At any rate we stayed at Aden for a day and then we got a start again and by nighttime we had passed through, "Hells Gates". As two great big rocks you pass through are called, and by then you know you are in the Red Sea. This is where you strike it red hot. Its absolutely boiling. It took us two days to sail through the Red Sea, and at last we reached Port Suez. This is at the mouth of the Suez Canal and it is something similar to Aden, only there are a better class of niggers here. We disembarked here and it is strange to see no trollies and things going along the street like there are in Adelaide. They carry all these goods on their heads or donkeys and camels.

We left Port Suez about three o'clock in the afternoon and lobbied in Cairo about 10.30P.M. It is a lovely sight all along the line. On both sides of the line you see nothing but irrigated land, and it is most tempting too, the mouth too to see the fresh water canal running right from Suez to the River Nile, all the huts along the line are composed of mud and straw matting. I will tell you more in my next letter. I can't tell you much as I have barely time to get this letter in before the mail goes. All I can say is that I'm in splendid health and condition and I hope you and all the others are the same. Don't forget to write as up to the time of writing this I have not received one letter yet. I must now close with love and kisses hoping you are all well as it leaves me. Excuse writing but the flies are that troublesome they nearly drive you mad.

From your loving son.

George.

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PRG 1626/2/3

[Black and white postcard with an image of an 'Arab village' depicting men walking along a road with two camels carrying large packages, and buildings in the background.]

MARY POST CARD  
CAIRO

Addressed to:  
Mrs A Oswald  
356 Carrington St  
Adelaide  
S. Australia  
Australia

Postmarked 29 Jul 1915  
A.I. F. Passed by Censor  
Post Free On Active Service  
No stamp available

Dear Mum

I just found this and I thought I might as well send it home. It is a native village on the outskirts of Cairo. You can see by the big load on the camels, the weight these animals can carry over the desert. Camels and donkeys do all the work here as they can go without water for six or seven days. You can see how valuable they are on the desert where there is no water. The men wear skirts the same as the women. Will now close with love to all.

George

PRG 1626/2/4

This is my 6<sup>th</sup> letter

August 4<sup>th</sup> 1915

D. Company  
27<sup>th</sup> Battalion  
7<sup>th</sup> Brigade  
Abbassia  
Egypt

Dear Mother,

I told you in my last letter of my arrival in Egypt. Since then, we have been hard at work, getting in trim, for the turks. The work gets more and more interesting as it goes on, and all the boys are pretty fit by now. About 2 weeks back I visited the Pyramids of Cheops, and several others. They are a most wonderful work of man. Rising to a height of about 453ft on a clear day, you can see them for a distance of about 12 miles. It's a lovely drive out to them. You catch a tram or a Victoria from Cairo and in about an hours time you have reached your destination. You pass through some very pretty places on the way, such as native villages and through what is known as old Cairo. Here you see some old ruins anywhere up to 12 hundred years old. Somewhere in the ruins is the well, that is mentioned in the Bible, I forget the name of it, but I did not see this well.

Well to go on, everywhere along the road, which in places are lined with thick overhanging trees you see the natives, carrying on trade selling watermelons shaving in the gutter selling water which is carried on their backs in pigskins, and which I would not like to drink of. All along the Nile, which is a very wide stream, you see the oxen at work pulling round a big wheel, which in turn pulls water up in buckets which are attached to it, as the buckets come up the water is tipped into a pipe, which runs away and soaks all the land around it. This is one way in which the country is irrigated, the other is by canals that lead from the Nile and floods the country for miles around. The Nile, I reckon, is the backbone of this country. It is very rich country all around the Nile and I would not mind a few hundred acres of it.

By now you can see the Pyramids quite plainly, and so you go on everything you look at is an eye opener until at last you here the driver say "finish" and you know you're there. In fact you know you re there for you see the Pyramids rising seemingly right over your head yet really you have about a quarter of a mile to go yet. The Pyramids it seems was built on level ground, and then the sandstorms and shifting sands gradually buried them as the years went by. You can get up to them by three ways, either take a donkey, camel, or walk. I took a camel and a very pleasant ride it was. I don't think the bit of rag they had over his hump did not stop it from, just about going through you. At last I got to the foot of it, and then it towers up just like a huge staircase, it is composed of great blocks of limestone, and how the diggins they got them up there is beyond my knowledge. There are numerous other Pyramids but much smaller than the one of Cheops. From the Pyramid of Cheops you go along a winding path, on the way you come upon a set of tombs where a lot of French engineers are buried. They are not buried like our people, but four big stone slabs are placed together box fashion and then another slab is placed on top. If it is a man that is buried so a man is carved out in the face of the rock. I counted 18 men by the carvings on the rock.

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There farther down you came upon the Sphinz. This Sphinz has three resemblances. Firstly the face of it, is the face of a man, secondly the head of it, is the head of a woman, because of the long hair, thirdly, because the body is the body of a lion, but this does not show very plain. The nose on the face is broken off. Napoleon done this. You know Napoleon's great army was camped here. Nearby is a big temple. This is built of great blocks of granite which were carried 400 miles, and a great number of men must have been employed. You can just imagine those poor slaves dragging these huge lumps of granite over the desert, from the Nile. Well I got back to the Pyramid of Cheops, and prepared to go inside. So I got my boots off and hired a guide. After I had given him a few piastees he produced a candle and we squeezed through the small entrance and away we went. The first part of journey you go right down into the bowels of the earth, and by the time you reach there you would think you was in H—ll, because of the heat.

There is really nothing to see, except when the guide lights a magnesium ribbon, and tells you to look up. Then it seems as though you are looking up a huge chimney with no light at the other end. We at last arrived at the bottom of the shaft and we started to ascend. This is the worst part of the journey you are slipping all over the place. Well we kept going up and up until we couldn't get any upper. At last we reached the Kings Chamber. Here was buried Pharoh. The king of the Egyptians, his body is now in America. His tomb consisted of 4 slabs of marble made box fashion. I was so interested that I did not look where I was going, and I fell down a big hole in the floor, lucky I was not hurt, but I had to find my way out as best as I could as the guide knew as much as me about the place. Don't forget to answer this letter as I am pretty anxious to get one. I will now close with love to all hoping you are well as it leaves me

With Best Love from George x x x x x x

P.S. Gordon got your letters all right. How many of my letters have you got.

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PRG 1626/2/5

August 9<sup>th</sup>  
1915

Dear Mum

From these Postcards you will be able to form some idea, what an interesting country .this. I have seen most of the ruins of Karnak, in fact I ve seen most of the scenes, you see on the postcards. The censor does not open this parcel, so I'm taking the liberty to tell you that I think we will not be going to the front for a long while yet and when we go they all reckon we will go to France. There s thousands of wounded round here, and I bet the Adelaide papers do not publish half the casualties that occur. The Australians are not having it all there own way at the front. At the present time there are a great number of Turks fighting along the Suez Canal and down as far as Aden. They are only about a hundred miles from us.

With Love from George x x x x x

The war will soon be finished now.

(Written in side margin)

There are thousands of soldiers here, including French English Indians Gurghurs, Montenegrins remnants of Battalions cut up in France.

We are having a good time here

PRG 1626/2/6

Letterhead

BRISBANE YOUNG MEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION

(Australian Coat of Arms and Union Jack)

"To thine own self be true; And it must follow, as night the day, Thou canst not then be false to any man" – Shakespeare

With the Commonwealth Expeditionary Force On Active Service

Egypt August 11<sup>th</sup> 1915

Dear Mother,

I am taking the opportunity of writing to you once more, although I have not much to tell you this time. The other Sunday I went for a stroll around Heliopolis, and some of the places are worth seeing. There are some beautiful buildings here, and they are a credit to the men who built them. There s one building here, it is called the Palace Hotel," there are at least 1,500 rooms in it and I reckon one would have to go a long way in Australia, to find a better building than it. Surrounded by a great iron fence, it takes up a greater space of ground than Foy & Gibsons in Rundle St, and there is a lovely carved dome on top of it that makes it recognisable for miles around. Most of the buildings are covered in carvings and ornamentations and are very picturesque. The Mosques, to my idea are the prettiest of the lot, and inside them is simply magnificent. I will send you postcards of the different places and then you will be able to judge for yourself.

Walking up the streets by just looking at the natives dress you will see every colour of the rainbow. But your heart would sadden if you could see some of the sights I have seen in the slums. You talk of the poor in S.A. The children here are brought up in the lowest form of degradation, most of them marked by some disease or other. Deformed, pox-pitted, armless, halfwitted, all crawl around in their filth and raggedness, and I reckon it is only the precautions that were taken by the authorities that has prevented us chaps from catching the diseases that fly around.

I have nothing much to say now, only hoping that you and all the kiddies are well, and God bless them, and give them all a kiss for me mum. I am in the best of health and ready for anything. So good-bye for the time.

I will send some Laces and stuff in about 2 weeks time. Remember me to all of them.

Your Loving Son [end of page torn]

PRG 1626/2/7

Tom has got appendicitis.  
August 16 1915

Dear Mum,

I am sending this by Tom Eyles, he's the young chap that I had my photo taken with. This is just to tell you about things that are going on here. We are getting treated all right as far as work is concerned although we could do with more food. At the time of writing this we expect to depart for the front. As much as we have heard the Dardanelles will soon be finished for the Australians and British have now surrounded the important position of Achi- Baba. If this place falls, it will mean that we will march into Constantinople in about 3 weeks. There are thousands of wounded here the hospitals are full of them. But most of them recover from their wounds. You needn't worry over Gordon or myself, we are in the best of health and condition. And we all expect to be back by February. There is hardly any illness here at all. They are landing troops in thousands at the Dardanelles.

I must tell you something about our trip from Adelaide. We were treated all right the first day on board but after that we were simply starved. One day they neally poisoned us. They gave us some rice that was boiled in a galvanized iron tin and some of them nearly died. The they promised us leave, or a route march when we got to Fremantle. We got there on the Sunday night, and we anchored in midstream about 50 yards from shore. Then they informed us there would be no route march or leave. Then you can just imagine our feelings with the shore just a few yards from shore. Then a riot started on boards, and thinking to stop it they drew revolvers on the men. That didn't stop it, so on the Monday they gave us no food. I vowed I'd get a feed, so a good few of us got into a motorboat and went ashore, but no sooner had we got ashore than the picquet caught a few of us and took us back to the boat and put us into cells in the bottom of the ship.

There they kept us all day without any food. By night I was pretty hungry. So looking around I seen a pretty big port-hole. I unscrewed it, and just leaving my trousers on I slipped out and swam ashore, right under the wharf after dressing myself I went up the street and had a good feed. Then enquiring when the boat was leaving, which they told me would go on the Thursday, so I caught the train to Perth, had a good look round and went back to Fremantle to catch the boat which I found had gone. When I say I, that includes about 50 of us. Well finding the boat had gone we reported at Camp at Blackboy Hill and was kept there for 17 days. Then we sailed on board the "Wandilla" and lobbed in Egypt on July 17<sup>th</sup> and was fined 30 days pay. But we are all right now so don't worry yourself at all. We will soon be at the front now and a good job for the life is pretty dry in Egypt.

With Love to all  
Your Loving Son George x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/8

(Letter from Les Heylen 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion, George's Mate)

October 22<sup>nd</sup>  
Egypt 1915

Dear Mrs Oswald, Will, Hazel, and Myrtle

I have not written to you before because I had hardly anything to write so I thought I would leave it for a while and then tell you everything. Well first of all I arrived here safe and sound and I had a good trip although (we were?) [.....] over for we did not stop once all the time coming over, but the sea trip does us all good. The second day out I was seasick once and then I was alright until the finish of the voyage but some of the chaps were very bad for a long time, we had it very rough in the Bight and some of them got sick again, we had it fairly warm in the Red Sea but it wasn't too bad, well at last we got to Port Suez and we were not sorry either we had been 28 days on the boat and you might guess we were pretty sick of it. We disembarked on the 13<sup>th</sup> October at Port Suez and travelled by train to where we are at present and after all that I was just lucky enough to miss dear old George by the (sauce?) as I did in Adelaide, 1 week, he had just left for the front when I got here, what do you think of that? Well I suppose I will be leaving for the front next week and sincerely hope I shall see him there. Well I still like soldiering just the same as when I started at it, although they give it to you pretty stiff here and it takes some of the chaps who are not too old, all their time to go through with it, there is plenty of sand and of course with it, dust. This gets down our throat nearly chokes you, besides it is pretty hot and you get plenty of drill from 6.0 in the morning until 6.0 in the night and sometimes from 6.0 in the night until 10.0pm I have been to Cairo and there are some beautiful buildings and gardens, also some Mosques there. I have not been to the Pyramids yet but I intend going before I go to the front. Well I have a lot of letters to write so I must be rather short in this letter and say goodbye this time with Best Love to all and remember me to Dolly and the boys, from your true friend

Les Heylen No. 3189

10<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements of the 10<sup>th</sup> Battalion 3<sup>rd</sup> Brigade Intermediate Depot Egypt.

Addressed to Mrs Oswald  
326 Carrington Street  
Adelaide S.Aust  
Australia

[Scribbled on Front under address, by George's mother Alice Oswald]

Kindly excuse opening of Gordons letter, am sending them all on. Mother

Dear Myrtle, Gordons letter came yesterday and I was so anxious I opened it, as I thought George had not written but this morning the postmen brought a letter from George and Les Heylen. He was a new man the postman.

PS Hope you received Gordons photo on ship (supply?)

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PRG 1626/2/9

Gallipoli  
Peninsular  
14<sup>th</sup> Oct 1915

My Dear Sister Myrtle

Just a line or two to let you know how I am hitting it out in the Dardanelles. We have been over here about 5 weeks, and Im still alive and kicking, and in the best of spirits. Things are pretty exciting over here sometimes. Gordon has such a nice beard and you would love to sit on his knee and twirl you re fingers in it. We are both in the best of health, and all expect to be back by February. Over here it is very hilly and mountainous and it is covered in thick bush scrub and honey-combed with trenches. I sorry Harry left so soon because I was going to write to him to see if he would enlist. (Eh What). We have not seen too many live Turks yet, (plenty of dead ones) but I suppose we will see enough of them before this is finished. The winter is fast approaching and can see thousands of ducks flying away to a warmer climate. We will soon be able too throw snow balls at the Turks instead of bullets. Gordon has not recieved any of those papers you sent him yet. We both read each others letters and papers so that if we do miss a mail we have something to read. I m sorry Les was taken ill. Give my love to all at home and except it yourself. Take care of my photo for I want to show them to my respective bride. I got a letter from Mary C. the other day. I must now say goodbye with love and kisses too all.

From your loving brother George x xx x x x x

PS Tell Will to send a line.

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PRG 1626/2/10

Gallipoli  
Peninsula  
Oct 18<sup>th</sup> 1915

My Dearest Mother,

Your most welcome letter to hand, dated Sept 17<sup>th</sup> and very pleased was I to receive it. I am writing this in the trench so you will please excuse writing. There s not much to disturb one just know only an occasional shell or two but plenty of bullets humming. As you might know I have joined the Machine Gun Section. It's a great life plenty to interest you and plenty to learn. At any rate it passes the time away.

I suppose you read in the papers all about the fighting round Sari Bahr [Sari Bair] and Suvla Bay. Up to the time of writing I have only received one paper from you the "Observer", still I will expect it in a day or two. Do not on any account send any parcels because ten chances to one I would not get it. If you want to send me a bit of chocolate or anything, always put it in the newspapers and then I will get it. Gordon has not received any papers from Myrtle yet. We both are in the best of health and still going strong. In my opinion the war will not last much longer and will end just as sudden as it started. Bang there goes a howitzer letting it into the Turks. They do kick up a row, I have no more to tell just now so I will now close up till the next letter.

Give my love to all the kids and M.H. and Will and tell Will I send him congratulations on the step he has taken, and to accept my best wishes in his future welfare and may he make a good husband. And tell Hazel that when I come back I will bring her home something in the way of a surprise for her wedding present. So

Goodbye for the time  
Your Loving Son George x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/11

Cheshire Ridge  
Gallipoli  
Peninsular  
5<sup>th</sup> November 1915

Dear Mother

Your most loving letter to hand dated Sept 20<sup>th</sup> and very pleased was I to receive it. I received the Sept 18<sup>th</sup> Chronicle, but up to the present I have not received the Observer, except the first one you sent me. I am glad you received those post cards as it will give you some idea of the sights that we have seen. I will tell Gordon that you received his cushion covers. I told you in one of my letters why I would not send you any covers, but the next time I am in Egypt I will not forget to get a few. Yes I got your letter telling me that Will and Hazel are to be married. I hope they are happy together. I would like to be at the reception. I could go a good feed now. And you need not worry about me coming home minus a limb because I don't intend to get hit to serious.

I would like to send Hazel home a present, but you see we've been on Gallipoli since September and as there are no shops here it is next to impossible to send anything, unless it was a hard biscuit or a tin of "Bully"! Any rate tell her the next time I m in Egypt I will not forget her. There s plenty of work here now preparing for the winter. The trenches are not so bad as you think. They are about 7 to 8 feet deep and are kept very clean. They are not straight but zig zag, so that if a bomb lobs in the trench it will not affect many men. We are having beautiful weather up to the present and the snow is not expected till January. You need not worry about Gordon or myself, we are quite happy, and we do not have any of those long weary marches that you think we have and it s not such a bad life. It s better than shooting rabbits up the hills.

I think it will be a long time before I see Les, as the Battalion he is going to reinforce are shortly leaving here for a rest and he will join them wherever they go. I received a long letter from Ivy and she tells me that Uncle Frank is going to insert the letter I sent to Ivy, in the "Argus" "Idiot". There are plenty of wild strawberries over here and I often have a feed of them. I have received neither letters nor papers from Mrs Yeo up to the present but they may come later. As I told you I am know in the Machine Gun Section and it is a very interesting game, and I m getting quite an expert at handling a machine gun. Gordon is a "Bomb thrower" and he s a pretty good shot. Don't forget to put paper and envelopes in the letters as they are the hardest thing to obtain here.

I have not much more to say only that you don't want to worry yourself in the least and that I wish you a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year

From your ever loving Son George x x x x x x

Give my love to all at home

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PRG 1626/2/12

Gallipoli  
20<sup>th</sup> Nov 1915

My Dear Mother

I am writing two letters this mail so you may be sure of getting one of them. I received both of your letters dated August the 6<sup>th</sup> and was pleased to hear you are still well. That's the way, you cheer up and don't you worry over Gordon or myself because we are going strong, fighting seems to agree with us. It s getting pretty cold and stormy over here, and I expect we will soon have the snow. The warships and ourselves are still plugging into the Turks, and tell Will its better than getting married. Most of us have had pretty narrow shaves, but the boys seem to enjoy them. I must now close wishing you and everybody a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

So Goodbye

George

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PRG 1626/2/13

Addressed to:

Mrs A Oswald  
326 Carrington St.  
Adelaide S. A.

Letterhead reads:

Gaba Tepe  
The blinding bullets fell like rain.  
They met the volleys with a cheer  
Leapt in the sea and charged amain,  
Sprang to the shore and ran like deer.

Russels Top  
Gallipoli Pens.  
November 21<sup>st</sup> 1915

My Dearest Mother,

I received your most welcome letter, dated Oct 6<sup>th</sup> in fact there were two of the same date. You will want to know why you did not receive a letter the last two mails. Well the barge that took our last mail was rumoured to have been sunk in the storms that have been prevalent here. Its getting pretty cold here of late, and we have been pretty busy here changing to different positions, as you can see by the above address. You mentioned in your letter, that you sent me a letter saying that Ivy was home well I have not recieved that up too the present. You don't want to get worrying yourself about Gordon or myself as we are all right and in the best of health. I hope we get those billy cans because they will come in very handy for Christmas. I must now close with love and kisses to all.

Your Loving Son George x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/14

Gallipoli  
Dec 2<sup>nd</sup> 1915

Dear Mother

Just a line or two to let you know how I am getting on. I m anxiously waiting for another mail from Australia. We have not received many mails lately on account of the rough weather. Talking about weather we ve had it pretty wild lately.

Last Sunday morning we woke up and found everything covered in snow about four inches deep, and cold, you didn't know weather you was alive or not. I don't know weather we will get those billy cans or not but I hope we do, because it will make our Christmas dinner a bit better. We are still keeping our end up, and are as cheerful as can be expected. Its only when things are a bit slack and you re thinking about home that you get a little bit downhearted, but a shell soon wakes you up and tells you not to think.

Don't matter Mum old dear you cheer up and don't go worrying yourself for then you'll get ill and wont be able to write to me. Don't forget to enjoy yourself Christmas time and tell the kiddies to do the same. It will be quite a novel experience spending Christmas in the trenches, far different from other times. Well I will write again as soon as I get some more papers and envelopes so don't forget to send some in your letters. So I must now say good-bye once again. With best love and kisses for all at home, and don't worry mother.

From your loving Son George x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/15

S.S. Glenart  
Castle  
Dec 10<sup>th</sup> 1915

I am writing this on board the Hospital Ship "Glenart Castle. I am not wounded, but suffering from debility. Just rundown that's all, so you don't want to go worrying. We are having a lordly time on board, we are treated like dukes and I am returning to Egypt for a spell. After one's done about 3 months running around the hills of Gallipoli you seem to get weak on it. We don't know how to fancy ourselves after living on bully beef and biscuits. The chaplain on board is just arranging a concert for tonight so you see we are having a good time. After the snow that we had a good many of the boys got frost-bitten, so you can guess it was cold. There one thing I looking forward too and that is, that I wont spend Christmas Day in Gallipoli. I had the pleasure of having a hot bath on the ship, the first wash I had had for 3 weeks and you can imagine the feelings of yours "truly" after it. Then to cap everything a good square meal the first for 3 months.

The Ghurkhas are the biggest characters I've met for a long time. They tells us yarns about the Turks whose heads they have cut off. One yarn was, the Ghurkha met a Turk and he made a sweep at his neck with his knife. The Turk said you miss" The Ghurkhas said "no you shaken head" The Turk shook his head and it rolled off into the grass.

I will write again as soon as we land and perhaps I may have some news by then. I will now close with best love and kisses to you, and all at home.

Your Loving Son George x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/16

No. 3 Auxcillary Hospital

Dear Mother,

Just a line or two to explain why I have not written to you. First of all I suppose you know I ve had Enteric Fever, well at the time of writing I ve just about got over it and now I can hardly write. It s just as though I m learning to write again. You need not write again unless I tell you as I expect to be home shortly after this letter. Gordon is in Egypt somewhere with debility but I cant find him. I have not seen Les yet. But things are so busy in Egypt now you don't know where to look for anyone.

Will now close with love  
From George  
x x x x x x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/17

No. 3 Auxillary  
Hospital  
Heliopolis  
Feb 9<sup>th</sup> 1916

Dear Mother,

I guess you'r just wondering why I ve failed to write so often of late. Well when a chap been on his back for close on 8 weeks, he gets pretty weak in the wrist, and elsewhere, such was the case with me. You will, that's if you received my cable-gramm, know that I m know pretty right, but still a bit weak. I left Gallipoli on Dec 5<sup>th</sup> and arrived at the above address on the 11<sup>th</sup>. Well on the 12<sup>th</sup> I wrote you letters to say that I was only over for a spell as I was suffering from Debility. Well the next day I was taken ill and put in the fever ward suffering from Enteric as was marked on my chart. I am now informed that I ve had neither Enteric or Typhoid. The Doctor told me it is some Eastern disease that Id got, picked up either in Egypt or the Dardanelles. It s wonderful what a dirty little Turkish germ will do once you get it into your system.

You must have read by now in the papers of the evacuation of the peninsular, it was a grand affair, carried out in fine style. My mates, who I have since seen tell me it was funny to see the poor old Turks go up in the air, through a 3 ton mine we exploded under their position. I wish I had been there. Just my luck. We have been treated splendidly since being in hospital. Ive been for motor rides, concerts, grand operas, and such like, that pleases the heart of soldiers. After being on the peninsular for 3 months amidst the row and racket of war, lying in hospital here in a clean white bed, it seems as though you've just been born again, and that as soon as you gain strength you want to go and run around viewing the different buildings and scenery, but not strange faces, for I cant tell the difference between an Egyptian or a Turk. We ve had plenty of rain over here lately. I don't know whether I will get a trip home, but I would just as soon stay with Gordon and see it through.

[pages missing]

PRG 1626/2/18

[To his sister Myrtle]

No.3 Auxilary  
Hospital  
Feb 19<sup>th</sup> – 16

My Dear Sister

I received your most welcome letters dated Dec 15 and Jan 13<sup>th</sup> and was pleased to hear you had a good time at Strathalbyn. I will be wearing a pair of those "giddy little trousers" as you call them when I come back, and Gordon looks just "it" in them with his hairy legs, and don't you worry my dear Myrtle I don't stand any chance of going to England, and next time Norman kisses my photo, let him, you can easy get another one. Tell the kiddies I m pleased to hear that they passed there exam, I think they have got better heads than when I went to school. Tell Bert to learn as much as he can in the fourth class and that when I come back I expect to see him going to the high school. I would not put him on a farm, but start him in some business office or a lawyers, for I reckon Berts got brains.

I have not seen or heard of Leo ever since I left Australia but maybe I will see him in the future. Gordon is quite well and happy and soon expects to be back at his unit. I m still in hospital although I m now a convalescent. I ve had quite a long spell of weeks up to the present. There s nothing much to tell you while in hospital but I will write once a week. I nearly dropped dead when I heard Harry is going to married, I cant believe it, of course his intended must be a socialist or a suffragget. I won t forget to send you a token when I get out of hospital. I ve been for several motorcar rides and Operas since being in hospital. Gordon sends his love, to you all. I am writing to the kids and sorry to say I did not recieve their letters but they may turn up later. So I must now close up with best love and kisses to you all

Your Loving Brother  
George x x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/19

Hospital

No. 3 Auxiliary

Feb 20<sup>th</sup> 1915 [1916]

Dear Bertie,

I m very sorry to say that I did not receive your letter, nor have I got Geoffrey or Normans. So the next time Mother writes don't you forget to put a few words in. I was glad to hear that you are now in the fourth class, that's right, you try and learn as much as possible while you have the chance. The kiddies over here are much different to you or your play mates. They have only bits of rag or an old bag around their waists, and food, the only food they can get, mainly comes out of rubbish bins and gutters. They sleep just any where they fancy, out in the desert, in the gutters, in fact any where the lice wont shift them. They start to earn there living long before the boys in Australia, little kids from four to five years of age running around selling matches, cigarettes, chocolates, or driving goats, working in the fields, driving rubbish carts in fact they do all manner of work.

The next time I write I will tell you all about the war and what it feels like to hear bullets and shells whizzing around you. By the time I get home I hope to see you going to the high school. They told me you liked to kiddies that were staying with you especially the little red-headed one. So I must now close for the present and will tell you more in my next letter. You can show this to your school teacher if you like. So you be good and don't give mother any trouble and if she writes and tells me your a good boy Ill bring you something home from Egypt. So good bye for the present.

Your Loving Brother George

x x x x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/20

Somewhere in France  
June 15<sup>th</sup> 1916

My Dearest Mother

I am writing this in the back yard of the house we are billeted in, behind the firing line. I just received a big batch of letters from yourself and other friends. I have received most of your letters up to date and in the "May" letter you said you were better after your illness. Well I know what makes you ill, it is worrying about me. Now you mustn't worry in the least, for I am quite all right and in the best of health. Also you must not allow Myrtle to worry too much for she will only get ill. Well by now I suppose you have heard of the great British offensive and I'll tell you that they have the Germans up a "gum tree" now and will soon be hurrying along the road that leads to Germany. I think that we will soon all be on the way home to enjoy a "Christmas dinner". We are having lovely weather in France and Belgium at present, and as it is now, it is more like Australia than any other country I have seen. I have seen a lot of France by now, having travelled from the south of France right up through Flanders to the north, and over the Belgium border. Aeroplanes are as common as motors over here and one sees plenty of air fights. Our aeroplanes take a great fancy to the Huns observation balloons, they brought a dozen down one week. I struck the "Tenth Battalion" just too late to see Les for he had gone to hospital with influenza. I did not get the kiddies last letters, but I am putting a note in for each of them. I'm glad to hear they got my other letters. Yes I bet I won't know Adelaide when I get back. I will write a letter to Mr Hewgill shortly you can tell him that I seen Clarence (the pencils blunt) Graves and he said he met him in Rundle street. Well mother this is all for the time being. I can't think off any thing just at present. So I will now close

With best love to all  
Your loving Son George x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/21

In France  
July 13<sup>th</sup> 1916

For Norman

My Dear "Charlie Chaplin",

Just a word or two to tell you how I am getting on. I'm now in France having a good time trying to shoot Germans. They not like the rabbits I used to shoot up the hills, except that they dig deep burrows to hide themselves in but they are like rabbits when you dig them out with a bayonet, and then they squeal and kick. Over here you the big boom of the cannons and bombs all day long, and they don't stop at night to go to sleep but keep going all the time. They kick up more now than you used to when I was home. You know poor old Gordon got hit, so you must hurry up and grown and learn and you will soon be able to work and help mother. Have you passed into the 2<sup>nd</sup> class at school yet. I hope you have. I suppose Geof can just about fight you by now don't have any more fights till I get home and I ll show you how to fight Bert. So be a good boy and goodbye for the time.

Your loving Brother George

x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/22

Somewhere in France  
July 13<sup>th</sup> 1916

To Geof

My Dear Geof

I don't know whether you are big and old enough to read this, if not Bert will do so for you. I forget what class you are in but I think it is the upper Juniors. How are you getting on at school? I suppose wouldn't know you now if I seen you for I bet your grown since I left. Do you still have two plates of porridge and six slices of bread and jam for breakfast. You were "dead nuts" on the jam but I think you liked the porridge better. Don't you wish you was over here fighting the Germans like you play in the streets at night? And what s the name of your sweetheart. I suppose you've still got the same one as you had when I was home. Every night you hear the big guns going bang and the bullets whistling through the air. I will now close with Love to you

Your Loving Brother George xxxxx

PRG 1626/2/23

Somewhere in France  
July 15<sup>th</sup> 1916

To Bert

My Dear Brother,

Just a line to let you know how I am getting on. I have left a good time now and we have been having a go at the Germans. I suppose you wished had left school and was able to come and fight too. By the time I get home you will probably be working somewhere on a farm or station for I suppose that is what you would sooner do, than be stuck in an office. Over here there are plenty of aeroplanes and Zepps and sometimes they have fights in the air which I know you would like to see. There are plenty of bombs and shells of all sizes whizzing around all day and it would not do for anyone to get in the way of one. You know poor old Gordon got hit with one. So now you try and cheer Myrtle and mother up and tell Dolly to help her every way she can, and then we'll all have a good old Christmas dinner together again and Ill have plenty of stories to tell when I come back. So goodbye for the present and don't forget to write.

Your Loving Brother George x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/24

Field Service Post Card

Mrs A Oswald  
326 Carrington St  
Adelaide S. Australia

I am quite well.  
Letter follows at first opportunity.

E.G. Oswald  
July 25<sup>th</sup> 1916

PRG 1626/2/25

Field Service Post Card

Mrs A Oswald  
326 Carrington St  
Adelaide S. Australia

I am quite well.  
I have received your letter dated June 10<sup>th</sup> 1916.

E.G. Oswald  
2<sup>nd</sup> August 1916

PRG 1626/2/26

[Letter to his sister Myrtle who was married to 'Gordon' in 1915. Gordon Cromwell Simmons, no. 922, Lance Corporal, 27<sup>th</sup> Battalion, K.I.A. on 27<sup>th</sup> June 1916, France]

France  
August 15 1916

My Dearest Sister,

Just a line or two to let you know how I am getting on. You will see in the letter I sent to Mother, the adventures we had a couple of weeks ago, so I need not tell you anything about it in this letter. I received all your June letters, also your birthday card which I think was very thoughtful of you to send. Now dear Sister I hope you are not worrying yourself too much over your late bereavement. It must have come as a great blow to you, but try and cheer up, and rest assured that I got even with them, on the night of our attack. I received all your photos, three I think and I thought they were grand, also I got a letter from the kiddies, and tell them to send some more. I get letters from Ivy regularly and I answer them all but some of them seem to have gone astray. We have been on the move so much of late, that one finds it difficult to answer all the letters one receives. I think I have travelled just about all over the North of France by now and at one time the scenery is great green fields and valleys, other times it is nothing but wrecked and shattered villages. Mother asked me in one of her letters, that if she sent a parcel to me, would I receive it safely. Well tell her she could send me a few chocolates, and as long as she addressed them properly I would get them alright. The address on all letters and parcels must be,

Pvte E G Oswald  
D Company  
No. 888 27<sup>th</sup> Batt.  
France

I am in the best of health and spirits, and hope you re the same. This war will not be long in ending now, the germans are completely knocked out, and will soon be on the run back to Germany. Well I have not much to tell you now. Give my love to Hazel and Will, and tell them I will write to them next mail. So I will close now hoping you and all at home are quite well as it leaves me.

Give my love to Mother and the kids and except it yourself.

Your Loving Brother George

x x x x x x x  
x x x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/27

France  
August 23<sup>rd</sup> 1916

My Dear Mother

Just a line or two to let you know how I am getting on. I am still in the land of the living and am in the best of health and spirits. I have not met Les yet but maybe I will meet him one of these days. I told you in my last letter that I had joined the signallers. It is a pretty good job and the knowledge of it may come in handy one of these days. I wrote to you last mail but I m afraid it won t reach you for the censor did not pass it. You asked me in one of your letters whether it would be safe to send me a parcel. Well as long as you address it correctly it will reach me all right. Address it

Pvt E G Oswald  
No. 888 27<sup>th</sup> Batt.  
D Coy  
France

We are having plenty of rain over here in France lately and I suppose in a few more months we will have snow. I received a birthday card from both yourself and Myrtle and thought them splendid. I recieved the kiddies letters and a few from Ivy. I recieved all your June letters up to date the same with Myrtles. France is so much like Australia with its great wheat fields and pastures but the people are much different. I think they are the meanest people on this earth. I can t put what I d like to tell you about for that's the reason I had the last letter torn up, so I ll just say that wev e had our share of fighting since being around this way, and I got through all right. How is Myrtle getting on has she got over her late bereavement, I hope she is not fretting, for I know how much Myrtle cared for him, poor girl. Well I can t think of any more to tell you just now so I will close now with love to all at home.

Your Loving Son George x x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/28

France  
Sept 17<sup>th</sup> 1916

Dear Mother

Just a line to let you know that I received your letter dated, July 11<sup>th</sup> and was very sorry when I read that the Authorities had only reported Gordon's death as wounded. There must have been a mistake somewhere. We are having good weather over in France here, and we are now having a spell. I am still as fit as a fiddle and quite happy. You must not worry yourself for me, I am quite contented and we all hope to be home for this next Christmas. By the way things are shaping on the different fronts over here, I think we will. It's a very exciting time this, that's when you re having a fair go at the enemy but none of us care for trench warfare. When one is in the thick of it one seems to forget the dangers and he keeps working on just as though nothing was happening. I think I was born lucky for up to now I have not received so much as a scratch. I am getting on well with the signaling, and maybe it will come in handy when I get home.

We had a good time here a couple of days ago, we held a sports day, but I didn't enter for any of the items, all the same I enjoyed it. Did the storm you had in Adelaide do any damage around our way, you all must have had an anxious time while it lasted. How are Hazel & Will getting on. I have not had a letter from them for a long time, neither has Ivy written, she may have, if so, they have gone astray. I told you in my last letter that I had met Les Heylen. He is trying to get a transfer to this Batt. I don't think he will be able to do so. I would like him to come here then we would both be satisfied. I am sure I can t think of anything interesting to tell you, for nothing of any interest has occurred lately. I suppose we will soon be preparing for the winter over here. We will be able to go skating next month, it will be good sport even if it is cold, well I suppose I will have to close now for I have nothing else to tell you, so don't worry and cheer up, hoping you are in the best of health and spirits the same as it leaves me, I remain

Your Loving Son George x x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/29

France  
September 19<sup>th</sup> 1916

Dear Mother,

Just a line or two in receipt of your letter dated August 9<sup>th</sup>. I was glad indeed to see how wonderfully you bore up against the news of Gordons death. It did not come as a shock to me, for out here one gets so used to hearing, or seeing the death of a friend or relative, that one becomes a little callous at the same time it deeply grieves me to think that poor old Gordon should be one of the unlucky ones. I'll cheer up and try to forget, and tell Myrtle to write to me wherever she goes. Is she ill at all, I hope not. We are now doing telephone work, practicing for when we go into the trenches again. What do you think of the British advance on the Somme. They re giving the Germans something there. We are still having a spell, a pretty long one this time. We are having splendid weather over here, and I am in the best of health and spirits. I am quite contented and happy, so you have no need to worry over me. Les Heylen writes to me now that he knows where I am.

Signalling is a very interesting game. The more you go into it the more interesting it becomes. First you learn the Alphabet in Code and then you start on a flag, after that you get onto field work with the telephone and (patent tunel flappers?) and after that comes the the Buzzer the same as they send telegrams on and then maybe you will have the chance to gain your first class certificate which would hold good after the war, that will be handy, wont it?

How are you receiving my letters, I hope you get them regularly for I write every mail. That is to say each week. You are the only one that I have recieved any letters from lately. I suppose the others have written and their letters have gone astray, for the time being. Nevermind as long as I get a letter from you each mail I will be quite satisfied. Well I have not much more to say in this letter, only that I hope Myrtle will be her old self again and that you will cheer up and don't worry over me for I am alright, quite happy and in the best of health, as I sincerely trust, it leaves you the same. So goodbye for the present.

Your Ever Loving Son George  
x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/30

France  
September 19<sup>th</sup> 1916

My Dear Sister,

Just a few short lines to let you know that I am still alive and doing well. The weather is very contrary lately. Sometimes the sun is shining with not a cloud in the sky and you wouldn't think to look around that a great war was going on except for the distant sounds of the guns. In about two hours the whole aspect is changed, great black clouds appear in the sky, and in about a minute you have the rain pouring down just as though it were mid-winter. We have had a good long spell since we last came out of the trenches. We will soon have the winter here which I suppose will be jolly cold, all the same we will be able to skate long and so save us the trouble of walking. Well Myrtle old girl I hope you are trying to cheer up as much as possible, you must try and forget although I know it will be hard but you know old dear, that if you keep on worrying or grieving that will do you no good will it? And you musn t worry over me, for I m as happy as larry and in the best of health and spirits, and we are all expecting to be home by next Christmas.

Do not forget to write to me wherever you go, Mother told me in her letter that you had gone away for a while well I hope that when you go back home you will be your old self once more. Well dear I suppose summer is just on hand when this reaches you and I would bet my next fortnights pay that we will be home, because that means the war is finished. Well Myrtle we can t put all I would like to say in this letter so I suppose I will have to leave it for another time so I must now close this letter wishing you the best of luck hoping you are in the best of health and spirits as it leaves me at present.

Aur Revoir but not goodbye

I remain Your Loving Brother George  
x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/31

Field Service Post Card

Mrs A Oswald  
326 Carrington St  
Adelaide S. Australia

I have been admitted into hospital sick and am going on well.  
I have received your letter dated Sept 21<sup>st</sup>.  
Letter follows at first opportunity.

E.G. Oswald  
21<sup>st</sup> Nov. 1916

PRG 1626/2/32

Letterhead  
Soldiers Christian Association

Dec 1<sup>st</sup> 1916  
Reply to 27<sup>th</sup> Batt.  
2<sup>nd</sup> Div. Base Depot  
France

My Dear Mother,

Just a line or two to let you know how I getting on. I have been discharged from hospital. I am now in a Convalescent Camp. My foot is not quite better just yet in this cold that we are having over here, it takes a long while for Trench Feet to get better.

On the Somme where we have been fighting for several months it is nothing but mud a couple of feet deep. I could not explain the awfulness of a battlefield after an advance has been made over it. Ragged and torn remnants of men battered beyond recognition. I do not need to tell you anything about this for I sooner leave it to your own imagination. I have been particularly lucky in the several charges that I have been in for I had my mates killed alongside me and I have got through without so much as a scratch.

I do believe God is going to let me get back so that I may paint that old wardrobe in my bedroom. Oftimes at night when in a dreamy mood I sit thinking of dear old home which I did not value until I had spent a few months in this rotten hole.

[Final page missing]

PRG 1626/2/33

[Page 1]

Somewhere in France  
December 20<sup>th</sup> 1916

My Dear Mother,

Just a line or two to let you know how I am getting on. I left that Convalescent Camp about 12 days ago. I am now back at our Base. I was here once before, about 6 months ago. We are a good way from the firing line so you may rest assured that I will spend a better Christmas than I did last year. If you remember, I was down with Malarial at that time and for my Christmas dinner I had a little drink of milk.

I will tell you something now, I went into hospital on the 11<sup>th</sup> Dec 1915 feeling pretty run down, for you see on Gallipoli one was practiclly living in the midst of fevers and diseases, well, I managed to walk around the first day I went into hospital, but on the second day I fell down in a faint and I was carried in and had my temperature taken. I was a 103.6 so they put me to bed, well next day I was much worse and that night I went off unconscious my temperature was a 115.6. Well I went just about mad in my delirium, my mind went back ...

[Page 2 missing]

[Page 3]

He said "By all means if it will help to cheer him up" so they gave it to me and I tell you it did cheer me up but not for long. I got the nurse to answer the cable for me, and then I went delirious again until New Years Day when I was just well enough to look down the ward without seeing a nightmare or something coming through the door. Well you know what bad luck I had in not getting back to Australia and how I got better and at last got to France where we have been having at it ever since. As I told you before we are going to have as good a time as we possibly can this year to make up for what we missed last year so don't you worry about what sort of a Christmas I ve had. So all I can do now is to close this uninteresting letter hoping you and all the family will enjoy yourselves and have a good New Year. Hoping this will find you as well as it leaves me, I remain

Your Loving

Son George

X X X X X X X X X X X X

A MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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PRG 1626/2/34

France  
Dec 20<sup>th</sup> 1916

My Dear Sister

Just a line to let you know how I am getting on. I am now out of hospital and am now back at the Base. I hope to have the luck to be here for Christmas for you know my last Christmas day was spent in hospital and I had a drink of milk for my Christmas Day. I don't know what you think of the war, but I reckon it won't last long now so cheer up I guess I'll be home for next Christmas. Don't you worry the Germans haven't made a bullet that will kill me yet. And Myrtle old girl, I'll tell you I've made it square with them over poor old Gordon. I hope you are feeling better to what you were and you must try to forget it. How is dear old Mum getting on. I hope Dolly gives her all the help she can. Well I have not much to tell you in this letter for I have not much news so will close now hoping this will find you as well as it leaves me. I remain your

Loving Brother George x x x x x x x x

A MERRY XMAS AND A HAPPY NEW YEAR

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PRG 1626/2/35

Somewhere in France  
January 11<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

Just a line to let you know how I am getting on. I am still down at our Base. Since writing to you last we have had plenty of rain and snow, and the winter is settling in, in earnest. As I am writing now it is snowing pretty hard. Yesterday the ground was all sloppy with mud and ice but last night we had a frost which made the ground as hard as iron. We are getting used to the cold now and do not mind the snow much. You would think that living in tents during the winter in a country like this would be very cold, but it is not. With about twelve in a tent we sleep pretty warm at night. After tea we light the candles make down our beds on the boards, get into them, light our pipes and cigarettes and then tell yarns and sing songs until light out. Of course that only one side of war, the other side you have already realized and so have I.

Well I suppose you are having it pretty warm in Australia now and also some big floods in Queensland. I have not received any letters for a month now for you see my going to hospital delays our mail. We have to send a card across to England to notify them of our change of address so I am expecting a big batch shortly. You read in the papers about the sinking of the British transport "Ivernia" well that was the boat that took us to Gallipoli. Also the boat that brought us from Australia has been sunk, lucky we weren't on them at the time, eh! I am sending you home a bit of a war talk by a Mr Lovell so as to give you a bit of an idea of what is going on his lectures are very interesting. Well I must now close this letter hoping you are in the best of health so good bye for the time will write again shortly.

Your Loving Son George x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/36

Somewhere in France  
January 30<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

Just a line or two to let you know how I am getting on. I am still down at our Base and am in the best of health and spirits. We have had some very severe weather lately, the coldest since the war started. One day have it registered 19 degrees below zero. At the time of writing this the country as far as the eye can see is covered with a thick mantle of snow. All the water pipes froze so we had to carry water from a certain point to our cook house. All the lakes and rivers are covered with thick unbreakable ice, and we have some jolly good fun shaking and sliding on it. Instead of throwing live bombs we are throwing snow balls at one another, and they are not too good if you stop one down the back of the neck.

It is now 20 months since we left Australia but it seems like 20 blooming years to me and we are all wondering when will the time come when we shall go back to the best land on this earth and those we love. This soldiering once held a certain fascination for me, but now that is over, it gets too monotonous at times. The knowledge that one day we would be in charge appealed to me for that was what we wanted, to get at grips with the enemy. Since our fighting on the Somme of which you have read so much about, my longings have been more than satisfied.

You my dear Mother, would picture a charge to yourself, after this fashion "lined up in your trench like a lot of hounds on a leash, with your nerves shaking to a high pitch, waiting for the words to go over, then the blast of a whistle, a sudden leap and scramble to the top of the trench and then midst the bursting and crash of shells, a terrible race for life across that stretch of ground wherein death lurks in a hundred different ways. And, then the crisis arrives when it means the survival of the fittest when men are rushing around with a curse on their lips, stabbing and swearing with the fury of a pent up hatred exerting itself to the fullest. And then moment of victory when the enemy turns his back and runs, a broken and defeated mob pursued by a victorious foe.

Yes, that's all right for "books and novels" it would be all right for us to, if that only happened. But over here, you don't fight men, you just have to fight machinery, absolutely battle your way through a great steel wall of compressed earth-quakes with never a sight of the enemy. One consolation however is that the Germans have to go through a barrage of shells that nothing on this earth could survive. God help anyone who is caught in a French and British barrage from concentrated artillery. You must not take it from this letter that I am unhappy, for I am not, I m quite contented and never regretted the day I enlisted. I m just giving you an idea of what our life consists of. I am in perfect health and don't worry Mum they can t kill me. I am getting a big batch of letters from England. The first for a couple of months so I will be able to answer your letters, so I will close now, give my love to Myrtle and Hazel and the kiddies and accept it yourself, hoping you are as well as this letter leaves me. So goodbye for the present and don't worry yourself.

Your Loving Son George x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/37

Somewhere in France  
Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

Great was my joy one day when I came from drill to find a big batch of mail awaiting me. I received all your letters from October and their dates were respectively, the 18<sup>th</sup> Oct, and November the 2<sup>nd</sup> 12<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup>. In answer to your Oct letter you say you sent two tins. Well Mother dear, it would be quite easy for me to say that I received them, which I did not. But look Mum I haven't been in the trenches for the last two months, and in our Battalion there is a hard and fast rule that when a parcel arrives for a person, and that person is not with the Battalion at the time then the aforesaid parcel is divided up amongst his mates. Many a parcel have I shared in that fashion. So don't you worry mum it wasn't a big greedy Quartermaster who got my parcel, but my well deserved comrades who have just come out of the muddy trenches for a spell and were kind enough to forward me that proof of yourself that you sent in the tin, and I tell you I am just as satisfied as though I had received it myself.

Yes Mother I have plenty of socks and shirts, there is really nothing that you could send me, for you see the military gives us all the clothes and socks that are needed. There is only one thing you could send me, that is a bit of the Australian sun. We are having the coldest weather that France has had for years. You must not worry about me Mother I'm quite happy and full of spirits and never regretted the day I joined to do my bit. I have not seen Les Heylen for a long time. I have two of my cousins over at the Base with me, you know them, Cyril and Fred.

You asked me how long this war will go on for, Well Mother, there is a day approaching, not very far ahead, when a decisive blow will be struck, that will absolutely knock Germany rotten. I am quite assured that we will see the end within the next five months. So please do not worry to much over me not that I don't want you to mother dear, for you see I'm quite able to look after myself and let your thoughts be at rest, they can never kill me. So goodbye for the time

I remain your Every Loving Son George  
x x x x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/38

Envelope addressed to: Mrs G Simmons  
c/- Mrs A Oswald  
326 Carrington Street  
Adelaide  
South Aus  
Australia

Somewhere in France  
Feb 7<sup>th</sup> 1917

Dear Sister

Just a line or two in answer to your November letters. I liked the address you gave on one "Sunday morn" "under the haystack". It brings back delightful memories of the glorious days of sunshine on an Australian farm, with the Jackass in the trees, and the sleepy feeling which one gets from the sunshine. They call this sunny France. I ve seen more sunshine in a day in Australia than I have seen in a month over here. At the present it s nothing but snow and then a glimpse of a sun that has got about as much warmth in it as a candle. I will certainly remember you to Les the next time I see him. It is a long time since I last saw him, about six months ago, up in Belgium. I will send you a photo of myself at the first opportunity. I am glad you like Terowie, the trip there will do you much good and don't forget to have a good time when you go to Sydney. I am writing to mother s sister and Mum will be glad to hear it.

Over here it is nothing but snow and ice, but we have some good skating on the ice. I received your photo of the kiddies and thought them grand, also the photo of Terowie. And Myrtle when you go home go and see Hazel and Will, but mind don't say that I told you, ask them if they have ever thought of taking poor old Mum out with them to the theatre or pictures for mum wrote to me and said she wished that she had Myrtle with her as she feels so lonely at times when she thinks about Gordon and myself, while Hazel doesn't seem to think the Mother wants comforting please do this for me for when I get home I ll see that she has a little more comforts than what she has at present. About that snake I really think you were brave. Well we are only allowed two pages per letter so I will close now hoping you are in the best of health and spirits as it leaves me.

I remain your loving Brother George  
x x x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/39

Somewhere in France  
Feb 8<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

In answer to your letters of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> November, I told you in my last letter of the 9<sup>th</sup> Feb that I received a bit batch of letters. Well I got 4 from you, 1 from Dolly, 2 from Myrtle and 1 from Norman also a few from other people. I have written your Sister a very long letter telling her different things and I no it will please you to hear that I will write to her as often as I can. About the question of Conscription well I don't know how to explain it to you, and without it my answer would surprise you no doubt. I admire your views on it, and I have no doubt it would certainly help us chaps who are fighting here but I myself reckon that even if the "Yes" had won it would have come too late, and if you could refer to a correct casualty list you would see what I mean. As we are not allowed to refer to these matters I will leave it at that, and, I myself reckon Hazel and Will were right and so would all my mates.

Yes I have your letter safely in my pocket and I will always treasure it. I hope by now that the weather is warmer than what it has been for I know what it means to be cold since my stay in France. I am very glad the Military gave you all particulars about Gordon s death and also the place where he is buried, it is in a little woods where he is buried close behind the firing line. The last time I went there I visited the grave and I found that someone had put a bunch of flowers on his grave, sometimes when I sit and think of things, poor old Gordon seems to appear before me. We are on Gallipoli again, I see old Gordon with a smile on his face striding down the hillside wanting to know if there s any mail, and then I realize what a great brother he was to me and then I slowly go on my way with the knowledge that his death didn't go by unavenged for there is a German lying somewhere who in his last moments who heard someone say "sleep on brother your debt is paid". I will now close with best love to all at home.

I remain Your Loving Son George xxxxxxxxxx

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PRG 1626/2/40

Somewhere in France  
March 12<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

Just a line or two to let you know how I am getting on. I will tell you something that will make you happy. When I got back to my Battalion I found two parcels awaiting me. My word I was happy when I received them. The mittens came in very handy also the handkerchiefs, these are the first handkerchiefs I have had for a whole year. But I reckon the box of chocolate was the best of the lot. By this mail I received 18 letters so you see I have a lot to answer. The letters were dated from Dec 11<sup>th</sup> 1915, Jan 12<sup>th</sup>, 22<sup>nd</sup> 1917, also several others I also received two photos of you 1 standing and 1 sitting

Myrtle sent me a little photo of Dolly. I ve just about got a pocket full of photos by now. I am glad to hear that Myrtle has gone to Sydney, the trip will do her good. I was sorry to hear that poor little Norman had scalded himself so bad. My word the children have grown since I left. I hardly recognized young Geof. Im sure I did not know whose photo Dolly's was until I had read the name on the back.

Luck is still with me. I have just come through another engagement safely. I am still in the best of health and spirits. How did you make the mistake in thinking I had gone to England. I was not quite lucky enough for that, still I had a good time in the place that I went to. I spent my Christmas as you will know down at our Base and we had a jolly good time. I have written to your sister Mrs Watkins and I am expecting a reply very shortly. Most of the cold weather has gone now but we still have plenty of rain. No doubt you have read in the papers by now of the Retreat of the Germans. We ve been chasing them this last few weeks. I am glad to hear that Harry is by now married, for I ve no doubt his wife will break him of some of his Socialistic ideas. At the same time I m glad he did not enlist, he's better where he is.

Well I must now close with love and kisses to you all hoping this will find you as well as it leaves me.

I remain Your Loving Son George x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/41

Somewhere in France  
April 3<sup>rd</sup> 1917

My Dear Sister,

Just a line or two to let you know that I am still in the land of the living and am feeling quite well and happy. Last night we had a pretty heavy fall of snow, and it is very cold again. I don't think we will have much more winter now, and I shall feel much better when it gets summer again, for I am just about sick of this continual snow and rain. Still we must all rest content with the knowledge that we have survived in the trenches one of the coldest winters experienced for a long while in France. As you have read in the papers of the Germans retreat it is considerably heartening to us all, to know that this retreat has been caused in a measure owing to a long hard, and cold fight during the winter months of this year by we Australians. Many a winter night I've sat in the trenches dreaming of home and Australia, and thinking of poor old Mum and you and the rest of them, and of the good and bad times we have had together, and it was not until I had got out here that I was brought to realize the value of the word home. Still it does not matter much now what I think, for you can rest assured that my firm opinion now is the war is speedily coming to an end, and it will not be long before we shall all be home once more, to reap the benefits of a good home country.

So will close now with Love and kisses to you all

Your brother George x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/42

Somewhere in France  
April 16<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

You will no doubt wonder why I have not written for such a long time. Well the only reason I have is that I have not been in the position of late to do so. For if you could picture to yourself the scenes of late that have been happening you would quite realize why it is so. For you see, Mother dear, since the Germans started their hurried retreat we have been kept very busy keeping on their heels, a very exciting time. My lucky star is still shining bright, for within the last month I have come through 3 more engagements without a scratch. The first of those battles was a stiff hand-to-hand fight which lasted all night. You should have seen your beloved son with his pockets full of bombs on a dark night made light by the flares, with about a dozen more boys. We were stuck in a trench full of mud and dead Germans and having a fight all on our own with about 2 dozen Germans out in front of our trench. The Germans wanted this trench and so did we, and Fritz though he knew better, so he charged all in a mob at us and that settled it. Our bombs just about jammed the sky, so fast did we throw them. Bombs are much better at close quarters than a rifle or so it proved, for when daylight came we still had that trench, and about 2/3 of the Germans were still out there but enjoying their last long sleep. So much for the Germans.

Everywhere that the Germans evacuated they left nothing but a heap of smoking ruins, and a few little bombs and mines for us. They cut down fruit trees and telegraph poles, blew up all cross-roads, and even went so far as to smash up babies playthings. I am now down at a signal school where we are put through a course of instruction, this school lasts for a month and we are having a very good time, here, it is really a spell from the trenches and when I come back from it, I should be a good signaller. Well I am in the best of health and spirits and hope you and all at home are the same so will now close with best of love and kisses.

Your Loving Son George

x x x x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/43

Somewhere in France  
Sunday April 22 1917

My Dear Mother

Just a line or two to let you know that I am still down at the Signal School, and that I am getting on quite well with my work. I am still in the best of health and spirits and am getting as fat as a pig with the good feed that we get down here. The weather is improving something grand, and after enduring one of the coldest winters for 22 years it makes one feel glad that he is still living. Gone are the long and cold night vigils, the mud and slush and the 101 other things that go to make a soldiers life in the winter a misery.

Can you picture yourself in a wrecked trench with cold and freezing water up to your knees, you are chilled right through to the marrow. You are sitting on the firestep (that's if there s any) suddenly a big chunk of wet mud will fall from the side on to your neck. Then someone calls you to come and do your watch. So you wade up the trench to your allotted post and there you keep watch across no-man's land for an hour or so while the others try to snatch the few minutes sleep that is possible. Sometimes one gets so sick of it that he'd almost pray for a big shell to bury or in some way put him out of his misery. Well as I said all that is over now, and the bit of sun that is filtering through the clouds now is welcomed not only by us but by the French people as well.

I have received all your letters up to date but I have lost a few of them so I cannot (answer?) So I will close now hoping you are in the best of health as it (leaves?) me (as?) I remain your

Ever Loving Son George

Au Revoir

PRG 1626/2/44

Letterhead: American YMCA  
On Active Service with the American Expeditionary Force

Dec 13<sup>th</sup> 1917

My Dear Mother

Just a line or two to let you know that I am still in the land of the living. I am still in London and am having a jolly good time of it. I am staying out at my young ladies place. You know who I mean. I know London now better than I do Adelaide. How is everything at home. Are you still getting your money alright. Please excuse this scribble but I am going out to a friends of mine in Lincolns Inn Fields. I am in the best of health and spirits and am looking forward to having a better time this Christmas than I did last.

I am going to spend my Christmas with Mrs Greene and others. You have no doubt received the New Years greeting Card from Flo by now. Write and tell me what sort of a letter she wrote.

I hope you are not running away with any ideas about me getting married while I am here because I m not. Mum she's a bonzer kid, and after the war she is coming out to Australia. I am treated just like a son out at there place and they all like me (including the old man). But don't go thinking that it is her that is keeping me over my leave, no I am doing it of my own accord. I am sick and fed-up of the whole blooming war I have not got a chum left out of the boys who left Australia with me, just think of it Mum your son is the only one left out of the 250 that left Australia with me, and now that I am in London I am going to stick right here till they get me. I don't need any money to keep me. Mrs Greene does that part of the work as long as I am in England you will know that I am quite safe and then one at least of the 250 shall come back again.

I hope you have had a nice Christmas because I shall try and have one although I am in London without money I am still having a good time. In future address all my letters and things as follows –

Mr E G Oswald  
c/o Miss F Green  
31 Fuller Street  
Bethnal Green Road  
London E2

Well mum dear don't worry over me I am quite all right and having a splendid time. I am going out to visit Mrs Watkins very shortly so give my love to all at home

I remain your Loving Son George x x x x x x x x x

PRG 1626/2/45

[Incomplete letter to Myrtle, written approximately December 1917 – January 1918]

[Pages missing]

YMCA PAPER

Keep praying Myrtle I ll get home.  
Don t forget that little kids address

The sergeant has just brought me in my Christmas Box from the Red Cross it is bonzer. It has a tin of Havelock tobacco a tin of cigarettes a block of chocolate a tin of sweets and a tin of “Peps” jolly good too. Don’t I tell you everything is working OK I m away from France, in Detention, got nothing to do all day but eat drink and smoke (drink I mean tea and coffee) and here I get a big parcel of letters and a Christmas Box I tell you everything is alright. I just cut my finger opening a tin of chocolate. Here is some of my blood I ve spilt for the dear old flag What Oh!

[Pages missing]

...year for I spent that one in the trenches but this one I shall spend in England in the warmest part of England – Dorset. My word I shall have a lot to tell you sister dear when I get home. And now Myrtle I want to tell you something which might cheer you up, its about Gordon, 2 months ago our battalion went back to the place where he is buried. Neauve Eglise [Neuve-Église], Belgium and erected a big cross over his grave and planted flowers there they are doing it for all of our dead boys. So many of my friends who left Australia with me have either been killed that at one time there were only three of us original boys left in the company.

No fear Myrtle no more fighting for me. I m going to use my head you don’t blame me do you. I am going to get home hook or by crook. Well I can t think of anymore to write just now but will send on more in two days time. I have received everything you sent me since July. Have you received my photos yet. I sent about half a dozen taken in London. Well cheerio old girl and don’t forget to keep mum cheered up.

Well Au-revoir with heaps of love and kisses to all at home

I remain Your Loving Brother George  
x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x x

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PRG 1626/2/46

My Address now is –  
c/o Miss F Greene  
31 Fuller Street  
Bethnal Green Rd  
London E2.

Jan 14<sup>th</sup> 1918  
Westham Camp  
Weymouth

My Dear Sister Myrtle

How can I ever thank you for the kind way in which you have done everything you can for me. I am afraid I have not written home as often as I should but never mind dearie I shall always write as often as I can from now onward. I have received a bunch of letters from you dated August 1<sup>st</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> Sept 20<sup>th</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> 30<sup>th</sup> and several others. I have told all the news in Mums letter but I must thank you for the 2 cables birthday parcels and parcels for Xmas. It did not come as a surprise about Mr Kirkam Evans. I knew all about him when I was at the O.B.I. I have had a splendid time since I have been in England 6 months now and I ve been to most of the principal cities here Birmingham, Leeds, Manchester, Scotland, London, Southhampton, Winchester and most of the other big towns so I have not done bad. I am now in Detention that is to say I am kept in a big room with a lot of other chaps, but we are not allowed out only for exercise, but we get fed lovely and we have plenty of reading books. So you see...

[Pages missing]

PRG 1626/2/47

Jan 15<sup>th</sup> 1918  
Westham Camp  
Weymouth  
England

My Darling Mother

It must seem a long time since I last wrote to you, but I have been in so many places that I only wrote about once a fortnight until I should get settled down. I have been almost all over England. Of course I have written and told you that I was going to have a little holiday on my own once I got to England. Well I have had it, and now that I am settled down again I shall write more frequent. Don't worry over me any more Mum dear because if I can possibly keep away from France then I am going to. You know they have granted me only one leave since I left Australia where other chaps have had two. Therefor I swore if I ever got to England I would take a holiday on my own. As you know I got pneumonia and then had a fortnights leave so when that was finished I took a holiday on my own. And I had 3 months bonzer time before they caught me again but now they have got me I intend to "play the game again" I cant growl I have had the last 6 months in England and it will be another 6 months before I go to France again.

So you will not worry will you, because I shall not be in France. I am pleased to say I just received a big batch of letters from you, Myrtle, Hazel, Dolly and Ivy, also a card from Mr Hewgill. Your letters are of July 31<sup>st</sup> August 1<sup>st</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> 29<sup>th</sup> September 5<sup>th</sup> 20<sup>th</sup> Oct 6<sup>th</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> 31<sup>st</sup> 1917. Also a lot from Myrtle Hazel and two from Dolly 2 from Ivy. I think I wrote in all my letters that I received your 2 cables also the chocolate for my birthday and the parcels for Christmas in fact Ive got everything you have sent me since last July 1917. It is very good of you to send those things to me and when I get back – for I know I shall get back – I shall be able to repay you for all these things you have sent me. Those strikes in Sydney and B. Hill must be very bad at this time of the war I am sorry to hear that Harry and Will were both out of work. Poor old Will, did he think of enlisting tell him never to go near a recruiting office, they might grab him.

Now Mum you have been warning me against get married or even thinking of having an English girl on my mind. You say that they only go after our money. Quite true in some cases but just let me tell you a few points about Flo – Miss Greene. She s one of the best little girls that I have met since I left Australia – and I ve met a few. Well for the first thing, she would not let me spend a penny on her, not on your life. Her father owns a big Grocers store in Shoreditch and also 9 big houses in a fashionable quarter of London. She is pretty – good tempered – always obliging – will do anything for you – she can cook – knit – sew – play the piano – Had a course of French in Paris – she was reared in the country – with her grandmother speaks just like and Australian, and she fell in love with me - chucked up an Officer who fondly imagined, he would marry her some day. He sent me a letter from Mesopotamia saying that I should keep out of his way. Stealing his sweetheart – he said. The very idea of it – an Australian stealing my girls heart Pooh! Laugh, I nearly burst. I sent back a letter saying that – I would fight him with pistols –rifles – revolvers – knives – fists – when and where he fancied. I said I am 5ft 10 ½" I weigh 11stone 8 pounds and that I was champion middle weight boxer of Australia – so much for him. So don't you worry about me getting married or anything like that. Not till I get back to Australia anyhow. I am in splendid health and condition and quite happy. I am quite sure this war is going to end in

the near future, anyhow I m not worrying about the war. The place I m in at present is a seaside resort and a very healthy place.

I am glad to hear Myrtle is getting a house. Poor old Myrtle she deserves something poor old kid. Never mind wait till this war is over and then we shall see what I can do for all of you at home for being so good to me. There are happier times in store Mum for all of us and so please don't worry over me I am quite safe and sound, and it won t be my fault if I m not. I am really surprised to hear that Dolly is engaged. Well I never, I suppose it will do her good. Myrtle tells me that she is a better girl now. Well its about time she was. I ve got a little bit to say to her, for I am writing to her shortly, did she ever get a letter I sent to her asking her to behave herself just for my sake I hope so.

Well we are in the midst of winter now, all the lakes, rivers, ponds, and canals are frozen over and snow lays on the Heaths (parks) I have had some fine skating and snowballing. But not now, I am in the warmest part of England because I ve had pneumonia. Im in the County of Dorsetshire it's a lovely wild part of the country right down on the South Coast of England. But of course I m in "Detention" but we have a fine time of it. We get fed splendidly here and will be sorry when I have to leave it. Now Mum I want you not to worry over me because I tell you truthfully I am quite happy well and contented, and am many hundred miles from the firing line. Ivy heard that I had been wounded well I don't know where she heard that from. I told you in my letters that I stayed at Mrs Watkins place – for a little while and she has quite a nice little home. She is quite well and I am writing to her tomorrow she is about the same build as you mother and her daughter is working in the munitions and is earning good money. I ts bad when the men wont take five pound to enlist now but I suppose they have heard to much of the war to do any enlisting.

That was a nice long letter you wrote on August 29<sup>th</sup> 1917 and you apologized thinking it would make me tired reading it. My dear Mother fancy you thinking I should grow tired of reading your letters. I just long to get a letter from home telling me how everything is. I got your 10/6 Christmas parcel and enjoyed the contents thereof. No mother I do not dread the cold because I am quite used to it by now. Tell the kiddies that I have not grown a moustache yet but by the time I get home I shall have one. You must not worry if you do not get a letter from me at times because alsorts of things happen to our letters to delay them so when you do not get a letter for some time don t think I have not written. Don't you worry Mum I ll get home alright, why I never felt so confident before. I don't know how to thank you and Myrtle for all the things you have done for me but one of these days I shall repay you. I have got everything you have sent me parcels cables and money photos and a few papers but don't send newspapers. I see all the Australian papers from other chaps. Well I like England very much but would not like to live here after the war.

Dear old Australia will do me. I went on my furlough to England in August 10<sup>th</sup> 1917 and went back for one week to France and I have been in England since then. You say you never knew how much you loved me until I left and what a good boy I had been. I can only say Mother that I shall be a better boy when I come back. I received your week-end cable of Sep 22<sup>nd</sup> and must thank you again for it. Tell Dolly not to get married till I come home and then I shall be best man. Myrtle tells me you are looking quite well and if you don't worry you will always keep well, and I tell you really mother this war will not last much longer and that I shall get home alright. Well I have no more news to tell you at present but I will write in a couple of days time again so please

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cheer up. Give my love to all at home and accept it yourself. So must now close with heaps of love and kisses to all at home

I remain your Loving Son George x x x x x x x x x x

P.S. Cheer up Mum everythings alright and Ill soon be home

PRG 1626/2/48

YMCA LETTERHEAD  
For God, For King & For Country  
H.M. FORCES ON ACTIVE SERVICE

Company D Bat. 27<sup>th</sup>  
Stationed at Signal School Fovant Camp Salisbury Wilts England

April 24<sup>th</sup> 1918

My Dearest Mother,

Before I start I will tell you although from these letters that I have received from home, you appear to be very displeased or angry with me, I must say that I am very glad to get them. There respective dates are Dec: 13<sup>th</sup> 1917 and 31<sup>st</sup>, Jan: 25<sup>th</sup> Feb: 25<sup>th</sup> 1918. I also received Myrtles letters of Dec: 14<sup>th</sup> 1917 and Jan: 1<sup>st</sup> 24<sup>th</sup> 1918. Now Mother, I don't, know, but I did not quite expect such a letter from my own Mother, telling me as you have in yours of Dec 31<sup>st</sup>, that it quite serves my right that I should stay over here fighting for my home for another 2 or 3 years. In your own words you say: "I cannot understand the soldiers voting No, and so let the clackers and wasters stop here in peace and comfort. I reckon you are all mad and have only yourselves to blame if you stay there 2 or 3 years more without coming home". Thank you! Let me state, as a matter of fact that I had not the chance of voting as I was not old enough.

Quite old enough to fight though. I am only one of a few more thousands who had no chance of giving our votes and yet you, my mother, openly accuse me of helping to prolong the stay of the slackers in Australia, and ourselves over here. Do you think for a moment that I or my mates would willingly stop over here longer than we could help. Let me tell you that those who voted NO, over here did it for intentions that are better understood by us. "The fighter". The majority of the Fighters who voted NO over here, voted the same that their own brothers and friends might not join up with an army whose "Heads" treat us with most shameless injustice in fact our treatment has been likened to a dogs at times. I will not tell you how or in what way, I would rather save you the unhappiness and remorse by leaving you in ignorance of what we have gone through. I have never regretted the day I joined up. I m past that stage now. I do not live in a "realm of uncertainty:" I know what I have gone through, and I know what to expect so I take it as a matter of course, but, I would regret the day, that would induce me to influence my own brother to join. I quite realize how much your patriotic heart urges you to these unjust utterances and I admire my mother for showing such a spirit but I deplore the fact that you should single my mates and myself out as though we, of all people should be the means of turning conscription down. Forgive me Mum but I must write as my heart dictates it is no good beating about the bush, you who have always written such cheery hopeful letters, and then to turn round and, as it were, condemn me to a few more years of this life. I cannot understand you, I admire your good intentions and motives, but I have had nothing to do with the conscription, so how could I help what has happened. I expected a little better than this from you, it made me hot and cold in turns as I read it, but there I expect I shall get over it. I can go out to France again which will be soon, and there I shall try again to alter your opinion and misgivings. If I go "West", mother you at least will know that I tried my best, like Gordon and the rest of them. Goodness knows I have tried hard during the past two years to put my whole heart and strength into ending this war. You must think of the Australia that will be after the war, an Australia that will be emptied of

men. England will want all her people notwithstanding, all her millions, and it will be a bad thing for Australia who is just in her prime, or was, to be cut off through lack of man-power. If it will give you any satisfaction, I might tell you that in 1915 or 16, I should have voted yes – but now – ? I hope you will forgive me for speaking so plainly to you, but I could not bear you to think that I have had any hand in turning down conscription, and those of my mates who did, done it for reasons that will be fully explained WHEN we get back to Australia.

There is another thing now Mother that I must speak of I refer to your letter of Jan 23 1917. I cant understand you Mum, haven't you the least trust in me at all, have I not told you, assured you beyond all doubt that you still have me so long as I m away from Australia, do you think that because I tell you that I have chosen who shall be my wife. Because I love Flo – do you think I should forget my duty to you, and my brothers. I hope when you write to Flo again that you will not write in the same strain as you have to me. I ask you once more to trust me believe in me, cant you. Oh! Mum I love you, surely you will not deny me loving...

[Pages 5 and 6 missing]

I am down in a place called Hurdcott near Wilton Salisbury Plains, Wiltshire. Not a bad little spot either, better than France. I have been in England 9 months now and I have had a splendid time. You asked me whether I went to see Mrs Watkins. I wrote to you when first I went there in October, apparently you have not received that letter. Well I spent several days there, although I did not sleep at the house. I did not stay any longer for previous to visiting there a party of four of us arranged for a visit to Scotland and I could not break out of the party. Mrs Watkins was quite well and happy although the Germans used to drop there bombs very near Studland Street. They have a very nice two storied house and quite comfatably furnished. I did not see her oldest daughter, she is on munitions. She thinks I am very much like you. I have up to the present received all your letters from last August when I left France up till the present month April. Also I have received the parcel from Griffiths Bros. A lot of my mail to you must have been sunk because I wrote to you last Feb: and stated that I had received all your parcels and cables and letters. No Mother I did not get into any trouble over staying Absent Without Leave, that is to say nothing that will affect me at all. I done one month in Detention and was released. Certainly I liked Mrs Watkins very well I don't know where you get your ideas from about me not visiting her or liking her.

Very sorry to hear about poor old Hary being out of work so soon after being married but am glad to hear that he is now working. Tell Harry to call his baby "Marmaduke" instead of "George". "Georges" always seem to be getting into trouble through no fault of their own. Am glad to hear they sent back a few things of Gordons. You need not say anything to Myrtle about this. "The Germans have captured the little cemetery where he is buried. You know it – "Neuve Eglise" Belgium. But we shall soon take it back from them. I have seen the letter you wrote in reply to Flo and was very pleased to see such a nice letter from you. Mother, she is one of the best and you wont or cant help liking her. She is not like a lot of girls in England she is more refined than most of her class and is easily satisfied.

I get cigarettes and many other things from her everyday while Im down here. I am about 90 miles from London and every morning I get a parcel either of cakes cigarettes or fruit. Her father has just bought another 8 roomed house out at Stoke Newington. He has also a house at Epping Forest, 3 at Victoria Park, Bethnal Green Rd, 2 out at Hackney Downs and one out at Hampstead Heath. I hope you will get her photo. Zeppelins raided the East Coast a few nights

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ago, dropped a few bombs on the Coastal towns and then returned to Germany. I have met several of my pals back from Germany who were captured on Nov 5<sup>th</sup> 1916, our Naval forces have just come back here after making a successful raid on a submarine Base at Zeebugge and Ostend. Things are a bit better in England than they were at the end of last year. There is more food and more of everything. Am glad to hear that Dolly is a better girl than she was. I have never met her other boy "Jack Cowan" (Perhaps it is best)

The weather is much better now and it promises to be a good summer. There are thousands of Americans in France now and millions more to come. Perhaps we will get a bit of a spell now. I don t know when I am coming home. Perhaps this year. Anyhow I will get home.

Well I m pretty well run out of news now. Glad you liked my photo will send some more when I get the chance. I am in splendid health and spirits and could not feel any better. My cousin Cyril is over here with me. He had a fractured leg. Several of St Johns! boys have been killed. I think I am the last one left of my company who left Australia with the original Battalion.

Have recived several letters from Ivy and Myrtle which I am answering today. Also Im writing to Mrs Watkins today. It is "Anzac Day" today and we are holding sports. I m going in for Rifle shooting. Well I must now close Mother dear, do not worry over me please, I can quite take care of myself and your interests. Forgive me for writing so plainly to you but I really had to. Believe me

I remain Your Ever Loving Son George  
x x

Good bye