



## Extracts from Letters

Letters used in the presentation at Woodbridge and in these Teachers Resources are sourced from Battye Library Acc MN94 3706A 12; 13 and 2244A 38-43 and from The National Australian Archives B2455/1 Further documents can be accessed from Battye Library <http://henrietta.liswa.wa.gov.au/search~> National Australian Archives website <http://naa12.naa.gov.au/scripts/ItemDetail.asp?M=0&B=4420283>

*Letter from Wilfred*

*Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/12*

Claremont  
Sunday

Dear Mother

As we won't be going home again I must write a note to you to say goodbye again.

We get up at four AM tomorrow and we leave here about ten o'clock and the day will be spent embarking. We are told that we will leave tomorrow night and will be anchored out in the sea till other boats come along.

There has been a big crowd down here today. Plenty of old friends have been down and between jobs we could have a chat.

The whole of our crowd have just had tea at the Dajo tea shop and I am writing this on the grass with a dim light in the distance.

Bea and Chas have just come 7.45 – the car had a puncture and delayed them for ½ an hour.

I will have to say goodbye now. We will promise to look after ourselves and hope to find you well when we come back.

I will try and send a note home to you tomorrow when we are embarking.

Goodbye Mum. We shall see you again soon.

Your loving son

Wilfred

*Letter from Gresley*

*Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/12*

Sunday

Dear Mum

Just a note to say goodbye.

We start our preparations at 4 o'clock tomorrow morning expect to be away somewhere towards evening.

I am sorry that there is no chance of seeing you before then but we must bear with that.

We start tomorrow with riding to Fremantle and putting our horses aboard.

We hear on all hands that the boat is all that can be wished for – all we now want is our horses on the upper decks so that stabling will be simple.

Goodbye and keep up your spirits you must be glad that we are doing what we are doing

With much love

Gresley



*Extract from letter written by Wilfred. NB. Censor has signed at top of letter*  
*Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/12*

Ye Auld Latrine View  
June 18<sup>th</sup> 1915

Dear Mother,

Today is a beautiful spring day and not even a rifle shot can be heard – although it is the Centenary of Waterloo.

We have been in this present dug out and camp for 2 weeks and have done absolutely nothing. We spend 24 hours up in the trenches sapping or navying and then come down and lay on our backs for 2 days. Passing the day with nothing to do is very tiring.

The flies are almost as bad as they were at Mena.

We did about 10 days of this and then we heard.....

*Extract from letter written by Gresley to Mrs Harper*  
*Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/12*

.....the Nile. It was constructed in part by Ramses the Great and Ahmenotip the 2<sup>nd</sup> both of the 18<sup>th</sup> dynasty about 1600 years BC and both the chief contributors to the ancient architecture of upper Egypt – that is Thebes in the main. Luxor from where I now am writing is on the East bank of the Nile and is built upon the ancient site of eastern Thebes.

The temples of which I speak remain only in their huge pillars in long succession some 60 to 70 feet high and 30 feet in diameter decorated in bas relief with all those figures and patterns so familiar in Egyptian work – the walls or so much of them as remain are similarly carved with marvellous representations of the kings themselves in their wedding processions on their way to worship in the Temples and their pleasure excursions upon the Nile. These processions are shown many feet in length with astonishing vividness. There are included in the Ramses portion of the temple many images of the king himself who we are told constructed more likenesses of himself in this manner than any of the ancient kings. The images are shown in single blocks of granite some pink some black of great size – together with their pedestals they reach .....

*The following extract is from the final letter written by Gresley and received by the family. The missing word is indicated by ..... The extract shows the letter is finished at the top of the first page.*

*Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/13*

Monday Aug 2<sup>nd</sup>

Dear Walter

I have long had in mind a reply to your letter of long ago, but find the matter of writing nothing of great difficulty not that we are kept short of time for our own devices but ones lives is so harassed with heat and flies that writing is impossible except when the twilight comes and then one is given over to rest for the flies have gone. We have had another remove - we no sooner get thoroughly settled in one position complete the defences in so far as they are deficient in the eyes of the officer commanding and get to know all the points that aid in defence than we are borne off to some new section of the line and proceed again to go through all the process of settlement. Tis a most exasperating thing for God knows where on earth such minimum of comfort can be found even when ones position is fixed and he can gather those few trifles about him that represent all the place affords of indulgence – trifles that mean much but which must be left behind when on the move for our equipment is all that any man can manage. On this our last journey.....

your affect. brother Gresley



*This extract was sent by Major Alan Love to Mrs Harper. Major Love was in the same Regiment as the Harper brothers and was present at the time of their deaths.  
Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/12*

10<sup>TH</sup> REGT  
3<sup>RD</sup> LIGHT HORSE BRIGADE  
AL HAYAT CONVALESCENT HOSPITAL  
HELWAN EGYPT

Dear Mrs Harper,

It is with feelings of deepest pity and grief that I feel constrained to write to tell you of the deaths of your two sons Gresley and Wilfred, who were killed in action on the 7<sup>th</sup> inst, together with scores of our gallant regiment, in an assault on the enemy's trenches.

I can only offer you the consolation that they both gave their lives as true and gallant men and fell doing their duty against fearful odds.

*This extract written by Walter, describes the situation at the time of the deaths of Gresley and Wilfred.  
Ref: BL MN 94 3706A/12*

October 12<sup>th</sup>, 1915

Dear Clara

Since posting my letter to you yesterday I have seen Russell and had a long talk with him. He is able to give us an assurance that both the boys were killed outright and that all were recovered within a day or so either by our men or the Turks. Aileen is here to read out a portion of Arthur Leake's letter so I will get this off and continue later.

“ To give you an idea of how Gres and Wilfred and Harold met their death I will relate what I know. We had known for a few days that we were to take part in a charge and everybody was bright and ready to do his utmost. The night preceding we were taken out of the trenches to give us some chance of sleep. A heavy bombardment was commenced by the navy on the left flank where a big move was in progress. Just before dawn we received the order to stand armed, formed up and filed into the trenches expecting to half across the peninsular at least. We took up our position behind the parapets and waited patiently for the order to charge. Every man was joking and laughing. The big guns opened fire on the trenches we were to take and after a short bombardment ceased at dawn. Our first two lines went out (another reg) and met a tremendous fire. The air was thick with lead guns and rifles. Some poor beggars did not even get over the parapet.”

All of us have had visions of our boys enduring these tortures and it is a great relief to know that they have suffered the easiest of deaths to be instantly killed in the excitement of battle. Poor Mum is almost happy over it the long silence has tended to make her feel that there was news too awful to give her and has in consequence been picturing all sorts of things in her mind. She has been waiting to know all there was to know before she would settle down to go anywhere or do anything but now we have heard almost all there is to hear I think she will soon buck up. With love to the family,  
Your affectionate brother  
Walter