

## LETTERS FROM THE FRONT IN WING PARISH MAGAZINES

### DECEMBER 1914

**LETTER FROM THE FRONT.**- The following extract from a letter dated November 5th, 107th

Battery, R.F.A., 3rd Division, British Expeditionary Force, and addressed to Mrs. James by Sergt. Chas.

Richards (son of Mr. William Richards, of Marsworth, formerly of Burcott), will, though relating to the earliest period of the war, be of interest to many:-“We have had very exciting times since we arrived in sunny France. Soon as we landed we were rushed up to Belgium, having our baptism of fire at Mons. It all came so sudden. We were in action and blazing away at the Germans before we realized we were at war. It was hot work, our division taking the brunt of it. We had some splendid targets, the Germans rolling up in thousands, and less than a mile away. Our guns played havoc with them. The more we knocked down the more came on-there were really too many of them. It was simply raining lead. We kept blazing away until the infantry had withdrawn. Then we had to withdraw our guns and the sport commenced. The teams coming up for the guns made a good target for the Germans, but they can't shoot straight. All the same horses were going down everywhere. I lost my section officer and my bombardier, and a few horses. We saved all the guns.

Soon as we limbered up we had a race for cover and another position. We withdrew still further, and took up position near Cambrai where we had a big battle. Again they were too strong for us, thousands of them and scores of guns. We withdrew again towards night and commenced the great retirement. I shall never forget that, it was worse than fighting. Day and night, day after day we kept on, dog tired, dirty and hungry, no time to wash or shave, men falling asleep on their horses and vehicles. We were within 20 miles of Paris when we had the order to take the offensive. That simply worked wonders. Men bucked up, and no longer felt tired, only eager to get at the Germans again.

We found them on the Marne and gave them a thrashing, our battery putting a German battery out of action allowing the Lincolns to go and capture them; the guns now on view in London. It was a great fight, and they beat a hasty retreat to the Aisne, where again we had a very long battle. At the Marne we were introduced to the “Jack Johnsons” or “mechanical engineers” as we call the German big shells. They make a large hole where they burst and

most awful noise, and their fragments fly hundreds of yards. They are very fond of shooting at Churches and destroying towns and villages – some haven't a house standing. The most painful sight of all is the poor people tramping along the roads, their homes and belongings destroyed by the Germans. ....I am not allowed to state where I am, but the fight goes on everywhere day and night. At night it is like a firework display with flashes from the guns and the bursting shells, and generally several fires round us. I hope you will excuse the scrawl. I am writing this during a lull in the firing sitting round my gun. It is indeed good news to hear my mother and father are well. I thank you very much for your kind wishes, and remain, yours truly,  
C. E. Richards, Sergt.”

## **AUGUST 1915**

The following letter from Lionel Jordan, one of our many Wing men at the front, will be of interest:-

“A few lines to let you know that I received the parcel quite safe, for which I thank you very much. The contents came in very useful, for I received them at the time we were in the trenches for 18 days. That is the longest we have been without being relieved, although we have been in the trenches, a great deal since we came out here and seen a lot of fighting. I am sorry to say we have lost a great number of our fellows. They were in great need of men when we first came, and we were pushed into the fighting within a week of our leaving Newcastle and took up a portion of the line near Ypres, where heavy fighting was going on. I'm pleased to say our Regiment has done good work and won a name for themselves. The Germans have gassed us three times, but not since Whit Monday, when they gave us some both morning and evening. The Germans advanced to one of our trenches and we lost about half of one company. I hear now we go to another part of the line, which is very quiet to what we have been used to. Leaving trenches tonight. Then we get three days' rest before we move on again. I expect to get home in a few weeks' time as our Regiment is getting leave, but very few at a time are allowed to go. I suppose things are very quiet at Wing just now; it will be a good thing when this terrible war is over as mothers that have sons out here are anxious to know how they are getting on. Thanking you again. I am,  
Yours Truly, L. Jordan.”

## **JUNE 1916**

I select one extract from a letter of Walter Samuels, 17th Lancers, as it refers to a very practical and pressing matter, viz., the employment of women in the fields. He says:

“How are the women coming up for the working on the land round our way? I would like you to come here and see for yourself, as there’s old women about 85 and young girls, anything between 13 and 24, all of them getting at it with a will. There’s no such thing here as having meetings as to who will come forward or anything like that. These people know very well that all the men folk are gone, and it’s up to them (the women) to work the land, and I say they are doing it with a will.”

(Women of Wing, please copy.- Ed.)