

1918 France
/8/18

My dear Mother,

My last to you was cut rather short on account of mail closing so unexpectedly but now that we are out of the line again for 3 or 4 days will try and scrape up a little news.

Yesterday I had a yarn with Doug who came along with an advance party to relieve us. He is looking as fit as ever again and none the worse for his illness. I also saw him a few days previous to this but only for a few minutes as we had just put our equipment on ready to move off as he arrived, which was rather disappointing as he had walked some miles to see me.

He tells me that he has been recommended for the M.M. for the work that he did on the night advance. I believe that he came across a party of Germans, threw a bomb in amongst them and then called to a Sgt. who was a little distance away and over 30 of the enemy surrendered to him. Not a bad haul for one man. On another occasion when they were up north I believe he also did very good work. They had just relieved another battalion when Gerry raided and practically surrounded them and Doug, who was in the advance post with a machine gun was the only one to open up on the enemy, a number of whom he killed and wounded. The officer who was in charge in making out his report took all the credit for what Doug did. He (the officer) said that he took Doug's gun and used it with great effect inflicting many casualties on the enemy for which he has since got the M.C. When Doug heard about the report that had been sent in he went to the officer and told him off in good old Australian style. Other officers in the battalion when they heard what had happened asked Doug to send in a written statement about it but he refused. This officer has since been killed and Doug, running a great risk of losing his life, crawled out behind an enemy strong post and brought his body in.

I also saw Clive and Bill Sharland yesterday on their way up to the line but as they were on the move did not have a chance to speak to Clive but Bill stopped for a couple of minutes. Clive is looking much better than when I saw him in England in fact I don't think I have ever seen him looking better. Graham Smith Ben's friend has been wounded and I believe is now somewhere in England.

Now that all the Australians are down here together I will possibly see Doug fairly often.

We expected to be taken out for a spell before this but as long as the weather keeps fine and this push continues I can see little chance of a long rest for some time.

Last night after we marched back and again this morning I went down to the canal and had a swim as I was badly in need of a bath. Life in the trenches is not the cleanest and reminds me of that of a rabbit as we sleep through the day and crawl out of our dugout which is often only a hole dug into the side of the trench in the evening. Naturally when sleeping on the ground with only an oilskin to throw over you one does not keep too clean and the vermin commonly known as chals soon accumulate.

I had a nasty experience a few nights ago. I was lying in my dugout and had just dosed off when a beetle about 1/4 of an inch long got into my ear. It just about drove me off my head and two of my mates got hold of me and rushed me off to the AMC who poured some oil in my ear but could not get it out. The AMC then took me on to the field ambulance which was about a mile away and they pumped about a bucket of water into my ear with a syringe and managed to drown it but could not get it out so I turned in and had a sleep. In the morning they again went to work and this time managed to get hold of it with a pair of tweezers. When they started to draw it out I thought they were pulling my brains out and I was not sorry when it was all over.

No more news this week so will close.

Love to all from your affectionate son, Eustace.