

**Frederick Cecil Mallard**

**Isle of Wight County Press**

**2 January 1915**

**LETTERS FROM THE FRONT**

**GERMANS ALARMED BY SENTRY'S SNEEZE.**

Rfn. Cecil Mallard, maxim-gun section, Rifle Brigade, writing on December 16th to his parents Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Mallard, of Oakmere, Medina-avenue, Newport, says: "Our artillery are shelling the German trenches in front, and as they are very close the shells just slide over the top of our trench. One burst just behind and 'put the wind' up us. I don't know if we shall be here for Christmas, as there is some big move on one way or the other. ... All the boys are looking forward to getting a Christmas parcel. We are having 'lovely weather'; it has only been raining for the last three weeks, and some of the trenches are in a fine state. I went for rations yesterday morning, and we had to come back through a communication trench about a mile long. In the worst parts it was over my knees in water and mud, and the mud in the best parts was over the top of my boots. When we got back we were smothered with mud and wet through. Still we cannot grumble at that, as we had a clean set of underclothing to put on. On the left there has been a big fight going on for the last two days. The Germans shelled a big town just behind us yesterday and set two or three places alight. They are destructive beggars. We had the yarn that the Kaiser was dead, but we see by the papers of the 13th inst. that he is still alive and kicking ... Our boys are busy sniping at the Germans opposite us. As our artillery drive them out of their trenches they have 'bagged' a few and are quite happy after it, and are looking round for places to find some more to snipe at. I was on sentry last night from 12 till 1.15 I sneezed and hardly before I had finished the Germans put six shots in rapid succession in front, but I was not there; I had moved a bit lower down. You have only to make a noise and the Germans will open fire, as they think we are advancing."

In another letter Rfn. Mallard writes of the arrival of Christmas hampers in the trenches, and mentions that he and a comrade whilst creeping back to fetch his hamper had a rather exciting time, as the Germans flashed their searchlight upon them, and they had to flop down among the swedes in the field until the light went off. They returned safely and greatly enjoyed the contents of the hampers and boxes. He adds: "We are still in the trenches. We have had three of our guns smashed since we have been here."

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**20 February 1915**

**LETTERS FROM THE FRONT**

**CELEBRATING THE KAISER'S BIRTHDAY.**

Rfn. C. Mallard, machine-gun section of the 3rd.Rifle Brigade, writing to his parents Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Mallard, Newport, on February 2, mentions that he has just come out of the trenches for a rest and that the weather was better. "The trenches in front of us were all decorated for the Kaiser's birthday, and the Germans gave us cornet solos and sings in the

evening. Our Navy sent the Kaiser a nice birthday present through his navy, and I hope he enjoyed it. The Germans made an attack on our left the other day and had the sauce to come up in an armoured train, thinking they would break through that way, but they didn't half get a shock, and they were driven back with losses. I don't suppose they will try again in a hurry." The writer mentions that he and three comrades were in a billet at the house of a woman who has 13 children, including seven sons, five of whom are fighting for France, and the other two are under age.

Writing again on February 3, Rfn. Mallard says: "There was a decent 'bust up' round here last night. The Germans tried to break through, and the boys let them get right on top of the barbed wire entanglements and then opened fire, and with our artillery there was a terrible row for half an hour. By all accounts there were not many Germans who got back to their trenches. It was a fine sight watching the shells burst. The Germans never got through, and I don't expect they ever will. The German artillery had a run at our trenches a couple of days ago, sending over 62 shells, but they could not even hit the trenches. We have skin coats, waterproof coats and capes, and knee boots, so we are not badly off. If it rains we have an umbrella to use on sentry."

In a third letter, written on the 15th inst., the writer mentions that he moved back to the Machine Gunnery School at General Head-quarters for a short course, and adds "Our officer, Capt. Osborne, got sniped three days ago, hit in the head. All the boys are very sorry, as he was a splendid officer."

**Isle of Wight County Press**  
**11 September 1915**

**NEWPORT MAN KILLED IN FRANCE.**  
**PATHOS OF UNFINISHED LETTER.**

We regret to announce that Mr. and Mrs. C. H. Mallard, of Mount-pleasant, Newport, on Wednesday received the sad news that their son, Corpl. Frederick Cecil Mallard, aged 23, machine-gun section of the 3rd Rifle Brigade, serving in France, had been killed in the fighting on Sunday afternoon. 2nd. Lieut. Douglas, of the Rifle Brigade, wrote on September 5th to deceased's mother: "It is with the greatest regret and my very deepest sympathy that I write to you about your son's death. He was killed instantaneously yesterday whilst sitting by his machine-gun. He is buried at La Brique amidst the graves of so many others of our gallant men who have fallen in these trenches at one time and another. I can assure you his grave will be most beautifully kept by our men and his very many friends in this battalion. I have only been out here about four months, and ever since he came under my command I cannot praise him sufficiently for the good work he did both as a rifleman and as a corporal. He was tremendously popular with all ranks of the battalion, and always carried out his work with a good heart, cheerily and most willingly. He is a great loss to us all. ... I enclose a letter written by him to you. He gave it to me to be censored just before he was killed. "

A comrade, Rfn. Bassoni, in a touching letter to Mrs. Mallard breaking the sad news says: "The death of your esteemed son occurred whilst he was performing his duty - about 3 p.m. on the 4th inst. I must say that by all ranks he was thoroughly loved, and as a soldier his duty was his first thought. We shall miss him beyond words to express, but trust that should

we be fated the same we shall have the honour of such a glorious death. Enclosed is a letter he was writing just before. All his comrades of the section join with me in expressing our most heartfelt sympathy. He died a painless yet glorious death."

Deceased's last letter referred to above is unsigned and evidently unfinished. It is dated September 5th, and in it he acknowledges with very many thanks the last box of comforts, &c., from home. In describing his journey back to the trenches with the box and his kit, he says: "It wasn't half a scramble. It has been raining here this last week, and the trenches are getting a bit sticky; it was nothing else but one long slide all the way up to the trenches. Never mind, we got there at last in a fine state, smothered in mud and wet through. Still, we have a couple of dug-outs in which we have established ourselves, and hope for the best. If it will only stop raining to-morrow so that we can put some more earth on top, as it leaks a bit, we shan't grumble. Many thanks for your good wishes to me on attaining my 23rd birthday and for the hope of many more. Thanks for the flute; I can play that one a bit, so I shall be able to give the boys a livener when I start." After another sentence the letter breaks off - alas! never to be finished by the writer.

Corpl. Mallard's letters are familiar to our readers, as they have often given a great insight into the conditions of trench life. He was home for several days' leave last month - the first time he had been away from France since the British Expeditionary Force arrived on the Continent. He had been all through the fighting without mishap, except that he was buried by earth thrown up in a heavy shell-burst shortly before he came home on leave, but was uninjured. The deceased, who was born at Newport, was one of Mr. W. K. Ediss's "old boys" at the National-school, a choirboy at the Parish Mission-hall, and a member of the Church Lads' Brigade Band. After being an apprentice at the Electric-light Works he joined the Royal Engineers in August, 1908, and six months later transferred to the 3rd Rifle Brigade. He was stationed at Tipperary and Cork. He was appointed to the machine-gun section in 1913, left Newmarket for the Front on September 7th, 1914, and had since been all through the fighting in France and Belgium.

Transcription by Kate MacDonell for the Friends of Newport and Carisbrooke Cemeteries,  
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