

25<sup>th</sup> June 1916

My dearest Rose,

We've been up on the front line near Beaumont Hamel for a couple of weeks now. There's a rumour going around that we are going to launch a big attack pretty soon. There's certainly been a lot of artillery fire over the last couple of days and two extra battalions, the West Kent and the Westminster Rifles, have just moved in to this stretch of the front.

The weather has been beautiful. The sun has been out for most of last week and we've managed to dry everything out at last. It seems strange to think that each day might be my last. Only last week, a young lad on sentry duty had his brains blown out by a sniper. I should be due some leave fairly soon. I am missing you and the kids very much. How are they? Send them my love.

You can't imagine what it's like to be stuck in these trenches for days on end. The real problem at the moment is the rats. There are hundreds of them. There's no shortage of food for them, with all the dead bodies around. The smell is disgusting. But I'm keeping my spirits up. The lads are great. There's a lot of laughing and joking. At times you wouldn't think there was a war on. The food rations are fine and there are plenty of cigarettes. It's not always been like that. I don't think the generals have a clue what it's like up here at the front, otherwise we'd get better food all the time.

Yesterday morning at dawn, we were on alert for an attack. The alarm suddenly went along the lines that the Germans had let off some mustard gas. We put on our gas masks so quickly it wasn't true! We were lucky! In this part of the country, there's a lot of early morning mist. Thank God it wasn't gas. We are pretty well kitted out and equipped against any attack.

Well that's it for now. I hope to see you soon. I can't wait for this stupid war to be over so we can get back to normal again. I often wonder whether it's all worthwhile. I know we are fighting for King and for our country, but try telling that to all my mates who have died.

Your ever loving,

Jack