

Glenbow Archives, Bell family fonds
M-9377-3

Seaford
July 2, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

Just a short note in answer to your letter of June 7th. Yours is the only one to get through from home since May 20th but have had quite a few others. Aunt Annie Bowes, Mrs. Gawley, Gladys, etc so have been very lucky. Haven't heard from Aubrey yet but I understand they spend a period of about a month in the trenches and Reserves, and then come out for eight days rest, so he will likely write as soon as he gets out. I think he went in about the first of June, judging by the date of his last card.

Hope you enjoyed yourself down at Campbell's. It will be a welcome change at least. Try and keep Mother as cheery as possible. You don't need to worry if Aubrey should happen to get wounded, as a rule a wound doesn't amount to much, and gives you from three to six months out of the line. Lots of fellows around here have been wounded three or four times and still are fit. I see that both Orley Loudon and Billy Langlands, two fellows I went to school with that were on the same draft as Aubrey have both got Blighties so they were quite lucky to get back so quick. The weather has been quite chilly of late, not any rain to speak of just cold. There is a big sports [sic] on today in South Camp, so will close to get ready to go down. Hope everything is Jake at home. Love to all from all.

Ray
Double up with that ring Marjorie. It might need it.

Seaford, Sussex
July 16, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I am afraid I am kind of behind answering your letters, but it is not altogether my fault. The one with the check in got here the same day I left, so of course didn't get it till I got back. The last one, written about June 20th, got here yesterday. There was a great old bunch of parcels waiting

for me when I got back A great big cake, cream cheese, biscuits, etc from Creelman and no less than three parcels of candy from home. I also had to bring one back with me from Kirkham, Mr. Bradshaw's sister put it up, a fine one too, so haven't broken into the boxes of candy yet. Will very soon now as I have pretty well finished the others. The cake that Aunt Annie and May sent was indeed a dandy, a very rich fruit cake, iced and all, a regular old monster. Bradshaws treated me splendid. I got there about nine Saturday night, went to church twice on Sunday, and had a good look at the crops etc. there. They have quite a nice little place there, very old fashioned of course they cook with fire-places and stone floors, etc. On Monday I helped them in the hayfield, quite a different method to that at home alright, one horse and cart, a good deal of the work done by hand, have a McCormick mower and rake though. They eat about six or seven times a day there and some eats too I can tell you, the very best of everything, homemade cheese and all. They have seven cows and three horses. Mr. Bradshaw has done well since coming back alright. He is living with an unmarried sister, a niece, and two nephews. The boys are fourteen and sixteen, fine lads. Went out with the gun that night and got a partridge and a rabbit. On Tuesday went to Blackpool and had a perfectly splendid time with Mr. Bradshaw, and Jane, his niece, a fine girl, full of fun. We were up in the tower there, went to a circus performance, and a permanent fair they have there, water-chestnuts, switchboard railways, and all kinds of things. There is a splendid beach there, runs out nearly have [sic] a mile of pure sand when the tide is out. It was crowded too, soldiers drilling on the sands nearly all day. All R.A.M.C. The American A.M.C. were there for a while but have gone to France. It is certainly an ideal summer resort. We cycled in, and got back about ten thirty. It is just ten miles, and splendid roads all the way. It took us less than an hour to come home. Miss Bradshaw had a rabbit-pie waiting for us when we got home, and that mind you after stuffing ourselves all day, on fruit, candy, etc perhaps I wasn't full.

On Wednesday we left home, Mr. Bradshaw and I about ten, on the wheels. Went about eight miles around, having a look at the country, to his sisters near Kirkham. The country is very level, lots of hedges and trees, really quite pretty. The roads are all asphalt and stone, so it is very easy travelling. Got there at a little after eleven, had dinner and a look at the place. They have one girl and two boys, all grown up. Each boy has a lot of hens, all wired in pens and a small henhouse in each pen. They have a great old bunch, about four thousand, with chickens. Get about six or seven hundred eggs a day. Nearly all white leghorn and Wyandotte, mostly pure-bred. They also milk seventeen cows and make cheese. They are quite well off for farmers, motor-cycles and side-car, and everything convenient. We stayed till about six and helped them milk. I managed to clean five of them. Dandy cows all easy to milk. There, as elsewhere, we had two meals and a snack, that was after having two before leaving home. We went from there to Kirkham, and saw another sister, who I had already met. They wanted us to eat again, but we did manage to talk ourselves out of it there. It was here that I got the parcel. She is a splendid woman, with two sons gone, one in France, the other in Mesopotamia. We left there about 7 and proceeded to the other relatives about a mile from home. They have two girls, and one boy, a cripple. She is Mrs.

Bradshaw's sister, an awful fine woman. I am slightly mixed in regard to how they all related, that explains the part crossed out. I made a mistake earlier on, the place where all the hens are, that woman is also Mrs. Bradshaw's sister, not his. They got Mother's address at the last place, and are going to write. They were so pleased at the way Mother had treated Mrs. Bradshaw when she was so sick. They have a fine place too, and of course had to again there [sic]. They are farming too, but are living just on the edge of a village, where they own quite a bit of property. They are all very fine, and just as kind as they can be. We left there just after ten, and got home about ten thirty, and then Miss Bradshaw had the nerve to ask us to eat again then. She is a fine jolly soul, an old maid, a little over thirty, hard to say how much, but chuck full of fun, her and Jane are always fooling around just like Matt. I left there about seven the next morning, got to London at 2 o'clock, went to the Record Office, left at 3:40 got to Brighton at 5:00 left at ten and home at eleven. I have written to Orly Loudon to see if he can tell anything about Aubrey, as he was in the same draft. He is in Convalescent Hospital at Epsom. I also knew Harry [illegible]. I sincerely hope you hear something long before this reaches you. It sometimes takes a report of Prisoner three or four months to come through. Let's hope for the best anyway.

Yours, Ray

Seaford, Sussex

July 18/17.

Dear Leslie,

I am afraid I am kind of slow in answering your letter but have had so cussed many to write since getting back off leave that I really haven't been able to get around to it. There has been no Canadian mail since I wrote home last, so there is very little news. I have written to Orley Loudon to see if he know what might have happened to Aubrey, but haven't had an answer yet. I was told the other night that on June 2nd the Canadians captured the village of Avion but on account of being able to get up re-inforcements were unable to hold it so had to retire, so it is quite possible he was taken Prisoner in the counter-attack while retiring if he was in this fight, and I think he was, as a good many of his Battalion were on the casualty list just after that.

The weather has been fine up till yesterday, when it turned and rained nearly all day. It is still cloudy today but not raining. as near as I can see they get little natural summer here, not more than a very few days at a time. Of course it is a lot different father north, they don't get near as much rain up there. I see you ask whether I have seen Vern Adshead. No, I never met him, as he is still in Shorncliffe I believe, although most of the Section he used to be in came to Seaford. I met several that knew him. Yes, I am afraid it is a hard case with Marjorie and Wilfred alright.

Tell her not to mind she can hope to see him again next winter. You advise in regard to the girls over here, at least the class we meet, is very sound, and are safe at a distance as a rule, although I have met one or two very nice girls. The worst part of the girls over here, if you go with them about twice, they seem to think you should marry them. As for the balance, the least said the better, but the little you may have heard is not a patch to the actual conditions. I am afraid there is going to be a bad time when peace is declared in this country. About half of the lower class that are married have husbands in France and two or three here, at least supposed to be, and a good many drink more than most men, but of course this only applies to the working class. I was told though that society here is really worse, if that could be possible, but of course with them it is hidden, not as it is where we see it. I am afraid there will be a great many murders, etc. when men come home and find three or four children in place of one or two, and things of that nature. Will close, hoping you have word of Aubrey before this. Write when you get time.
Yours Ray

Seaford, Sussex
July 23, 1917

Dear Mother,

As I received your letter of 27th of June, will answer today in order to catch the mail-boat. As I think I said in my last letter, I have written to Orley Loudon, but have not received an answer as yet but expect to any day now. I am going to write to the Record Office again too and see if they have any news yet. Of course as soon as they receive any information at all, they send it right on to you.

I have been asking several men that have spent a good deal of time in France what is the best thing to do, and they say, to try and get in communication with his chum, so by writing to Orley, he may know who his chum is. I should have heard from Orley before this, but it is possible he has been moved to some other hospital or Camp, so therefore would take time to reach him. I don't know if anything else than [sic] can be done, just wait and hope. I think he was in that scrap Marjorie spoke of, the capture of the village of Avion. Personally I think there is a good chance of him being a Prisoner.

I am afraid you have been doing some worrying on my account as well. Now, there is absolutely no need of it, for it is impossible to obtain a transfer from this Depot, as there are a lot of extra men in South Camp, all machine Gun Corps, and a couple of thousand other men; and as for air-raids, you can make your mind easy on that score, as there has never been an enemy machine

closer here than London. It is to [sic] far out of their course to try and reach here, and only a comparatively small Camp to come this way for they would rather strike at the munition factories and large buildings of London. As for transferring, I have given up all idea of it.

Quite a surprise to hear Ready is talking of enlisting. I think him foolish, never the less respect him for it. If he is wise he will stay out of the Infantry, anything but that. I haven't had any word from Leslie for a long time, but I suppose he will write after a while. The mail has been very regular lately, but not much of it, as yours was the only Canadian letter I had this mail. The reason for the Canadian stamps on our letters is that we post them in the Orderly Room some times, and no postage to pay. If you have a snapshot of Father and also Marion, I wish you would send it, as I haven't any of either of them, except that one of Marion in the group on Polly. I haven't been in bathing for a long time, but may go in soon, as the water is fine just now, the weather is beautiful too. Have had lots of rain so everything is looking fine. I hope you will be able to say the same for Poverty Flat in your next letter, also better news of Aubrey.

Yours as ever,
Ray

August 1st, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

As it is just a month ago today that you wrote me, I will celebrate the anniversary by answering it. I am afraid it will have to be a very short letter though, as there is very little news to write about. I was to a dance on Tuesday, but it was so frightfully crowded with men, that there wasn't an extra good time to be had although I enjoyed myself fairly well. There is another one next Tuesday, don't [sic] whether I will bother taking it in or not. I haven't had any mail since writing last, so you can see there is not much to write about. The weather has been very wet, and is still cloudy. It started raining about six on Tuesday and quit sometime last night, after ten as it was raining then, bed-time.

Too bad it is so dry there, hope it rained in time to help before ripening. Wish we could send some of this we don't need here, over there. The fall wheat here is hardly turned colour yet, will take at least two weeks to ripen yet. We have had very little hot weather here at all, in fact warm weather is only a bit now and again. How many colts are there altogether, I haven't kept track, as about very other letter mentions another, also calves if you have an idea. Ready is wise if he joins the Engineers, it is far ahead of the Infantry, but there is no branch of the Service can touch

the Army Safety for a cinch, am doing practically nothing at present, but of course might have to start working any time, I have done nothing for so long, just [illegible] orderly.

Nothing else to talk, or at least write about, so will close. Hope the haying has been going well and no trouble. Soon be cutting time again too, I suppose.

Yours,
Ray

I have had no word of Aubrey yet but will surely hear before long, nor of Leslie either but think he is OK.

Seaford, Sussex
Aug. 6, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

As I have had about three letters from home since writing last, it is pretty near time I got busy. I got one from you Thursday and one from Mother today. In that clipping you sent, I see it refers to a Manitoba Battalion, but what applies to them, might well apply to our Alberta one too, so all we can do is wait and hope for news.

The weather has been very wet ever since I wrote last until today. It is nice and bright now though. The Imperials are holding a sports [sic] right next to our lines this afternoon, so we are having a half day off to see them. The Canadians are holding theirs on Friday I understand. They make a nice change from the ordinary routines of Camp Life. Jack Frazer is entered for a lot of the sports.

I was up to Brighton last night for a little trip. It was fearfully crowded, all kinds of girls, mostly munition and factory girls from London. I have met quite a few girls over here, and even kept company with one or two, for a short while but always get tired of them. I am afraid I am too hard to please; but unless I strike someone vastly different to what I have met, I think you are perfectly safe in seeing me come back to Canada unencumbered. One doesn't realize how many girls there are over here until you get to a place like Brighton. The crowds were something dense there last night and will be worse today as it is a Bank Holiday. I got a letter from Lily Evans on Saturday written on March 11th. It was advanced to the 100th Army P.O. had been over to the 107th France, Shorncliffe, London and South Camp. It is quite a souvenir, I think I will send it

back to her when I write. I am still Hut Orderly and doing next to nothing. Was up to Orderly Room this morning but got dismissed, as I was on Pass in Brighton. I was supposed to answer fire picquet but of course the Pass cleared me. I also had a letter from Gladys the other day. She speaks of Harry Hewitt being in the Flying Corps. Some Aviator, eh what. Also James Purdy enlisted. They seem to be having a great time with Jim's car. Wouldn't mind a go at it myself. Wonder if I could run it. I would make some [illegible] wouldn't I? Well so long for this time.

Yours
Ray

Shorncliffe, Kent
Sept. 12, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I have a few minutes to spare before dinner so will try and rattle off a few lines. We are on the ranges this week so don't mind it much. Get up at 4:30 and leave Camp at 5:30 with full marching order and rifle. It is a fine walk down through Seabrook and Hythe to the ranges a distance of about four miles. We shoot twenty rounds apiece and then home again. Get home anywhere from eleven to one. Got home today at eleven so am using up the spare time before dinner. I am not doing anything wonderful in the way of shooting, have been rather disappointed in myself but have a very poor rifle for one thing. We have no drill for the afternoon.

Yesterday afternoon we had a clothing parade. Took away the riding breeches from all the C.A.S.L. boys and gave us all pants. Also gave us any new clothes we wanted. I haven't been down town since Saturday, since I went to see the Bing Boys are Here. It was very good, a splendid chorus, and good singing and music. Will go down again as soon as I can, but we are C. B'd for picquet on Saturday so I won't be able to take in the matinee. Have had no mail with the exception of a letter from Gladys, but to make up for that got two parcels from you. I have only opened the one with the socks yet. They were very acceptable as was the candy. You will likely have Aubrey's mail returned to you with the exception of parcels which are given to his chums, I understand.

Yours,
Ray

Shorncliffe, Kent
Sept. 19, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

It is raining like a brute just because I have a midnight Pass for Folkestone, so will rattle off a few lines while I am waiting to see if it will clear. I intended going down and taking in a show for a change, as I haven't been out of Camp for nearly a week. Was put on Guard Sunday night so had to clean up in the afternoon and Saturday we didn't get home from the Ranges till 1:30 so was too tired to go down Saturday. Haven't had a letter for about a week, but another Canadian mail came in today, so will likely have some forwarded from Seaford soon. I am sending a few snapshots home each mail that I don't want to lose. They only get destroyed carrying them around. The drill is still easy but expect to get guard fairly often as there are not a great many in the Reserve now.

Will close for this time and make a dash for the show if possible.

Yours, Raymond

Shorncliffe, Kent, England
October 3, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

It must be nearly time I was answering one of your letters I think as I know I must owe you several. There is really very little to write about as we haven't had anything very unusual that I can write about, since my last letter. I'll take it by days and then not miss anything.

Sunday morning Church Parade. In the afternoon went over to the Army Service as nearly every one of the Seaford bunch is here now. They were all in C.B. so spent the afternoon and evening there, hunting them all up and of course talking Seaford. Monday was an inspection by the O.C. a very strict one too, but I managed to slip past without getting [illegible] somehow and the rest of the day drill, "as per syllabus" as the orders always read.

Tuesday drill in the morning till eleven, dinner eleven thirty, and all-in at one with our dear old friend the full marching kit, including rifle. We didn't go so very far, just enough to get our shirts wet. I don't mind it at all any more, seem to be getting back in shape pretty good. Will soon

regard the pack as a dear friend. Of course we don't fill them very full you know, just an overcoat and perhaps a shirt to make it square. This morning we were on drill all morning, but wonder of wonders, this afternoon we were paraded to the football field, which is about half way to Folkestone, and saw a game of football, 11th Res vs. 18th Res. Of course the 11th won easily. Two or three of the 100th were playing, so it made it more interesting. After the game I came down here and had quite a nice little supper for a shilling, and am now very busily engaged trying to think of trash with which to fill your letter. The weather has been splendid for nearly two weeks, but is a little cooler today. Here's hoping all is going well at the little corner of Poverty called home. I am fat and happy, hope you are too, or should I wish you the final part?

Yours ever,
Ray

P.S. Just received a great big parcel from you, really a dandy. Oh you [illegible] now just imagine me.

D Company 11th Reserve
Shorncliffe, Kent
Oct. 9, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I have nothing much to occupy my time at present, so will help kill time by scribbling a few lines. I have been busy reading "The Man from Glengarry". Am just nicely started it as yet, but hope to have a good hole in it by bed-time. Haven't had any Canuck mail since I wrote last, therefore will have to write mostly of myself, which soon becomes monotonous.

Well, to start off with, I suppose the weather is the first subject. Seeing that is only two days since I wrote that is soon finished. It has been quite cool, but no rain, so the job of marking on the butts has been jake. We get up at 4:45. Breakfast at five, and start off at 5:15. Leave butts about ten thirty and home about a quarter to twelve. We have the afternoon to ourselves, so am writing this afternoon seeing that I have lots of time. News is very scarce as usual, don't know how to write another page.

Well here is a start, how soon the finish will be is hard to say. I am afraid I will not be able to get to the 107th as this Reserve is going amalgamated with another Winnipeg Reserve. Whether we move in with them or them with us is not yet known. At any rate, on account of the change we

no longer re-inforce [sic] the 107th but may have a chance to go in the Kiltie Regiment as it is a Kiltie Reserve we are joining. Can't you imagine me teaming around with a Kilt on? No, Kid, not for Willie, for if there is one thing I absolutely refuse to wear, it is a Kilt. I see by your letter you are worrying about the hard drill. No necessity for that, I am having just as easy a time as you could ask for. Don't drill again till Monday as our little Holiday on the Butts lasts till then. Possibly they'll have a fatigue waiting for me by then. I know I have missed a hard week by being on Butt party as we are Duty Battalion this week, nearly all this Company is on Guard and picquet. So long for this spasm.

Yours as ever,
Raymond

Shorncliffe, Kent
Oct. 14, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

I only have about fourteen pages of various letters of yours lying in front of me, so it is a pretty good incentive to write, but not to that extent. On Thursday I had one from you dated Aug 29th and Friday along comes one Sept 13th, and as I had already received one I between them, it was kind of funny reading, but certainly was very interesting. Very pleased to hear that you have a man at last, you at least have quantity if not quality and with you to encourage his best efforts I am sure he will do his humble best. Glad to hear you have all the calves branded, it is certainly a good job done. That was quite a nice little bunch too. Soon have quite a heard [sic] on old Poverty yet if luck holds good. A few more years at that rate of increase and you'll soon be able to call it Riverdale Ranch without a blush. There are so many things in your letter to answer I hardly can help missing some but I see one all important one re: marriage. Now to tell you the plain unadulterated truth I did have a little trouble at Seaford to escape as one there sure thought she had the strangle hold on me, but I managed to wriggle loose, so since that little experience, the first, I have been kind of shy. For one thing a private here seldom if ever meets a girl he would care to marry on account of class; imagine me talking of caste, nevertheless have found it so, and as for seeing a decent looker, well I pass. But if a person wanted to get married which I don't well it's about the easiest thing to get for nothing I have struck in this country. As for Jane, she is certainly a dandy girl, and would make a good wife – but well, reasons, mostly red hair and freckles. She is a splendid sport though, full of fun, and just as nice a girl as you could meet. Anyway, by what you say of the gardens around there, I don't see the need they'll be growing on bushes soon.

In regard to that little box I sent I am afraid it will have to do as a Xmas gift unless I strike something different to what I have seen lately. I can't see a thing worth sending that distance. Lots of trash like that bit I sent. If you would like anything more of that nature let me know and I can easy get it. I see Mother asked for a Jap vase called Satsuma or something. Never heard of such an animal but will take a hunt around Folkestone and may strike one day. I'm glad you're teaching Comet how to jump, but am afraid you have to teach me how to ride, so long since I've been on a horse. You'll soon be a full fledged cow girl if you keep on. I'll have to hire you to break colts when I get running the place. What will you soak me a head?

This has been quite a week for us in one way. It was the eighth of training and we were never on the parade ground once. We were marking on the ranges from Monday till Friday up at a quarter to five and back to Camp at about eleven thirty and were finished for the day. Friday night I was on picquet down in Sandgate from five till ten. Saturday morning we moved from our old quarters in with the Reserve we are absorbing. By the way address is just the same yet. If changed will let you know. Last night I was stuck for picquet again at Seabrook so am hoping to have this afternoon off. As well as moving we have been Garrison Duty Battalion so had lots of work; but our squad had a cinch marking, as it was a very easy job, and finished at noon.

We certainly eat a lot of fresh fruit here as it is so plentiful, hawkers selling it when ever you go Apples, Plums and pears mostly home grown too. Am not much stuck on the pears unless you buy the very best at 6 cents each, which is not often. We get some splendid apples at times. Whether home grown or not I can't say. Well enough trash for one session so Ta Ta.

Yours Ray

Shorncliffe, Kent

Oct. 27, 1917

Dear Mother,

As this is Saturday again I had better try and scribble off a few lines to let you know how things are progressing. Well much as usual yesterday were marching on the butts [sic] in the morning and had the afternoon to ourselves. Today we went on a route march from nine till twelve with full pack. The weather is just right for marching now, fine and dry, and a cool tingle to the air that makes one feel like walking. We only went about seven or eight miles altogether but partly over a different road to what I have been before so it makes it more interesting. Saw the ruins of a tremendous old castle that is still in very good repair considering its age. In fact people are

living in the central part of it which looks to have been rebuilt. The walls are all overgrown with ivy and small shrubs, but they are still a considerable height thirty or forty [sic] feet. You can still see the old moat running around the castle, with the bridge over to the gate. I would not mind spending a few hours just wandering over it.

I am writing this in the "Y" Hut at East Sandling. Came up this afternoon to see Vern, but he has been moved to another company since I was here last, so it took me about an hour to find where his Hut was only to find he was out. Some of the boys said he was in here, but as he wasn't thought I'd sit down and kill time for a few minutes as he will be sure to be back by supper time.

I had quite a bit of Canadian mail lately. Got one from Aunt Annie Bowes and one from Beatrice today. Beatrice speaks of the threshers being there with rain threatening and of Arthur being threshed out, so he has been lucky to get finished so soon. I sent Aunt Annie Bowes a little bit of a handkerchief with "souvenir of Folkestone" on it. She seemed as pleased over it as if it had been a real present instead of a little knickknack like that. I also had one from one of the boys I chummed with at Seaford. He is in France, driving a team somewhere near the line, as he speaks of being under pretty lively shell-fire at times. Nearly all the boys that left Seaford after I did are in France now, or on draft, and all driving teams too, so I was kind of out of luck when I was put in here, but it all turns out for the best in the end, and the drill is certainly not hard, and the hours about half what the boys on the teams were having before they left for France. The packs doesn't [sic] bother me much as a rule now, in fact after a week I know I'd never mind it at all, but only having it on once in a while it feels a little heavy at times. Of course we don't carry much in it, just enough to make it look full. All I had in mine today was a very small blanket and a sweater coat, so I didn't mind the march at all.

I have no idea when I'll be on draft but don't think it will be for some time yet, as I can't possibly make the first draft, which is not called yet. So it is quite possible I'll not be out of here by Christmas, or if before, very little. They are taking very few drafts out lately, and those they do are just small ones.

Oh I mustn't forget to tell you about marching along today to the squirling [sic] of the bagpipes. The 11th have both a pipe band and brass band, so with them changing off we had music all the way. The pipes are very good to march to, but you can't hear them if you are near the end of the Battalion. Well I don't think there is much more to write about this time so will close.

I hope everything is in good shape for the winter. P.S. Those stuffed dates are certainly fine, my perhaps I don't stuff [sic] these days.

Yours as ever, Ray

[incomplete letter]
D coy 11th Res
Shorncliffe, Kent
Nov. 4th/17

Dear Mother:

Just received your letter of Oct 4th today, so it took just exactly a month to get here. I also received a long one from Gladys with some snapshots enclosed. One of Mrs. Speen [?], Aunt Maggie Gertrude and Kathleen; one of Uncle Mervyn and a bunch in swimming, and one of Carrie. They were all very clear. I hope you have those snaps you spoke of finished, as I would like one of father. I haven't one of him at all.

Very sorry to hear the weather has been so rotten for threshing, it will surely clear up some time. I only hope you got it finished without any more delay. I was very glad to hear that Leslie got the red heifer, that was one I hadn't expected. [remainder of letter missing]

D. Company 11th Res
Shorncliffe, Kent
Nov. 11th 1917

Dear Mrs. Gawley,

A few lines to thank you very much for the letter and parcel just received. I don't know how to thank you enough for all the work you have gone to to make up such a fine parcel of candy, more especially when you were so busy and all. I haven't enjoyed anything for a long time as I have that candy. There was such a splendid assortment too.

I was very sorry to hear that Laura has been so sick. I sincerely hope she is well by this time. I am sure she must have suffered a great deal with it as it is a very painful thing.

The weather have been very changeable indeed. One day quite sunny and bright and the next cold and wet. There hasn't been a great deal of rain in the daytime, but has rained very frequently at night. It makes it miserable training for us when it does rain, so we are always pleased to see it cleared up in the mornings.

I have just about completed my training now, start on the last week tomorrow, but don't know when I will be put on draft. I expected to be on before this, as they have taken a good many lately, but only about ten out of our Company, Ours is only a training Company though, for as soon as we complete the fourteen weeks course we are put in a draft Company. So I expect to reach France somewhere near Xmas; but of course we never know definitely.

I had one of Aubrey's parcels that Mother sent him last June, forwarded to me today. It brought the fact home to me more than anything has done yet, for although it is nearly five months since he was killed, I can hardly seem to realize he has been. It was such a short time before that he left Seaford, just the picture of health, and just coming into manhood for he was only nineteen. Oh, Well he will surely be rewarded for his sacrifice some day. They miss him so much at home too, but Mother is very brave over it. Really must close for this time.

Best Regards to all
Yours sincerely - Raymond.

D Company 11th Reserve
Nov. 15th, 1917
Shorncliffe

Dear Marjorie,

I received your letter a couple of days ago, also one from Mildred written a good two weeks earlier from Calgary. I don't know why it is, but I have noticed that letters from Millerfield often beat letters from Calgary by quite a bit. I also got a parcel of candy and a letter from mother last night. Very glad to hear you have the threshing all done and are getting on well with the plowing. By the freeze-up you should have a fine big piece of it done. In one way I am glad to hear you are getting quite a bit of wet weather, as with a good chunk of fall plowing done, you are certain of a good yield. If you remember, the fall before the last big crop was very wet. So hope it means another big one.

Since writing last we have had quite a busy time of it. Monday morning we were warned for draft, so did nothing in the morning. In the afternoon we went down to the gas-chamber and were issued with both helmets, and went through the gas-chamber. On Tuesday we had drill test and bayonet fighting, which was pretty stiff. Wednesday we had to march out on top of the hills five miles to the bombing area, where we throw two hand-grenades and fired one rifle-grenade. Today I am just awaiting orders, so don't know what I'll be doing. Part of the boys are on

entrenching, but I have finished that. This morning this Hut were about three minutes late in getting out on physical jerks parade, so the result was a couple of days C.B. each so for the next two days little Willie has to answer Angels' Whisper. I was down to a show last night but it wasn't up to much. I am going down to another as soon as I am finished this, that will be Saturday. I am going to take in all I can now, for I don't suppose I'll get another chance for while.

I hear we are to go on Tuesday, but of course we never know, there are so many changes being made. In fact, I might be pulled off this altogether yet, but I hope to Goodness not, for I am booked for the 27th now, and as there are a good many of the 100th there, and all this squad are going there, I don't want to miss out.

Just address my mail as usual anyway for I'll be writing form here again for sure. I will drop a card as soon as I reach there, so as soon as you get one just send it to 27th Bn. Canucks B.E.F France.

Yours as ever,
Raymond

27th Bn. B.E.F.
Nov. 30th, 1917

Dear Father,

Your letter was quite a surprise and very welcome. I got my first mail in France last night. A Parcel from Uncle Arthur and one from Eatons I don't know who sent it, but expect it was from you. It was a soldiers hamper and a dandy too. Everything was in splendid shape. It came in at a good time too as I am pretty well on the rocks as we haven't been paid since landing so was not able to buy any extras. Expect to draw my Xmas pay soon now. The parcel from Arthur had partly spoiled. A fruit cake was really splendid and part of the other stuff was alright, but quite a lot of cookies with jam between had gone mouldy [sic]. There was enough in the Eaton parcel to keep a person eating for a month. I am at a training camp at present, as I think I said in my last letter, don't know for certain when I'll be joining the Battalion. Will likely go up whenever they need re-inforcements. The mud here is fairly plentiful, and quite a bit of rain but it hasn't been near as cold here so far as it was in England. I notice a great difference, more especially at nights. But for all that the trees are all bare here whereas in England they were all in leaf. I hope it wasn't the freeze-up when you wrote. I never heard of it freezing up that soon. Just what yield

was there exactly, Marjorie never said. I received a letter from Mother today with yours in it. Will answer it again. My pen is just dry so will have to close. Will write again soon.

Yours
Ray

France
Dec. 29th, 1917

Dear Marjorie,

As I received two letters from you about a week ago, I had better get busy and answer them. One was written Nov 3rd and the other Nov 8th but both reached me together. I have had a letter from Mildred since then written on the 11th. Outside of these letters, Canadian mail has been very scarce. I received a fine big parcel from Jane Bradshaw last night, so have been busy punishing Xmas case, etc ever since. I also had my Xmas Dinner last night. It was a real good feed, far better than what I ever expected to get. The cooks did exceptionally well with just a field kitchen. Had turkey, mashed spuds, carrots, apple sauce, plum pudding and coffee. Extras consisted of nuts, apples, raisins and for beverages, beer and stout. I had a real good feed, the best I have had for a month of Sundays. There was also a little concert etc in connection, so we had a dandy evening.

I am waiter tonight for one of the other Company's so may make another small feed on the side. Trust little Willie to look out for his Tummie. I guess you know that to your sorrow when cooking for me in the good old days before the War.

That Ouija Board you have certainly must be a funny thing. I can't understand it at all, but I certainly hope it is right. Part of it was all wrong anyway, as I was still in Blighty at that time, and as for Leslie being wounded or shell shocked, if he was he never mentioned it in any of his letters, but he may have had a shaking up as he was through a pretty tough place just before that date. As for Aubrey being a prisoner I hardly know what to think. If he is, he would surely have communicated with us long before this, but will hope the little board is right.

I was talking with a German Prisoner recently who has not been long captured. He asked what part of Canada I was from, and told me he had a sister living in San Francisco. He looked about nineteen, fuzz on his face, and apparently had never shaved. Had spent a year in the trenches.

Looked the real thing with a big pair of glasses and little small chin. Enough trash for one time.
Hope the weather is fine, some snow here.

Yours Raymond

[incomplete letter]

France

Dec. 30th, 1917

Dear Mother,

Sunday evening, and little to do, so will kill a few idle moments writing a few lines. Received your P.C. and Mildred's letter a couple of days ago. Glad to hear you are safely settled down in Calgary, and that you are really going to get your teeth fixed at last. It was too bad you hadn't had them attended to long ago, it would undoubtedly have saved you a great deal of suffering. I sincerely hope it will be a permanent cure this time. I hope you have found a dentist to treat you that understands the disease. It must surely be fairly well know by dentists by this time.

I received the "Lifes" Messenger, and Drumheller papers today. Have been busy reading nearly every since. That little poem by Ella Wheeler Willcox was indeed fine, about as fine a piece as I have seen. I hadn't know before that she was a member os the T.S. [?] I suppose you will be attending the meetings while in there. Are you a member yet or not? I know you have spoken of intending to join several time. [remainder of letter missing]