

## Letters Home 1b Letter from Private James Hedges, Gloucestershire Regiment, to Rev. W E Blathwayt, February 1916

1614891. Co. Coy. 12th Gloucesters  
B. C. I. France  
February 24th 1916.

Dear Sir,

I was very pleased indeed to receive a letter from you yesterday, and am glad to hear that Phoebe is better. He told me he had had to return to bed with a fresh cold when I heard from him last - about a fortnight ago. I fear he had a very rough time, although I must confess that many of us envied him when we heard he was in England again. His chest is not strong enough to stand the exposure. I am afraid I have had no thrilling experiences up to the present and to my mind the worst part of the business - to begin with at any rate - was the awful state of the trenches. People at home can

never realize what it means to be in a narrow trench with mud & water up to one's knees & often deeper! The first time we went into the trenches lots of our men got hopelessly stuck in the mud & had to be dragged out by their comrades. I thought it was rather a joke until I experienced the same thing myself. I cannot describe the awful sensation of feeling one's feet sinking deeper & deeper in mud which appeared in some places to be bottomless & to be quite powerless to help oneself! I actually had to be dug out with a spade! We thought more about the mud than German bullets - although we got our share of those, & quite a brisk shelling at times. However I am glad to say we have said "goodbye" to trenches - for the present at any rate.

We have been stationed at a village about 20 miles from the firing line for the last five weeks & last Wednesday we came still further back. We had a march of about 15 miles that day in weather which was by no means ideal. There was quite a gale blowing against us, & we were wet through before we got half way here. However the rain cleared off in the afternoon & our clothes had got nearly dry by the time we reached our new billets. I hope Phoebe will soon be well enough to get home for a few days, & he will be able to describe things much better than I can do in a letter. I often hear from Phoebe - from Mrs. Spencer-Jones. She has been most kind to me & is constantly sending socks etc. They were rather frightened by the 'pops' a short time

ago although I don't think they actually reached Gloucester. I see compulsory service comes into operation on March 2nd but it cannot affect many in Dyrham - every one from there who possibly could seem to have enlisted. I am pleased to say I have been keeping wonderfully well since we have been out here & haven't even had a cold. The war seems to drag on, but I hope the end is not far off now & look forward to the time when we shall be all safely round the home fires again.

Trusting this will find Mrs. Blathwayt & yourself in the best of health, and thanking you very much for writing

I remain

Yours Respectfully  
James Hedges

## Transcript

No. 14891 C. Coy 12<sup>th</sup> Glosters

B.E.F. France

February 21<sup>st</sup> 1916

Dear Sir,

I was very pleased indeed to receive a letter from you yesterday, and am glad to hear that Christy is better. He told me he had to return to bed with a fresh cold when I heard from him last – about a fortnight ago. I fear he had a very rough time, although I must confess that many of us envied him when we heard he was in England again, his chest is not strong enough to stand the exposure. I am afraid I have had no thrilling experiences up to the present and to my mind the worst part of the business – to begin with at any rate – was the awful state of the trenches.

People at home can never realise what it means to be in a narrow trench with mud and water up to our knees and often deeper! The first time we went into the trenches lots of our men got hopelessly stuck in the mud and had to be dragged out by their comrades. I thought it was rather a joke until I experienced the same thing myself. I cannot describe the awful sensation of feeling one's feet sinking deeper and deeper in mud which appeared in some places to be bottomless and to be quite powerless to help oneself! I actually had to be dug out with a spade!

We thought more about the mud than the German bullets – although we got our share of those and quite a brisk shelling at

times. However I am glad to say that we have said “Goodbye” to the trenches – for the present at any rate. We have been stationed at a village about 25 miles from the firing line for the past five weeks and past Wednesday we came still further back. We had a march of about 15 miles that day in weather which was by no means ideal. There was quite a gale blowing against us and we were wet through before we got halfway here. However the rain cleared off in the afternoon and our clothes had got nearly dry by the time we reached our new billets.

I hope Chris will soon be well enough to get home for a few days and he will be able to describe things much better than I can do in a letter. I often hear from Gloster – from Mrs Spencer-Jones. She has been most kind to me and is constantly sending socks, etc. They were rather frightened by the ‘Zeps’ a short time ago, although I don’t think they actually reached Gloster.

I see compulsory service comes into operation on March 2<sup>nd</sup>, but it cannot affect many in Dyrham – everyone from there who possibly could seems to have enlisted. I am pleased to say I have been keeping wonderfully well since we have been out here and haven’t even had a cold. The war seems to drag on, but I hope the end is not far off now and look forward to the time when we shall be all safely round the home fires again.

Trusting this will find Mrs Blathwayt and yourself in the best of health, and thanking you very much for writing.

I remain,

Yours Respectfully,

James Hedges