

FORGET ME NOT

FRED WALKER

ANGUS WALKER'S GRANDFATHER

Fred, my grandfather, was born in 1889 in Ilkeston, Derbyshire. When he left school he trained to be an accountant, like his father (and my father and me!). As a young man he was interested in sport, particularly cricket; this brought him into contact with Costock Cricket Club, in Nottinghamshire, established by local Costock butcher, Albert Walker (no relation).

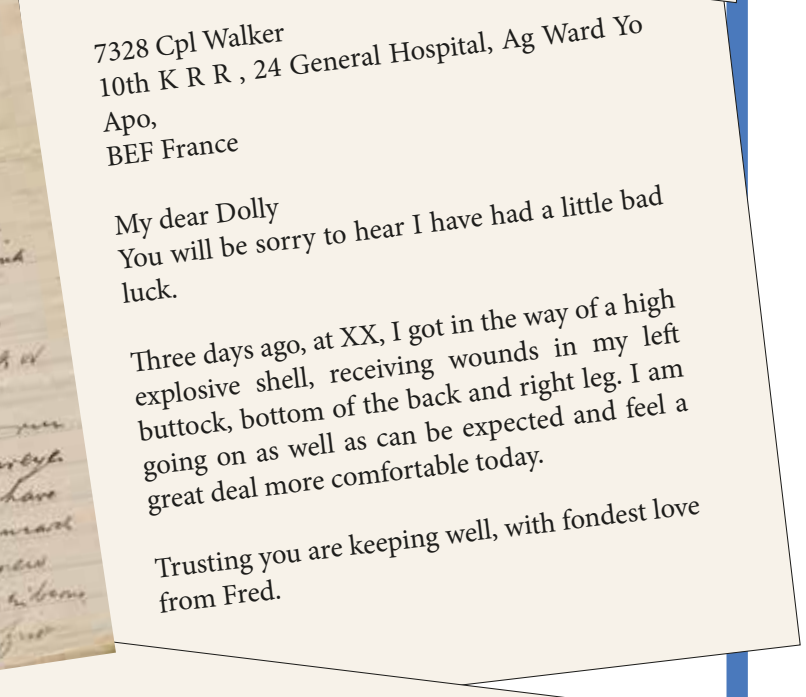
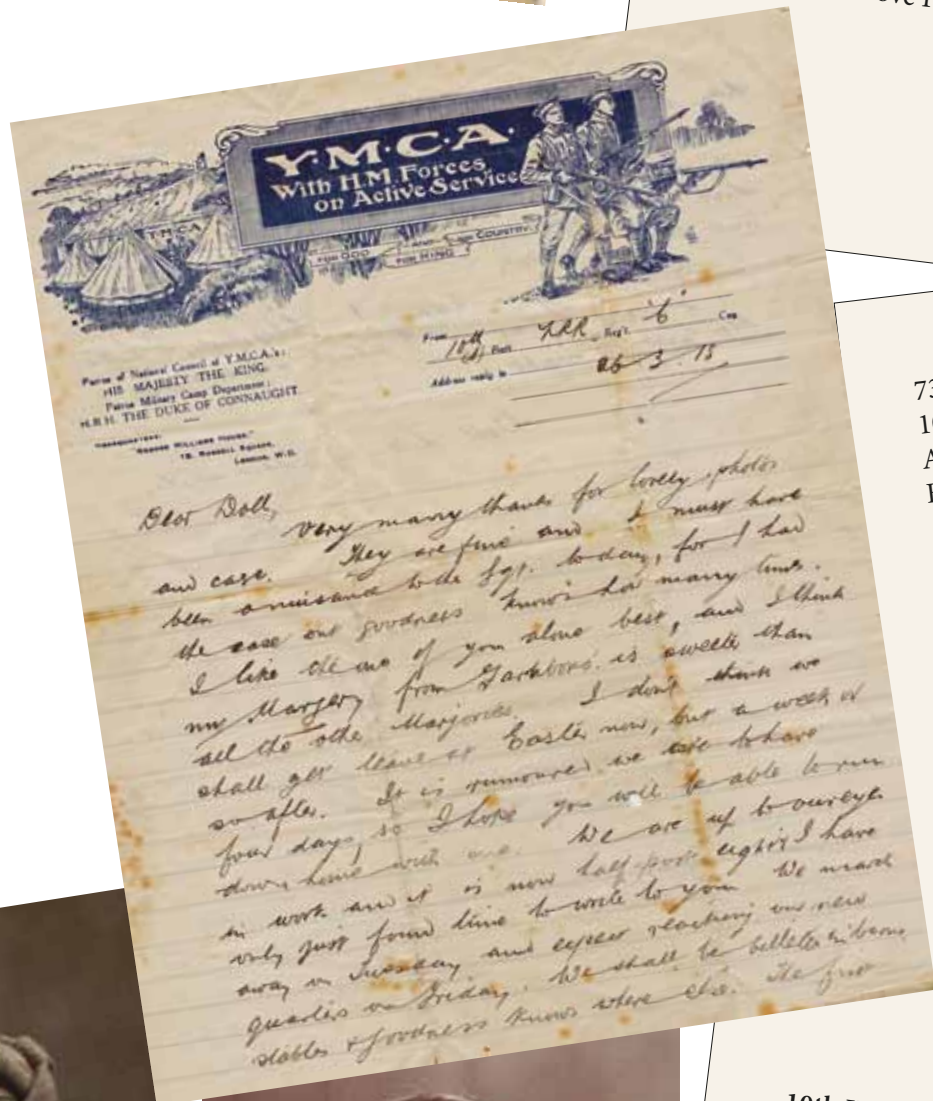
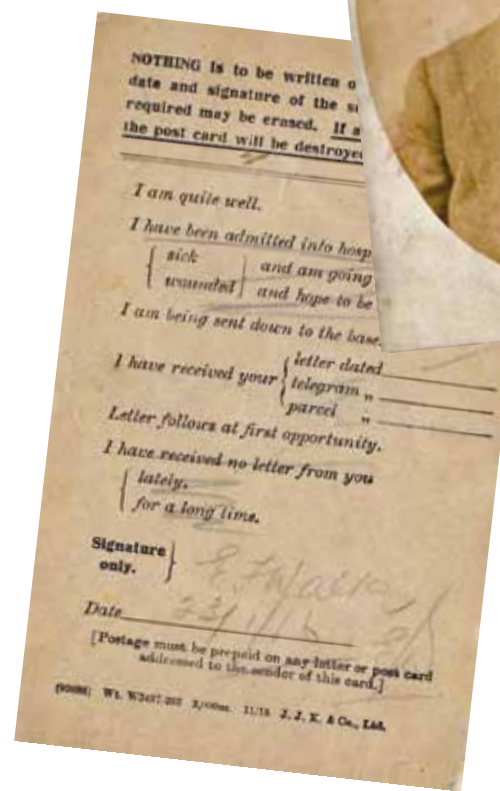
Albert had a large family including a pretty daughter Alice Dorothy (Doll). She was born in 1891 and at the age of 13 in 1904, she went to live as a companion to the young son of the owner, Brigadier General Bagnall-Wilde, at the nearby Manor house in Costock. She had a rich, varied experience within that family's homes in London, the Isle of Wight and France and, from 1914, Farnborough; the Brigadier had become head of the Aeronautical Inspection Department throughout the war (later to become Director of Research at the Air Ministry).

Doll had many young admirers but Fred was successful in winning her over before he enlisted in 1914 with the 10th Battalion of Kings Royal Rifles. This battalion had been formed at Winchester on 14th September 1914 as part of K2 and came under orders of 59th Brigade in the 20th Light Division). It moved to Blackdown, going on in February 1915 to Witley and then in April to Hamilton Camp (Stonehenge). On 21st July 1915 it landed at Boulogne.

His correspondence with Doll forms the basis of this Forget Me Not culminating in his injury in January 1916, his hospitalisation in France and then at St Thomas's hospital in London.

Fred was on crutches when he married Doll later in 1916. Doll had six sisters and two brothers. Her favourite brother Jack was killed in France and is buried in Costock; the other Alfred was badly gassed, survived and emigrated to Canada.

Fred recovered physically but throughout his life had horrific nightmares about lying wounded with a wild horse and gun carriage circling round him



Thursday Sep/2/15

My dear Dolly, Hilda, Norah, Percy, Gwenth, Pat & Bev,
Many thanks to you all for sending me the splendid parcels of eatables. We have quite a lot of stuff left yet and I hope to take some with me when we move away to take a few weeks well earned rest. We were in the reserve line when I received the parcels after having had a weeks strenuous time in the first line and we moved away the same day to our present quarters. I shall never forget carrying the big parcel which I fastened to my packs as well as a peet and my rifle. We were wet thro' with sweat when we got here and yet we only came about 900yds. The same night we were out in the front of our parapets digging a trench. The only danger was in getting in and out of the trench. At one spot we had to crawl on our stomachs for about 20 yds on fairly high ground. Luckily no one was hit that night. The next night we went out again and as we were coming back the Germans spotted us and turned their machine guns on us. We all fell smack on our stomachs and stayed there for what seemed an eternity. I thought my time was up as I happened to be just on the high ground when one of their flares went up and showed us up to them. Machine gun bullets were buzzing over us like bees from a disturbed hive.

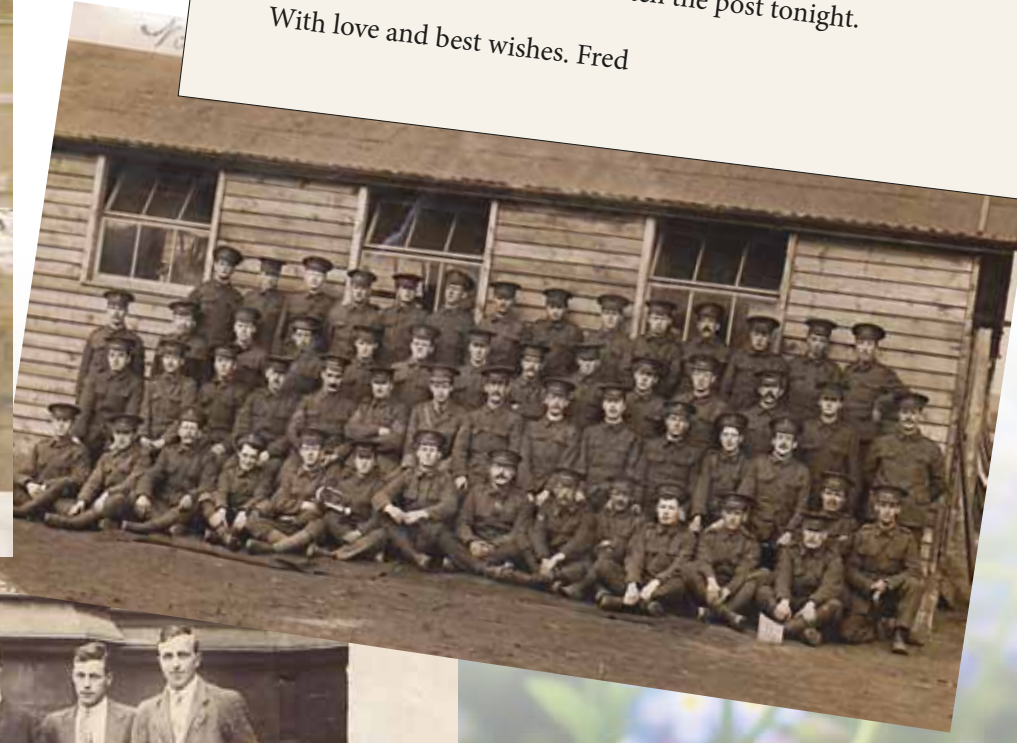
Ps will write later



10th KRR 'C' Coy, 26.3.15

Dear Doll,
Very many thanks for the lovely photos and case. They are fine and I must have been a nuisance with Sgt Bodan, for I have had the case out goodness knows how many times. I like the one of you alone best and I think my Margary from Farnboro' is sweeter than all the other Margaries. I don't think we shall get leave at Easter now, but a week or so after. It is rumoured we are to have four days so I hope you will be able to run down home with me. We are up to our eyes in work and it is now half past eight I have only just found time to write to you. We march away on Tuesday and expect reaching our new quarters on Friday. We shall be billeted in farms, stables and goodness knows where else. The first day we expect to do 18 miles, second 25, then 18 and fourth 15 or so. I will try and drop a card at each place we stop at but please don't be disappointed if you do not hear from me til next week.

How are you keeping? Cheerful I hope!
I must hurry or I shall never catch the post tonight.
With love and best wishes. Fred



Doll's admirers

