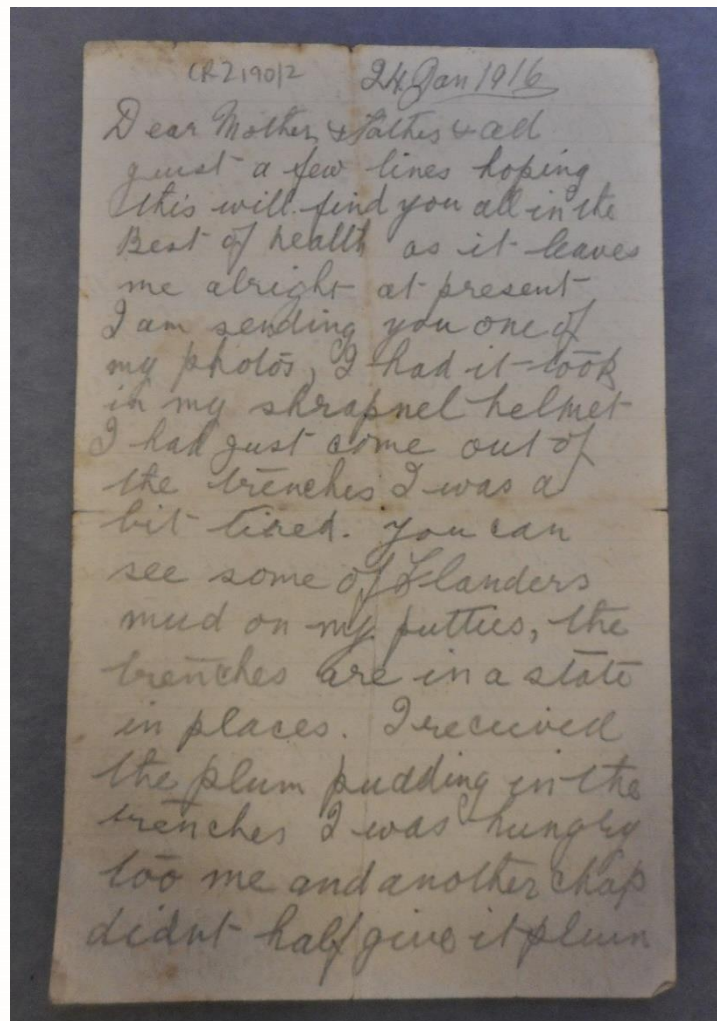


Letters of Alfred Knight, sent home from Flanders

CR2190/1-4

The Document of the Month for November is a small collection of letters written by Alfred Knight, sent home to his family in Kinwarton, near Alcester.ⁱ During World War One, Alfred Knight served in the 1st Worcestershire Regiment, though he was born in Arrow, Warwickshire.ⁱⁱ

Alfred's letters to his family are conversational in style, discussing life on the front as well as home and family matters. The three which have been dated were written in early 1916, and feature references to Evesham and Alcester which show his connection to the local area. A full transcription of one of the letters, CR2190/2, has been provided separately.

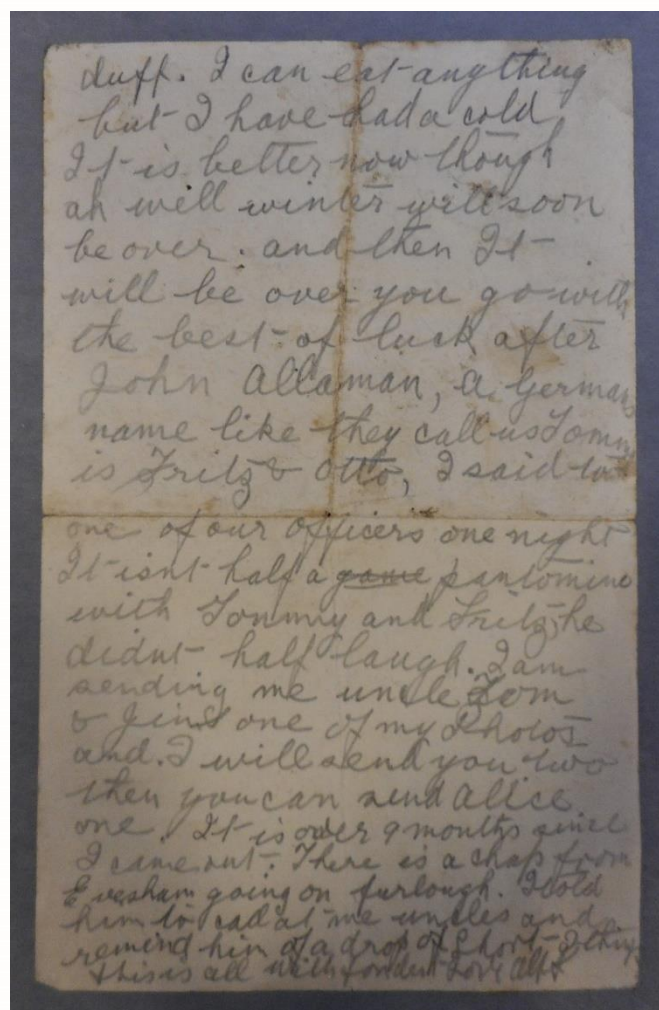


Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2190/2

Life in Flanders

CR2190/2 is dated 24th January 1916 and is addressed to 'Mother & Father & all'. As was the case for many soldiers, receiving parcels from home was something to look forward to for Alfred; he mentions receiving gifts such as cigarettes, chocolate and soap in his other letters, but in this one he notes that he received a plum pudding while in the trenches. Speaking of a photograph he seems to have sent with the letter, Alfred remarks on the 'Flanders mud on my puttees', presumably referring to the puttees soldiers wore in the trenches, a strip of cloth designed to support and protect the lower leg.

Alfred's letter also gives an idea of the camaraderie between soldiers on the front, and how language played a part in their jokes. He uses familiar 'Fritz' and 'Tommy' nicknames for the German and British forces, but also references 'Allaman', which could mean 'Allemand', the French word for German which was also adopted by soldiers as a slang term.ⁱⁱⁱ



Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2190/2

Alfred Knight's service in the Worcestershire Regiment

According to his service medal and award records, Alfred was not posted to France until May 1915, but he did in fact enlist long before the war, in June 1907.^{iv} Details of his service before the war are unclear, but there is a census record of 1911 which suggests he was stationed at the Shaft Barracks, Western Heights, Dover in the 3rd Battalion Worcestershire Regiment.^v Alfred is also recorded as having served in the 1st Worcestershire Regiment, as stated in the address given on two of his letters.^{vi} It seems France was the only theatre of war Knight saw, as he was then discharged on the grounds of 'wounds' in January 1919.^{vii}

The Knight Family of Alcester

Little is known about Alfred's life after the war, but we do have some information about his family and their connection to Alcester. Alfred was born to George and Emily May Knight in 1889, and was baptised in Arrow, Warwickshire.^{viii} Alfred grew up in the Arrow area at an address named 'The Gorralls', with census records suggesting he had as many as seven siblings- four brothers and three sisters. His father was an agricultural labourer, with two of his brothers working in the same industry.^{ix}

In his letters home, Alfred mentions 'Else' and 'Ron', referring to his wife Elsie, whom he married in 1913, and his son Ronald, who was baptised shortly after their marriage at Coughton in July 1913.^x Alfred talks about Ron in his letters to his parents, giving updates such as 'Else says Ron gets a nice boy and talks well' and 'I sent some cigarettes for him once and every time she has a letter from me he cries for them'.^{xi}

Alfred's letters were found in Glebe Cottage in Kinwarton after his death in 1968, which had been home to the Knight family for many years. The 1939 Register places Alfred's father George Knight and two of his daughters, Kate and May Emily, at the cottage, by which point George had been widowed. We believed that Alfred passed in Kinwarton in 1968, after which he was buried in the parish of St Mary's, Kinwarton, where his parents and sisters Kate and May are also buried.^{xii}

ⁱ Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2190/1-4, Four letters sent home from Flanders by Alfred Knight of Glebe Cottage.

ⁱⁱ [Ancestry, Alfred Knight in the England & Wales, Civil Registration Birth Index, 1837-1915](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]; [Ancestry, Alfred Knight in the Warwickshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1910](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]

ⁱⁱⁱ [British Library, 'Slang terms at the front' by Julian Walker](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]

^{iv} [Ancestry, UK, World War I Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920 for A Knight](#); [Ancestry, UK, Silver War Badge Records, 1914-1920 for Alfred Knight](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]

^v [Ancestry, Alfred Knight in the 1911 England Census](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]

^{vi} [Ancestry, UK, World War I Service Medal and Award Rolls, 1914-1920 for Alfred Knight](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]

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- vii [Ancestry, UK, Silver War Badge Records, 1914-1920 for Alfred Knight](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]
- viii [Ancestry, Alfred Knight in the Warwickshire, England, Church of England Baptisms, 1813-1910](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]
- ix [Ancestry, George Knight in the 1891 England Census, Ancestry, George Knight in the 1901 England Census, Ancestry, George Knight in the 1911 England Census](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]
- x [Findmypast, Elsie S Richardson in 1913, England & Wales Marriages 1837-2005](#) [accessed 20/10/2022]; Warwickshire County Record Office, DR0690/1, Register of baptisms.
- xi Warwickshire County Record Office, CR2190/1 & CR2190/4, Four letters sent home from Flanders by Alfred Knight of Glebe Cottage.
- xii Warwickshire County Record Office, DR1113/2, Register of burials.