

Transcribed text of William Shield's letter home after being wounded on the first day of the battle of the Somme  
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10/7/1916

Vincent Ward No 2  
2nd G.N.H.  
Becketts Park  
Leeds

My dear wife and children just a line or two to let you know that I am healing as well as can be expected hoping to find you all in the best of health well my dear wife I was wounded the first day of the big battle and soon on I was shot through the right arm first and I still went on until I got another then I threw my rifle and bayonet away and lay down I was not down seconds when there was a bullet come bang against my steel helmet and went through thank God I had it on I says Willie a sniper better shift shots so I took leg into a big shell hole I wasn't there long until it was full and I just eased my arse up to make room for another lad when I got one but I always told you that I would get one on the arse so it was time that we were shifting shots again so I did at the double after we got into our own trenches it was awful to see the poor fellows some creeping there was a one belonging to Grange Villa called Proctor I wanted to carry him out and he would not let me touch him he said I was bad enough myself I was resting a little and I asked a stretcher bearer to bandage my head he said you can walk I said yes well then go to first aid station you can guess what sort of a Sunday name he got so I got up and away I came I met a lad belonging to

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Waterhouses and he put me a one on so I did away again and I saw our Cpt and he asked me what I was like and I told him very weak he said come on lad and try to stick it he was wounded himself but I was about done there was plenty of clarts in fact there was places where I was up to the knees so I kept on until I saw a safe dug out I went into this dug out and when I got to the bottom I fainted so when I came round there was 3 or 4 stretcher bearers in belonging to the fourth with a bottle of rum so I did away at then and save them a good calling and to get out a get some work done but it took no effect they were frightened so I had a mouth full of water and a bit lie down I started again I had not gone far until I got a sup tea and brandy that set me away I got to Albert away from there in motor car to Amiens away from there to another hospital stops an hour or two away from there into a badge about 36 hours there did nothing but eat and sleep out of there into the 2nd field hospital next morning got my name taken for blighty and I was coming every day and I cried with disappointment but I got used to it at the finish because we were there 4 or 5 days and coming away every day but I got away at the finish and we did some travelling and here I am well my dear wife you will be getting a free pass through here it will do you good to see one of these hospitals so if you happen to come you

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can get a Headingly tram car from Leeds station and it will fetch you right up to Great Northern Hospital you would think that I cut your last letter short but I had to do it to set it away and I was in a hurry to let you know where I was it was the first post and I didn't know what time it left you might write and let me know if Geo. Wm. was in the engagement I hope to God he was not they were on our right and I hear that the 15 DLI has also got a cutting up there was a lad on telling me that the only men that got the distance was one Scottish and one

Irish but they had to go further so he slung his rifle and did about turn it will give you a bit idea what it has been like both Irish and Scottish wiped out dont forget my little Bill I will have all the more money to come home with tell our Joss and Wilk that the Germans has hit these faver 4 times they keep peppering away at you untill you get close quarters and then they up with their arms mercy comrade but no mercy for Bill no mercy for all German the curs that they are well my dear wife I think that I have no more to say this time from your ever loving Husband and Father Bill

XX

For yourself and children  
there's a good Sundays afternoon spent for you.

My Grandfather William Shield was a miner who enlisted in November 1914 (20<sup>th</sup> Batallion Northumberland Fusiliers (Tyneside Scottish).

The Newcastle Journal 29/10/1914 has article about his enlistment - he was one of the first to join the Tyneside Scottish

despite being shot 4 times (leg, arm, head & buttock) he was discharged in 1919 when he returned to his job as a miner at Shield Row Drift, South Moor and saw the birth of his yougest child, my mother. Bill retired in 1939 and lived until December 1969 by which time he was 94 years old.

Like most old soldiers my granddad never talked about his experiences. The only inkling I ever got was in 1967 when I joined the army cadets and stood to attention in front of him in my khaki uniform and he burst out crying.

AWOL 6-8/2/1915

Was wounded at La Boisselle 1/7/2016 (Y Sap beside Roman Road) facing 13 machine guns

His CO was Captain White

Bill was 41 years old when he went 'over the top' on 1<sup>st</sup> July 1916. the Maximum age of enlistment was 41 years

Silver War Badge no 408716 source BO SGG 20WD SWB MR

Discharged 13/4/1918 (KR Para 392(xvi) Gunshot Wound

Some Figures for the battle of the Somme 1916

Fusilier Deaths 1643

British Deaths 19240

British Wounded 35493

Prisoners 385

missing 2152

End of the battle November 18 1916 (141 days later)

Fusilier deaths 4250

British & empire killed, wounded or missing 419654

French Killed or injured 204253

German killed or injured 558500

Distance advanced by Allied forces 7 miles