**MR4/17/260 Series of letters regarding Pte Thomas Mercer 5th Platoon, 20th Manchester Regiment. Killed in Action 12th October 1916**

**Letter from Pte Mercer to ‘Dick’ 6th August 1916**

5 Platoon

20 Manchester Regiment

Dear Dick,

Many thanks for your letter which I received a few days ago.

Seems ages since I wrote you last but no doubt you have heard all the news from home.

Yes, it was rather a nasty shock when I found myself transferred to another regiment. I feel sorrow now too – if that is [possible?]. You see our lot went over the top about a fortnight later although they were cut up, they were highly praised by the Times. It is a very different thing in being in anything with your pals. I’ve had only a matter of ten or eleven days in the danger zone when we retired to rest – we are a good way from the trenches and are having good weather and a nice lazy time.

I agree with you that at last they seem to take things a little more seriously – [?] boards to which you refer and also my rapid travelling and eventual destination seem [?] of a determination to keep the pot boiling. The only fault in the latter is men do not have the same enthusiasm as when with their own lot; in the matter of leave too, well you lose everything and restart. I am inclined to think all leave should be cancelled until the war is finished.

Russia seems the one who will have the biggest hand in making a finish of the war.

Well things run on more or less smoothly. Just depends on what we are doing or where we are. We are lucky now of course.

Many happy returns of the 15th – glad to hear you are having a happy time. Should like to see you all in your cottage.

Give my love to Edie

Best wishes

TM

**Letter from Sgt. J. Waring to Mr. Mercer 12th October 1916**

20th Manchester Regiment

B.E.F.

France

Dear Mr. Mercer,

I very much regret having to report to your son’s death which occurred around 4.30pm on October 12th. He was on duty in the Trenches as Sentry. I was discussing the position of our line about a minute before this happened, went to my dug-out to get a map to show him exactly our position and on returning, found he was dead.

I am very sorry indeed and must sympathise in your loss. He was a fine fellow and one of the men you could rely upon at a critical time. We all feel the loss of him very much.

I have asked his friend Pte. Hardisty, to write you.

Again expressing my sympathies

J. Waring Sgt.

**Letter to Mr. Mercer from Sgt J. Walton 13th October 1916**

5 Platoon, B Company

20th Manchester Regiment

B.E.F.

France

Dear Mr. Mercer,

It is with deepest sympathy that I have to break to you the sad news of the death of your son, Tom. He was killed in the execution of his duty on the afternoon of the 12th inst.

He was on sentry in an advanced post when this unfortunate accident befell him. His death was instantaneous and he suffered no pain. His Platoon Officer (Mr. Waring) had a remarkable escape as he was talking to Tom only two minutes before the accident occurred. Tom had been asking him the shape of the line and Mr. Waring went round the traverse to his dug-out to get his map so that he could explain the position exact. When on his way back, he was met with the sad news that Tom had been killed.

He was very well liked throughout the company from Officers downwards. In losing Tom, I have lost one of my best chums.

He was a soldier through and through and his pluck never faltered, not even under the greatest difficulties. He was always cheerful and had a kind word for everybody. I will now bring my letter to a close.

I am

Yours sincerely

J. Walton (Sgt.)

P.S. Please accept my deepest sympathies from myself and the boys.

I will send all his personal belongings as soon as possible.

J.W.

**Letter from Pte C. Hardisty to Mr. and Mrs. Mercer 13th October 1916**

Pte C. Hardisty 26808

5 Platoon B Company

20th Manchester Regiment

BEF

France

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Mercer,

It is with great sorrow that I write these few lines to you. I am deeply grieved to have to say your son, Tom, has been killed.

It was whilst he was on sentry that he got killed; he met with a painless death.

I was next on duty and I was on my way to relieve him when I was met with the dreadful news that Tom had been killed.

He was very well liked by everybody in his Company from Officers downwards and it was only a week or so ago that he refused promotion.

Tom and I have been chums since he came to my Battalion and we have been in one or two close corners on the Somme and it was only his pluck and cheerfulness that pulled us through. In losing him, I feel I have lost something more than a brother.

This is all I can write just now so I will close the letter.

Please accept the deepest sympathy of myself and all who knew him.

Yours sincerely,

Charles Hardisty

**Letter from Sgt. H. Killey to Mr. Mercer 14th October 1916**

France

Dear Mr. Mercer,

It is with deepest regret that I write these few lines to you to offer you the heartfelt sympathy of all the NCOs and men of No. 5 Platoon in the loss of your dear son Tom. During the few months I have known him, I have found him a true friend as well as a good soldier and it is a great shock to me to lose such a good lad. You have every reason to be proud of such a son as he was so brave and fearless.

Please give the deepest sympathy of the platoon (on behalf of which I am writing) to his mother and all other relatives and accept the same yourself

Yours very sincerely,

H. Killey (Sgt.)