

**Lt. E.A. Chapman**

Letter from Lt. E.A. Chapman, "B" Company RGLI (Attached from the 2/4 Buffs) standing in for Lt. E.H.P. Hutchinson, who was on a training course and therefore not present at Cambrai.

*No. 2 Red Cross Hospital  
Public Schools Wards  
A.P.O. 2 BEF Rouen  
France*

*Thurs. 20/12/17 8pm*

*My Dear Hutchinson,*

*I expect by this time you are back from your course & I sincerely hope that you enjoyed it & had a good time, as I am sure you did.*

*I feel I must write & tell you what a fine company you had & what fine men they were. The NCOs & men were bricks every one of them & as brave as lions. They really did excellent work & by jove they had something to put up with. I found of course that they were not quite up to trench life & hadn't quite got the idea of making themselves comfy in trenches, but of course none of us have had much experience in that. The only experience that I had had was having to live in trenches during training in England for 4 days at a stretch & then again I was lucky in having a lot of Retd. BEF men in my company. Your men during the German attack were marvellous. The grit they showed. Act. Sgt. Major B ....?, Sgt. Le Poidevin, & Brache & Meagher the two runners were of course the men I noticed the most & admired their pluck. They all stuck to me like good 'uns. Of course I was at a great disadvantage not knowing the men, but in the short time I had them I got to love them. The signallers worked well in fact every one of them did. I expect you have had a pretty good account of the whole show by now, but in case you haven't I'll give you a few details. To begin with after we left our Camp, & entrained for our destination, the men had some very heavy marching to do. Here again they showed their grit & not a man fell out. He went till he dropped out. The night before the show, we had some heavy & long wearisome marching to do & a lot of weight. Never have I seen such pluck & endurance in any men. The way they went over the top & went over 3*

*miles to their objective when they were fagged out was a marvel & they dug in & reconsolidated like good 'uns & didn't care a rap for Shells or bullets or Huns. Sgt. Le Poidevin showed great pluck & initiative in capturing prisoners & bombing dugouts. They were good in rest, & when we went into the line again, & got heavily shelled they showed utter contempt to the danger. They had some very unpleasant & risky jobs & worked so well. The officers too were great. Poor L..? was killed as you know in our first counter attack. he was such a good chap. "Bottles" & Morgan did excellent work. Poor Morgan has died of his wounds.*

*"Bottles" I cannot get news of. He was exceptionally good with his men & showed himself a very fine officer. Plucky & full of grit & he had some very ticklish jobs. I am sure you would have been the proudest man in the Army if you had seen your Officers & men at work. An incident which gave us great hopes occurred before the show. I am not superstitious but I believe in this. A black cat followed me for more than 400 yds when we were marching into our last rest before the show & I am sure luck was with us all through. Personally I had some of the nearest shaves it is possible for a man to have. The first day of the Bosch attack, I was talking to two Royals with a Lewis Gun on the Bridge at "M" & a shell burst in the middle of us & took the heads off two of them & buckled the gun so that it could not be used. My batman & I were not touched. Unfortunately I got wounded early on the second day of the attack, so did not see much of the second day's fighting, neither have I any idea what NCOs or men we lost. As you have probably heard I had my right leg amputated as it was smashed by a shell & my left leg is broken at the shin. It was the work of two separate shells. Sgt. Le Poidevin came to my rescue & got me down a cellar at the risk of his life & some one else. I think it was my batman. I am pleased to say I am doing well now & gaining strength every day. My pulse & temperature are good & my appetite is wonderful. I can eat anything, & drink anything, & I feel remarkably fit now. I get rather bad nights & lots of pain occasionally. The dressing of my legs which takes place every two days is a painful procedure. I am going to Blighty after Xmas. I am very anxious to see my batman Stone if he is not a casualty. He was a brick & stuck to me through thick & thin. I wonder if it is possible for him to come & see me & if he could have 48 hours off to do it. He could then bring, the wallet with the photos in that I want from my kit & he could bring my cheque book & pay book & pass books from my kit.*

*At present I have nothing & lost all my personal stuff at "Mêg". I really should be delighted if he could come & see me or any one else before I go to England.*

*Got the Times d. 10/12/17. Page 9 Col.6. There is an excellent article there about our bit of the fighting & also the Staff. Capt.*

*My love to all, & the very best wishes for Xmas & the N. Year & the best of luck in the New Year.*

*Yours very sincerely,*

*E.A. Chapman*

*Note at head of letter : "Norman (?) is in this hospital with me. He has lost a foot. He is in another ward & is doing well. EAC*