

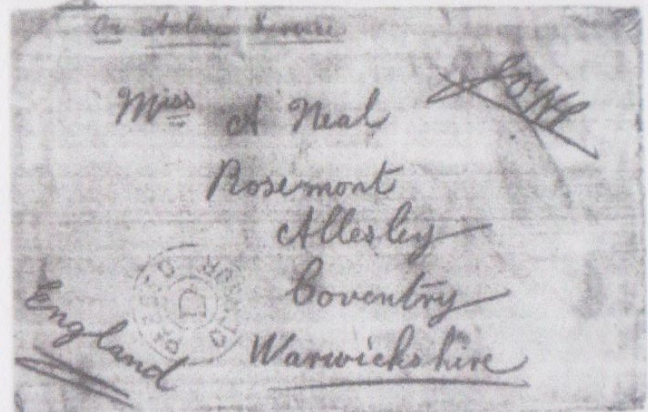
## A Letter to Alice

In Memoriam George Frederick Powers 1890 - 1917

There must have been great relief in Allesley when Alice received the news from George.

"Thanks very much for your letter, also for the lovely parcel you and your Mother sent me which I received quite safe last Thursday. I was delighted with it and everything had kept beautifully, the pudding and pies were lovely and nothing was damaged a bit. So I have been living well this last few days. I am glad to hear you are all well but sorry to hear about Walter but I hope he is better before now"

It must have made them feel less helpless, knowing they could at least



make sure he got some proper food. The farmer's son from Pickford Green, would have been used to the outdoor life, used to breaking the ice on the cattle troughs in the morning after a hard January frost, so they maybe supposed the desert winter would not have seemed anything out of the ordinary to him. In fact he sounded in good spirits on the 23rd, when he wrote. The Mesopotamia campaign seemed quite distant, being not much reported back home, unlike the horrors being suffered in the Flanders mud. This exotic Old Testament location must have been hard both to picture and comprehend.

*In late April 1916 the British suffered a defeat at the hands of the Turks. The siege of Kut-al-Amara lasted 147 days before the British and Indian troops finally surrendered. The news had shocked the people of Britain but the position was far from hopeless and with reinforced troop divisions and a new leader, General F. S. Maude, the British and Indian troops advanced rapidly up the Tigris in early 1917. Amongst the reinforcements were the*





## George Frederick Powers 1890 - 1917

*9th Battalion of the Warwickshire Regiment, George's company.*

"I am sorry to hear about Mr. Heatley being so poorly. I suppose everything is very dear now but I do not know about living on love I am afraid we would soon begin to look rather thin don't you. Fancy the Co-op only going round with the milk every other day." George's response to the everyday details of life in Allesley gave no hint of stress or tension.

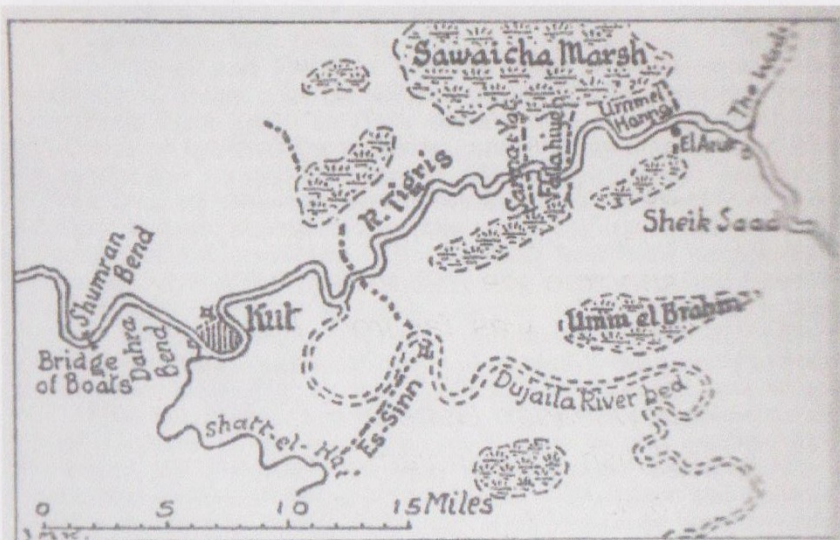
However efficient the mail service, it must have been after the 25th January when the letter arrived on Alice's doormat.

"By a surprise march on December 14 (1916), General Marshall seized a position near the Turkish lines on the Shatt-el-Hai. A month of small engagements and continued sapping followed, till by January 25 the main Turkish defences were no more than 100 yards distant. That morning the

Worcesters and North Staffords stormed and carried the enemy front line trench and began to consolidate. When the development of the Turkish counter-attack threatened to drive them back the Royal Warwickshire was brought up to our front line trenches.....The moment was critical. Colonel Henderson, who had been shot in the arm just before, jumped on to the parapet and shouting to his men to follow him, advanced alone some distance in front of the whole battalion, cheering them on under the most intense fire over 500 yards of open ground. He was shot down but rose and again led in the most gallant manner till they were within 100 yards of the Turks. Then the battalion raced in with the bayonet and re-established our position from end to end. Colonel Henderson was again twice wounded and as he lay out in the open Captain R. E. Phillips, who had already shown great courage in the attack, went out under very heavy fire and with the help of a comrade succeeded in bringing

him back to die in our trenches. Both Colonel Henderson and Captain Phillips were afterwards awarded the Victoria Cross.

.....General Maude wrote in his dispatch later, 'that gallant charge across the open had restored the situation at a critical moment' ..... The Royal Warwickshire had four officers killed and seven wounded (one



THE ENVIRONS OF KUT



## George Frederick Powers 1890 - 1917

*mortally). Of other ranks 45 were killed, 118 wounded and 18 missing." inscription that was afterwards put in the cemetery still survive?*

*Among the 45 who were killed that day was George. His family in Allesley were probably yet to read his letter.* Pickford is still green, the farming seasons still follow their familiar patterns as the years pass.

"Well Dear Alice I don't think I have much more to tell you this time. I wish I could write as long and interesting as you do. I must try and write home as soon as I can get a chance. Please remember me to all the neighbours. Well I will close thanking you and your Mother for the beautiful parcel. Pleased to say I am in the best of health. Please remember me to Roll\* also to your Mother.

With fondest Love,  
Yrs Lovingly,  
George"

\*His brother Roland, whose flat feet the Army had rejected and who went on to live to the age of 101.

*"End of the day 25th January 1917. Congratulatory telegram from Corps Commander 'Bravo the Warwicks' was received."*

The gilded letters of George's name on Allesley Village Hall War Memorial are read with reverence when people stop to remember the young men who did not return.

*George's headstone in Amara was eaten away by the corrosive salts in the sand where he lay. Does the wall*

*George's cemetery has fallen into ruin because of the fighting in Iraq. Not for him the immaculate headstones, clipped green paths and borders of English garden flowers.*

"Was it for this the clay grew tall?"



*British War Medal*

**George Frederick Powers**

Private 16652

Date of Death: 25/01/1917

Age: 26

Royal Warwickshire Regiment 9th Bn

Grave Reference XIX. K. 13.

Amara War Cemetery

Son of Frederick and Annie Powers,  
of Pickford Green, Allesley, Coventry.

*With love and thanks to Beth Powers and her family for sharing their treasured letter, photos and papers of 'Uncle George'* Amanda

Refs: Diaries of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment. Powers family letter, photo and medal. Quote from 'Futility' by Wilfred Owen