

JCW Esq
Oct 20. 1915

2 copies of a letter
from Mr. & Douglas Vernon
re Mr Robert's death
in France

COPY.

Wednesday, Oct. 20/15.

3rd. Bn. Grenadier Guards,

B. E. F. France.

My dear Mr. Williams,

Ritchie was wounded on Sept. 27th, so I opened your letter, and I will try and tell you all I know of your Son's end.

On the afternoon of the 8th, the Germans bombarded the trenches we were holding and your Son was near the Gun on our dangerous flank. The Germans attacked with bombs at 4.30 and succeeded in entering the trench your Son was in. This gun was doing splendid work, though the Machine Gunners were suffering heavily. Sergeant Hawks was killed, then Sergeant Kendrick came back from No 2 Company to take his place, and no sooner had he got up to serve the gun than he was killed. The Germans were getting very near the gun, and your Son held on till the last, and then decided to retire. His team had practically been wiped out, so he carried the gun himself, and a private soldier took away the tripod. Mr. Bowes-Lyon saw him then go down a communication trench carrying the gun. He got the gun away..... and on reaching another trench, he turned round and patted the private soldier on the back and said "Well done, we have got it away". No sooner had he said this, than he was hit in the head with a bullet and he died at once. All I have said is as much as I can find out about his movements during his last few moments. I was sent up to this communication trench that night and I found his body just over the parapet where it had been put, while the attack was still on. One man in getting it back the next day was sniped through the head, but we eventually got him back and that night (Saturday) his body was removed to Vermelles. His servant took all his papers and belongings. He was buried Sunday at 2.30 in Vermelles Cemetery, and most of the Officers were present. It was a short service and we laid him to rest in blankets, and the grave has been duly marked. Words can't express what I feel for you in your great loss. Your Son was very much beloved and his men adored him. His energy was quite unexhaustible in educating

his team and he lavished every kindness on them.... He was a very fine Machine Gunner, and we all lament his loss and we know how great a one it is to this Battalion, and to the 2nd Brigade Machine Gunners. If I hear any further particulars I will forward them at once.

Please accept my deepest sympathy over the loss of one of your dearest possessions, and may you find some consolation in that your Son died fighting, doing his duty, bravely and courageously to the very end.

From one of his fellow - Officers,

(signed)

H. DOUGLAS VERNON.
