

Mother's sorrow at three sons lost to war

In 1914, four brothers from Brookton went to war. Lt George Curlewis, Lance-Cpl Selwyn Curlewis and Capt. Gordon Curlewis joined the 16th Battalion in October. Their brother Cpl Arthur Curlewis joined the 12th Battalion. The brothers landed at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915. Between May and August of that year, Selwyn, Gordon and Arthur were killed in action. George returned to Australia in November. Here is a letter, written in December 1915, from their mother Lila to relative Ethel Curlewis (nee Turner, author of *Seven Little Australians*)

My dear Mrs Curlewis, Please accept our sincere thanks for your kind letter of sympathy, to us, in our great sorrow and loss in the death of our two eldest sons, Capt. Gordon S. Curlewis and Cpl Selwyn L. Curlewis and the wounding of our third son Lt George Campbell Curlewis.

Since then he has recovered but been wounded again and has been sent to London for treatment. Our sorrow has been greatly added to since then in the death of our fourth son — our youngest, Cpl Arthur Grenville Curlewis.

He was among those who first landed at the Dardanelles of the 3rd Brigade on the 25th of April.

The first three days after landing (or I may say swimming ashore), he only had a drink of water and no sleep and for seven weeks.

After he had not a change of clothes of any sort and what were left of those he had on, were in rags from getting through barb wire

entanglements and climbing rocks and digging trenches.

During the last seven weeks, he used to go out on volunteer night patrol and gained much valuable information.

And tho' he had many narrow escapes, he always managed to get back safely to the trenches.

It was in the terrible battle of the 7th of August that he was mortally wounded, shot through both lungs.

He lingered for eight days. It took six to get him from the battlefield to the hospitals of Alexandria but he only lived two days after reaching there.

His last conscious words to the matron were: "You will write and tell my mother. I did want to come home again but I did my duty to the end."

The matron who wrote said he did indeed do his duty to the end as he was so brave and patient and his suffering was very great, as his case was "a cruel and hopeless one".

My poor little brave soldier boy. Our hearts were indeed broken with grief when we



Shot: Cpl Arthur Curlewis was wounded at Gallipoli and died in Alexandria.



Survived: Lt George Curlewis



Killed: Lance-Cpl Selwyn Curlewis

received the news of his cruel death so soon after our two other dear sons.

We have had many letters from their fellow officers and men and the doctors speaking of their bravery. I would like to send you a copy of some of them.

If I have time, I will send you a copy of one Gordon's poor little girl wife got from the doctor who dressed his wounds and was with him.

All our sons were great readers and thinkers (and I may say clever boys), tho' their mother I must tell you that all your books in their young days were read with much interest and greatly enjoyed, especially "The 7 Little Australians" and were proud when you changed your name to Curlewis.

The name of Curlewis has taken its share in the early contingents who went from Australia, our four dear sons, Mr Alf Curlewis of Victoria,

only son Lt Ken Curlewis and the last Mr Alf Curlewis of Queensland youngest son Arthur Curlewis is now in Egypt — ready to go to the front.

I've found that our dear sons, with so many thousands of other dear brave men, were willing at the call of duty to leave all they loved best on Earth, all comforts and enduring so many hardships and much suffering and so many of them dying in defence of us, our country and empire, and to give the future generations their freedom.

But at what a cost it is being brought. It should make us all feel very humble and try and live more worthy of so great a sacrifice, for us all, and our beloved Empire. But human love is so strong, for those we love so dearly, that it is hard to part with them in death in this cruel war but we know they have reached that quiet land beyond all jest and will sleep till that

great day when Christ will come again and we are told the dead shall arise first, to meet Him.

And surely all our dear brave soldiers who have laid down their lives for others will be worthy to meet Him. For no greater love hath a man than he lays down his life for others.

Thank you for those comforting and counselling verses you so kindly copied out for me. I read them often and find consolation in them. I love such poems such as they.

Please accept warm regards and appreciation of your kind letter of sympathy to us in our great, great and overwhelming sorrow and loss.

I am yours sincerely,
Lila M. Curlewis

PS: It is with great sorrow we hear Ken Curlewis, who was also seriously wounded on the 7th of Aug, is reported missing since the 8th of Aug, "an only son too" — poor parents L.M.C.