

Letter from Roy BRUCE, Lieutenant in the Canterbury Mounted Rifles Division to the mother of William Harold HAY, annexed to the probate of W. H. HAY.

"B"

RMS ATHERTON

Winkley.

16 May 1915.

Dear Mr. Hay:

It is with a very heavy heart & with profound sympathy with you & yours that I write this letter to tell you how Harold met his death.

On the night of the 14th May volunteers were asked for to go out & bury some of our dead which were lying on the beach about 1/2

a mile away from our lines, and Harold was one of the first to send his name in.

It was a somewhat risky business owing to there being several enemy snipers in the vicinity.

During the operation Harold was shot through the head, death being instantaneous. He was buried properly.

It must be a consolation to you to know that he died well on a voluntary service towards his dead

comrades.

He was a fine fellow &  
a fine soldier, and his  
loss is very deeply deplored  
by everyone who knew him.

I can only give you  
all my heartfelt sympathy.

Corp. Bruce.

This is the letter marked "B" referred to in the  
affidavit of John Andrew Paterson and William  
Henry Walton sworn this 31<sup>st</sup> day of July 1915  
before me

E. W. Ulrick

a Solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand

Letter from Neil GUTHRIE, Medical Practitioner attached to the Canterbury Mounted Rifles Division, to the mother of William Harold HAY, annexed to the probate of W. H. HAY.

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"C"

16<sup>th</sup> May 1915

My dear Aunt

By the time you get this letter you will have long before received the first short news of Harold's death and I feel that you feel though it is true + and you I will at least help a little to soften your grief by giving you the few short details attached to his end. First of all let me tell you emphatically that Harold had wanted so, and shown himself to have such metal that he was a man marked to take responsibility and step upwards. He was put in charge of a volunteer party to carry out a job, work and doing it he met his death instantaneously. I saw him just before he started and gave him some improved respirators (for this work was not pleasant) that was the last I saw of him. He did what he was detailed to do but he was shot dead almost immediately afterwards. Next morning another volunteer party went out to look for his body (at a great risk) and they found him still grasping his rifle. He was buried and his effects that he had with him were brought - and landed I had quarters. I can see the spot where he was buried with my classes and when opportunity offers I shall strive to do something to his grave that will mark the spot permanently when a man died doing the greatest duty that he could - serving his country. Harold I told Tom of my sorrow and showed the sorrow of all his comrades. It is little but it is much that tells Harold of his gift and place. There are many resources in his work. It is cruel work this but it has to be done. I have nothing more to say. To you Auntie + my Cousins I express my sorrow which but will give us here cause to be proud of Harold for he has done well and paid the price. He went out to bury a comrade and found his own grave alongside him. all true

Yours  
Neil Guthrie

This is the letter marked "C" referred to in the affidavit of John Andrew Paterson and William Henry Watson sworn this 31<sup>st</sup> day of July 1915 before me  
G. H. Alchurch  
a solicitor of the Supreme Court of New Zealand  
written by  
Dr. Robert Neil Guthrie (North Canterbury Troopers) a Magistrate

"New Zealand, Archives New Zealand, Probate Records, 1843-1998," index and images, *FamilySearch* (<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:KDT9-F4X> : accessed 12 May 2015), William Harold Hay, 1915; citing Timaru, Timaru probate files, 1871-1997, record number TU716/1915, Archives New Zealand, Auckland Regional Office. [first accessed 16 June 2014]



16 May 1915

My Dear Aunt,

By the time you get this letter you will have long received the . . . . short news of Harold's death and I feel that painful though it is to me and you I will at least help a little to soften your grief by giving you the few short details attached to his end. First of all let me tell you [emphatically?] that Harold had wanted so and shown himself to have such metal that he was a man marked to take responsibility and step forward. He was put in charge of a volunteer party to carry out risky work and in doing it he met his death instantaneously. I saw him just before he started and gave him some improved . . . . . (for the work was not pleasant). That was the last I saw of him. He did what he was detailed to do but he was shot dead almost immediately afterwards. Next morning another volunteer party went out to look for his body (at a great risk) and they found him still grasping his rifle. He was buried and his effects that he had with him were brought in and handed to head quarters. I can see the spot where he was buried with my glasses and when opportunity offers I shall strive to do something to his grave that will mark the spot permanently where a man died doing the greatest duty that he can do – serving his country. Need I tell you of my sorrow and [indeed] the sorrow of all his comrades. It is little but it is much that all know of his grit and pluck. There are many mourners in N Z now. It is cruel work this but it has to be done. I have nothing more to say. To you Auntie & my Cousins I express my sorrow. But with you we have cause to be proud of Harold for he has done well and paid the price. He went out to Bury a comrade and found his own grave alongside him. All Love

from

Neil Guthrie