

Letter from Henry Howes in the Crimea

You can see Henry's full personal record at:

<https://howesfamilies.com/getperson.php?personID=I26072&tree=Onename>

Are you related?

This letter was forwarded to us by a correspondent in Canada, a descendant of one of Henry's many brothers. He is keen that the original go to a descendant of Henry. If you are such a person, please write to me at paul (at) howesfamilies.com. I will put you in touch.

The letter itself

Henry enlisted with the 1st Battalion, Scots Fusilier Foot Guards in January 1854. His regimental number was 4469. Injured in November 1855 (we believe) he took the opportunity to write home to his parents and describe his experiences. On the following pages we have displayed the eight pages of his letter together with a transcription of that page at the top. I've tried to be faithful to the spelling and punctuation of the original so that readers can form an opinion of the man's text just as he wrote it.

For me, there are a few lessons that can be learned:

- military censorship of soldiers' correspondence has come a long way since then!
- Henry is quite literate, although his spelling is dreadful. He uses some sophisticated turns of phrase.
- His penmanship is better than mine, amazing when one considers where he was and the limited schooling he must have had.
- He was a clear thinker. How many of us could write eight pages lucidly with barely a crossing out?

With a slightly wider perspective it's worth noting too that:

- the place from which he was writing was Scutira to Henry, but more widely known as Scutari. It was the hospital where Florence Nightingale revolutionized the practice of military field medicine, reducing the mortality of troops by a large degree.
- I cannot imagine what it must have been like to be a parent of three sons engaged in the same war over 1,000 miles from home. Clearly the letter was most important to the family.

Paul

Anyway, read on

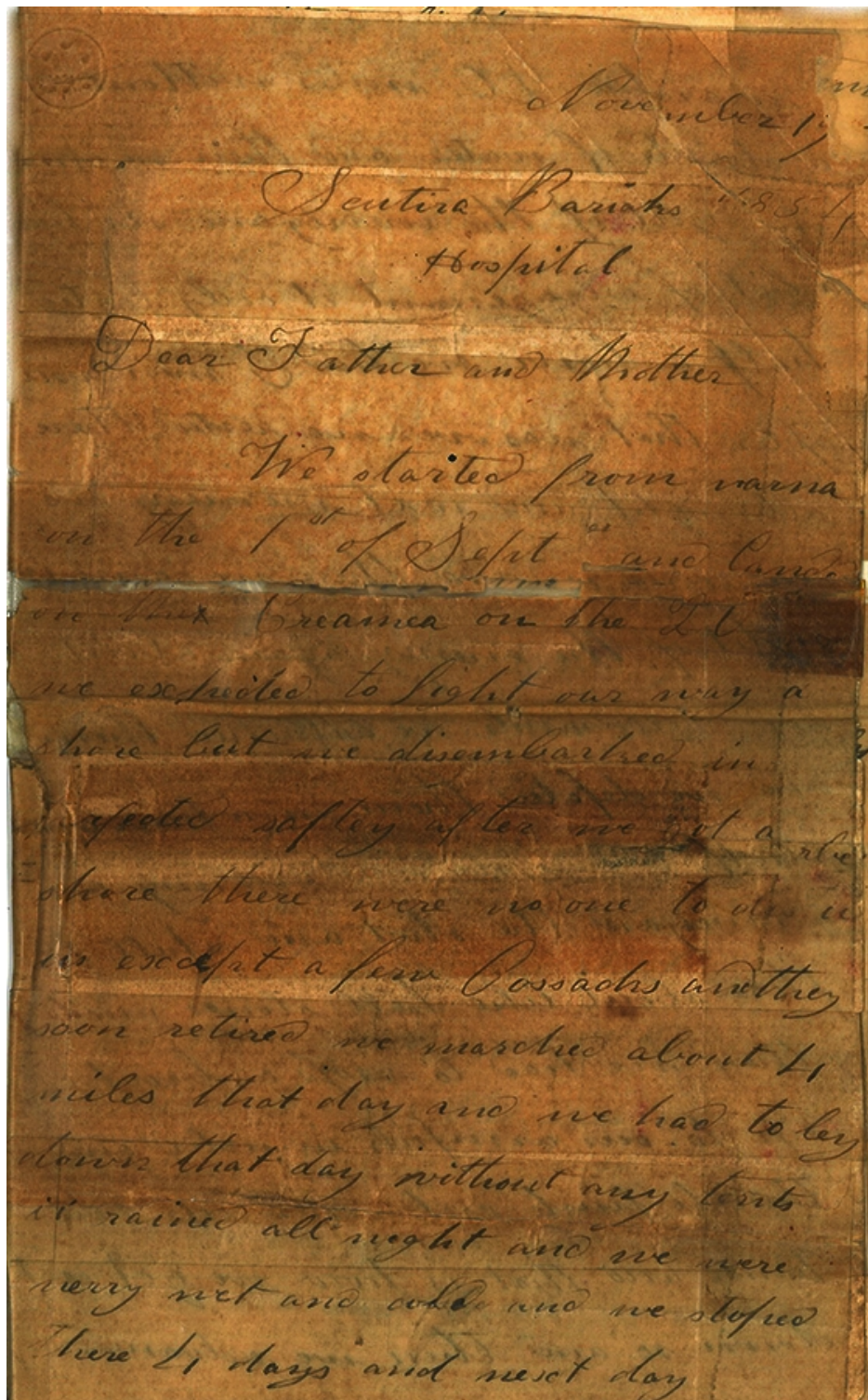
Transcription of letter home from Henry Howse in the Crimea, 1855?

November 21, <lost at margin>

Scutira Baricks Hospital

Dear Father and Mother,

We started from varna on the 1st of Sepr and landed on the Brassica on 20th. We expected to fight our way ashore but we disembarked in ? refected saftey after we got ashore there were no one to us except a few Cossacks and they soon retired. We marched about 4 miles that day and we had to ley down that day without and tents. It rained all night and we were verry wet and cold and we stoped there 4 days and next day



November 21
Scutira Baricks Hospital
Dear Father and Mother
We started from varna
on the 1st of Sept^r and landed
on the Brassica on the 20th
we expected to fight our way a
shore but we disembarked in
perfect safety after we got a shore
there were no one to do us
except a few Cossacks and they
soon retired we marched about 4
miles that day and we had to ley
down that day without any tents
it rained all night and we were
verry wet and cold and we stoped
there 4 days and next day

we marched 20 miles without a drink of water and then we came in sight of the enemy and we had a bit of engagement it only lasted half an hour we had 3 men wounded after that was over we rested there all night and next morning we marched on and the sight of the enemy again about 40 thousands we attached them and we defated them in a houron a half and as we were crossing a vineyard the shot and shell flew about like hail stones and then we had to cross a brook up to our armpits in water and then to push each other up the bank and that is how we got cut down so and then we advanced

marched 20 miles without
a drink of water and then we came
in sight of the enemy and we had
a bit of engagement it only lasted
half a hour we had 3 men wound
after that was over we rested there
all night and next morning we
marched on and then we came in
sight of the enemy again about
40 thousands we attached them
and we defated them in a hour and
a half and as we were crossing a
vineyard the shot and shell flew
about like hail stones and
then we had to cross a brook
up to our armpits in water and
then to push each other up the
bank and that is how we got cut
down so and then we advanced

Alma fight

up the hill and we cut them down by thousands and they soon ran away we had two Russian Generals and a lot of prisoners and they said we were not souldiers but a lot of divels for they said we eat the grapes..... ing a cross the and drank water coming a cross the brook as if there were nobody firing at us and then we stoped there that night and we were wet and cold and we stoped there 3 days to bury the dead and take the wounded away and it was dreadful to hear the screams of the poor fellows and then we marched on again and when we came to the next brook we expected

Alma fight
up the hill and we cut them
down by thousands and they soon
ran away we had two Russian
Generals and a lot of prisoners
and they said we were not
souldiers but a lot of divels
for they said we eat the grapes
..... a cross the
and drank water coming a cross
the brook as if there were nobody
firing at us and then we stoped
there that night and we were very
wet and cold and we stoped there
3 days to bury the dead and
take the wounded away and it was
dreadful to hear the screams of
the poor fellows and then we
marched on again and when we
came to the next brook we expected

to have a nother engagement but when we got there there were nobody to disturbe us and then we stop there that night and there were grapes and apples of every description the people had run away and left the village and left pigs bulls of every description and left flower and furniture of every ..., it was worth looking at ... the French usaway with pigs, geece and driving the cows and then we marched through a wood and tore the clothes of our backs we marched on about 15 miles and then we overtook a enemy and we came so quick on them that they run away and left us the villidge

to have a nother engagement
but when we got there there
were nobody to disturbe us and
then we stop there that night and
there were grapes and apples of every
decription the people had run away
and left the village and left pigs
bulls of every decription and left
flower and furniture of every kind
it was ^{worth} ~~worth~~ looking at to see
the French and us ~~both~~ running
away with pigs geece and driving
the cows and then we marched
through a wood and tore the clothes
of our backs we marched on about
15 miles and then we overtook a
enemy and we came so quick on
them that they run away and
left us the villidge

and left about 40 Waggon of flower and we took about 100 pounds wourth of jullery and we marched on to a town called Ballaclava and the people ran away and left the town we took 130 Russans and 6 long guns we plundered the town and took what we liked some run away with beehives we stoped there 4 days and then we marched on to Sebastopol and then we expected to have a big army to face before we got there but ther were nobody there they were all gone into sebastopol and then we comenced making the batterys and we were obliged to work

and left about 40 Waggon
of flower and we took about
100 pounds wourth of jullery
and we marched on to a town
called Ballaclava and the people
ran away and left the town
we took 130 Russans and 6
long guns we plundered the town
and took what we liked some
run away with beehives
we stoped there 4 days and then
we marched on to Sebastopol and
then we expected to have a big army
to face before we got there but
there were nobody there they were
all gone into Sebastopol and then
we comenced making the batterys
and we were obliged to work

in the night because they should not see us we were at work about 3 weeks and they kept firing at us all the time but they only killed one now and then but our batteries was in about a hundred yards of Sebastopol and when we had finished the batteries we comenced firing with the shipping and guns on shore we had about 4000 guns and you may depend it was a tremendous noise we comenced about 6 in the morning and finished about 6 at night and so on every day for 5 weeks and we don't know wen it will be taken and then we had a army come up in rear to attackt us they made their attackt about 4 O'Clock in the morning.

Ballaclava fight

in the night because they
should not see us ^{were at} we work about
3 weeks and they kept firing
at us all the time but they only
killed one now and then but
our batteries was in about a
hundred yards of Sebastopol
and when we had finished the
batteries we comenced firing with
the shipping and guns on shore
we had about 4,000 guns and
you may depend it was a tremendous
noise we comenced about 6 in the
the morning and finished about 6
at night and so on every day for 5
weeks and we dont know wen
it will be taken and then we
had a army come up in rear to
attackt us they made their attackt
about 4 O'Clock in the morning
Ballaclava fight

about 4000 horse soulders 2000 infntry and our horse souldiers were engaged with them and we lost about 800 and the enemy lost 1500 they attected us again about 8000 and then we killed 900 the British lost only about 18 men killed and wounded. And on the 5 of November us again about 6 O'clock in the morning and we were fighting till 6 at night we were fighting 6 hours before the French came at to help us when the French came up they soon made them retire we did not only stand and fire but run one another threw with our bayonets and wen our amunition
Inkerman fight

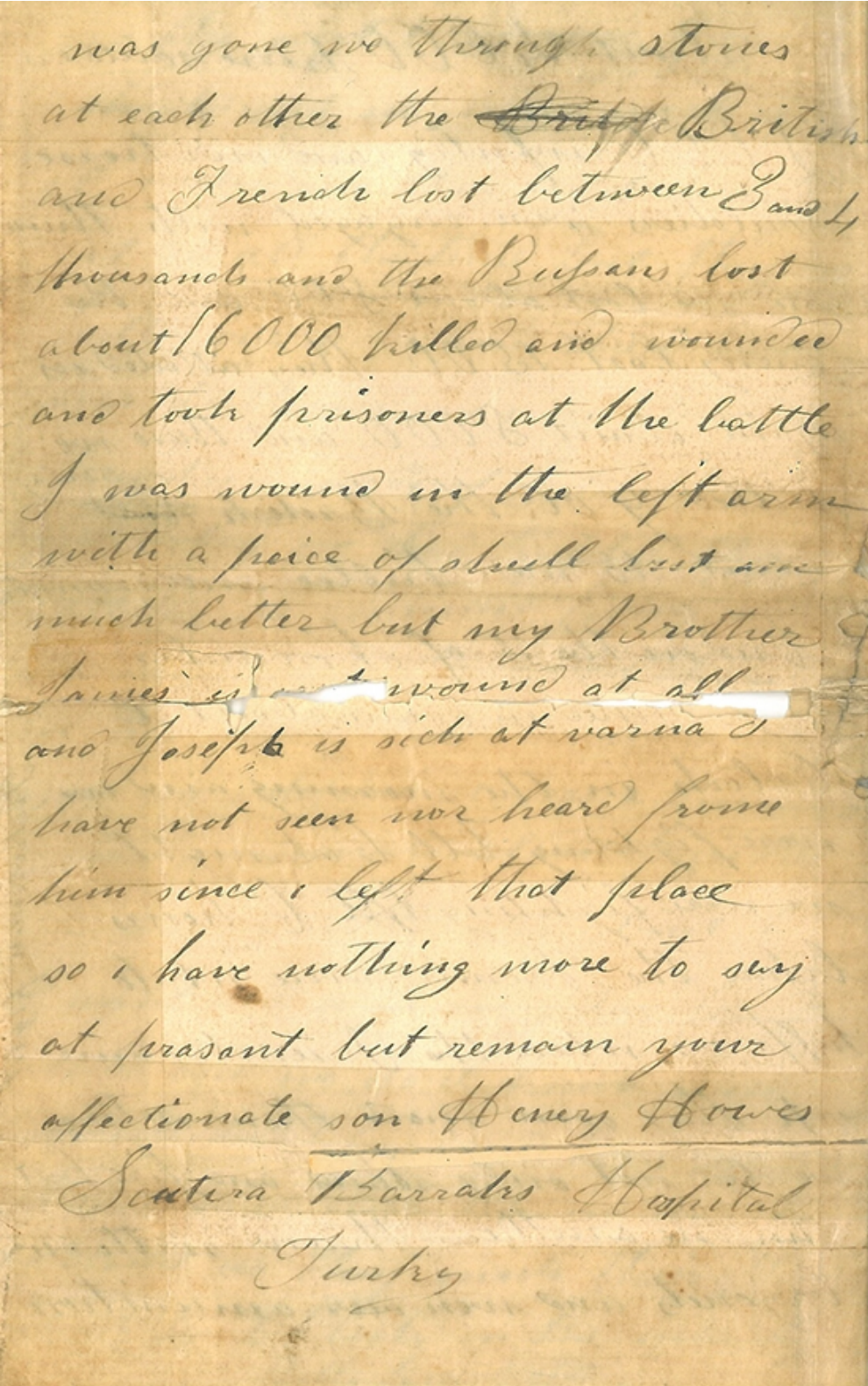
about 4000 horse soulders
2000 infntry and our horse
souldiers were engaged with them
and we lost about 800 and the
enemy lost 1500 they attected us
again about 8000 and then we
killed 900 the British ^{only} lost
about 18 men killed and wounded
And on the 5 of November
the French attacked us again about 6
O'clock in the morning and we
were fighting till 6 at night
we were fighting ~~the~~ 6 hours
before the French came at to
help us when the French came
up they soon made them retire
we did not only stand and fire but
run one another threw with our
bayonets and wen our amunition

Inkerman fight

was gone we through stones at each other the British and French lost between 3 and 4 thousands and the Russans lost about 16000 killed and wounded and took prisoners at the battle I was wound in the left arm with a piece of shell but am much better but my Brother James is not wound at all and Joseph is sick at varna I have not seen nor heard from him since I left that place so I have nothing more to say at present but remain your affectionate son Henery Howes

Scutira Barraks Hospital

Turky



was gone we through stones
at each other the ~~British~~ British
and French lost between 3 and 4
thousands and the Russans lost
about 16000 killed and wounded
and took prisoners at the battle
I was wound in the left arm
with a piece of shell but am
much better but my Brother
James is ~~not~~ wound at all
and Joseph is sick at varna I
have not seen nor heard from
him since I left that place
so I have nothing more to say
at present but remain your
affectionate son Henery Howes
Scutira Barraks Hospital
Turky