

**Transcription of a recording of John Speight reading a letter to Father and Mother
from James Speight [24 Mar 1918]
Warwickshire County Record Office reference CR 4781/20/2 (17a)**

Sunday March 24th

Dear Father and Mother

12.15pm! Then *you* are just coming out of church. Strange, I am sure this *is* Sunday, for many times in the past out here I have not realised the day until it is almost over. As for the date, I *a/ways* have to look at the calendar.

This is written in a residence entirely of my own making in the side of the trench; all clay, very solid, deep, and there's only room for one - that's me. My feet dangle in a deep oblong hole. This is for the fateful crouching moments.

You would never guess what I have just done. Got my sponge out and sucked it. It was so nice and *damp*. I then sponged my face – no wash for four days. Water is a great difficulty in the front line. It's the getting it there. Last night I had the job of dishing out three petrol tins of water to 75 men along the trench – by moonlight, too. We also get tea in petrol tins, but it's so precious I always put mine in my water bottle. Then I take little sips at long intervals.

This letter has just been covered in dirt by a shell, confound 'em!

This morning we have rubbed our feet; and a letter of thanks has been read by the brigadier. Yesterday was a day of thrills. The Boche commenced an attack without a barrage, and some of our fellows in another section had been obliged to give way. It's no secret: it will be in the papers before you get this. They came through our trench to take up another position. One thing with another, we were not quite happy. The enemy advanced. Our artillery wait! wait! wait, oh that waiting! And then! And then! The good old 1st Division Artillery set up a barrage, some of the sweetest music I ever heard and such a hellish row too. What a treat it was to see the Boche running like rabbits into holes. Here I am. Still alive. 'Another moment at the well of life to taste'. A ration of tea has just arrived. Hurrah.

Your loving son,

Jim