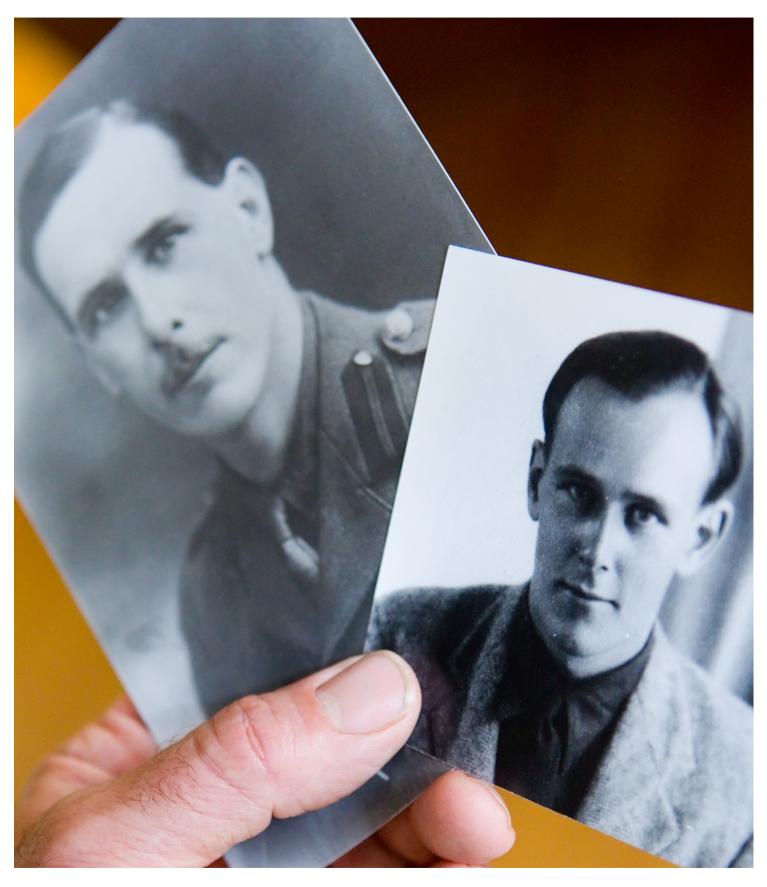
Major Philip Achilles Townshend [6A25]

Philip (L) in 1917 and his Son Robert Vere [6A51] in 1938



First World War - Philip in the trenches



## Extract from a letter from Captain Philip Townshend dated 18 March 1915 recounting his experiences during the Battle of Neuve Chappelle 10 March 1915

1a The prisoners were a d-d mindance - Our fret ad vance was about 300 jards. There was thin another artillery borno and ment Extract pour below pour Captain : The Riple Brigade advanced Townshend dated March 18 ver our captures hindus i through us, & advanced array "I have wen this ug a the most The village. They also gut a los dreadful experiences & hava A prisoners, a about ten officers. very nerve - rack me lime. Dunne this second bomb and Will- on the 10. at 7.30 A. Moron ment I had a rollen lime & guns started. They sucled my subaction farmers a the German trench 150 jands the Hintant were shot in the in front of us. we were four back, the reason being the 23rd. ares in our breast-world. The Brigade on our left had not you 6 inch Howitzers fell short & so well forward at me had, i got us in our breakt-workers The Ams spoule wen himed Athathelnyolownshendl

bash - I had over so men in my company Releas & wounder One of our shall pull of feet from me & I was Rusched with for 3 or 4 minutes a workerip & discover myself covered with bits of humains. My poor men I almost crued when I saw the sigues. It was too awful for words. The bomb and ment lasted 36 35 minutes - the wat dread ful time I have ever en. dured. Then came the allack. Our first low times onegst for. ward in a much & jumper clean over the Hund frost hinches 2 carried the 2nd. 23 id. in

me bound. I led the 3 w. line & we supported the let. & 2 md. une - A few une germans were in their hendres & the brutis fred into our backeras we pushed on Their support timelle. Anyway some of my umpany upper back a shoots wen bayoutt into the Huns stomache, & they some went on win Ruces praying brung captured a machine gun à a lot of prisoners. Our advance was so rapid the Huns were badly surprised & ran like haves giving thunselves up in batches of 50 At & Ather inyonown shend

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Turned on again & they success us instead of the Home. It was auful. All the telepline wires were cut. We were then order. es & attack again . Mother company went forward & in 2 or 3 minutes only free or six were aure. We tun stood fast for further orders . I has Tyo back 100 jaids thetch up me of my plations thought I was dead a doz in limes. I got back safely however. My last enbaltim Hag an was shot during our ad vance from the 2nd. 1 1st. trenches. Very sas - he was quite a joung elle

BELTWOOD, SHEFFIELD.

has broken through their line.

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have a combined attack all three Brigases, but the test the test alle looking attacked before us, a got a check. They must have suffered a bit, I am apaid.
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a my poor sed cans they pell as if the dums were broken. The men stood it very well con. sidering - I had about sie men, his Ried & four wounded by the heary guns. We thin went over the topo to the frest truch. They saw us a greened a wing heavy fre from machine guns & rifles. The Reple Brigar, were to the attack, end of support Um. The Refer Brig are had a company wiped out. The Colonel went to the general 2 500 him it was unpot sible Fact for ward of Atherthyllownshend

When we captured the 1thm himdes a would is Cerman Then represent wain pour the "swine - dog of Inglish coldins. They were brutes lungent wo ful boxes of am munition on their fre hoping to alow up some of my men if me didn't ustice it. It is hand & write conseculively when I have to lie flat in the trinch were few minutes. Then gues one pood any good. Thur observation is excellent but I don't link much of their infanty. One writched wounded them game him seef up I'me & I let me of me men carry him pick-a. back & The ais-port - He weemed very grateful.

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10 and many heroic thing of drue of course heroic thing of drue of the form men for de corrations.

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dug trenches this monning a ? at once set & work & dupin tum - its just as well lais as I am now lying on the bottom of one a they are sending over dy me of shells. The incussion is awful. My nerved will be in edge when I do get line . I Rup getting smothered in und. chur oh - I am shiel going strong! I hope you will like the Hun believet. The thing were giving them return up in bunches jesters ay - All the would myo hwands nu trenduce - not then own. They allungeed an attack

yes tuday no ming a a priestot of them were Pured of. The at tack was bearin of as ease as they heat us of restersay its quite impossible & ad. vance against properly organ 1300 hospes these days mee they are in their trindres un. lest you have over : wallung quit men. I can't write any une . I don't Ruon what is al now. I expect me will want for a Hum allack. we can exil Ever The vileage of Nuive Chapelle it nothing but a leap of they sheel cracered. I gave all my morphia & the wounded have un got @Atbethelityonowashend

## Transcription by Philip's grandson Athelny Townshend [6A56]

I have been through the most dreadful experience & and had a very nerve racking time. Well, on the 10th at 7.30AM our guns started. They shelled the German trench 150 yards in front of us. We were four deep in our breastwork. The 6" howitzers fell short & got us in our breastwork very badly. I had over 50 men in my company killed & wounded. One of our shells fell 9 feet from me & I was knocked silly for 3 or 4 minutes, & woke up to discover myself covered with bits of humans. My poor men. I almost cried when I saw the sights. It was too awful for words. The

bombardment lasted 35 minutes. The most dreadful time I have ever endured. Then came the attack. Our first two lines swept forward in a rush & jumped clean over the Huns first trenches & carried the 2nd. & 3<sup>rd</sup>. in one bound. I led the third line & we supported the 1st & 2<sup>nd</sup> line. A few live Germans were in their trenched & the brutes fired into our backs as we pushed on to their support trenches. Anyway some of my company nipped back & shoved their bayonets into the Huns stomachs, & they soon went on their knees praying for mercy. I captured a machine gun & a lot of prisoners. Our advance was so rapid the Huns were badly surprised & ran like hares giving themselves up in batches of 50 and 60.

The prisoners were a d---d nuisance. Our first advance was about 300 yards there was then another artillery bombardment & the Rifle Brigade advanced over our captured trenches & through us, & advanced through the village. They also got a lot of prisoners & about ten officers. During the second bombardment I had a rotten time & my subaltern Saunders & the adjutant were shot in the back, the reason being the 23rd Brigade on our left had not got so well forward as we had, & the Huns opposite them turned & fired into our backs after we had broken through their line. I reorganised my company & found I only had my colour sergeant, & one sergeant left out of 7 sergeants. We were ready then to go forward, but the General didn't let us go. The Indians on our right broke through the Hun lines half a mile to south, & we killed or captured all the Huns between us. The Indians did very well & made the Huns run like hares.

On the 11<sup>th</sup>, we were supposed to have a combined attack, all three Brigades, but the telephone wires were cut & the Indians attacked before us, & got a check. They must have suffered a bit I'm afraid. We moved up to our front new trenches three times but the attack was postponed.

On the 12th we were to attack at 10am. The guns started but the Huns had by then brought up a battery of four 8.5" howitzers. They gave us H---l. I was buried twice & my poor old ears - they felt as if the drums were broken. The men stood it very well considering. I had about 6 men, 2 killed & and 4 wounded, by the heavy guns. We then went over the top to the first trench. They saw us & opened a very heavy fire from machine guns and rifles. The Rifle Brigade were to do the attack & us to support them. The Rifle Brigade had a company wiped out. The Colonel went to the General & told him it was impossible to get forward, so our guns were turned on again & they shelled us instead of the Huns. It was awful. All the telephone wires were cut. We were then ordered to attack again. Another company went forward & in 2 or 3 minutes only 5 or 6 were alive. We then stood fast for further orders. I had to go back 100 yards to fetch up one of my platoons. I thought I was dead a dozen times. I got back safely. My last subaltern Hogan was shot during our advance from the 2nd and 1st trenches. Very sad - he was quite a youngster. I buried him last night. I saw many heroic things done and can recommend three of my men for decorations. Well last night we occupied the second line trenches about 100 yards behind the first line held by the Rifle Brigade. We had a quiet but cold night. We could have no fires. I used a tin of spiritine to heat up a cup of cocoa. Thornton & Moody-Ward were wounded & Hogan killed. I am now second in command. We moved into some partially dug trenches this morning and & I at once set to work to deepen them – it's just as well I did as I'm now lying on the bottom of one & they are sending over dozens of shells. The concussion is awful. My nerves will be on edge when I do get home. I keep getting smothered in mud. Cheer-oh - I'm still going strong. I hope vou will like the Hun helmet. The Huns were giving themselves up in bunches yesterday – all the wounded (up) towards our trenches – not their own. They attempted an attack yesterday morning & a fine lot of them were killed off. The attack was beaten off as easily as they beat us off yesterday. It's quite impossible to advance against properly organised troops these days once they are in their trenches unless you have overwhelming guns & men. I can't write any more. I don't know what is on now. I expect we will wait for a Hun attack. We can easily sock them. The village of Neuve Chapelle is nothing but a heap of shell craters. I gave all my morphine to the wounded. Have now got some more. When we captured the Hun's trenches a wounded German officer refused water from the 'swine-dogs of English soldiers' They were brutes. They put two ful (sic) boxes of ammunition on their fire hoping to blow up some of my men if we didn't notice it. It is hard to write consecutively when I have to lie flat in the trenches every few minutes. Their guns are good very good. Their observation is excellent but I don't think much of their infantry. One of the wretched wounded Huns gave himself up to me and I let one of my men carry him pick-a-back to the aid post - he seemed very grateful.

Philip's wife Zoe Elaine Howells aged 15 ½ months

