Dear Mother,

Your cable of 7-16 with batch of letters of champagne followed me right into the trenches as a plane called champagne. We have now been under fire for almost three weeks. We were shelled while being landed in the Inspector, boat—the landing beach is constantly being shelled. We have been bombed, sniped at, practically every since. The last post this Regt held was champagne when the trench in some places are only 50 yards from the enemy trench. Enough, the situation I hold we are still in, connected by a communication trench with the rest of the enemy. The infantry whom we relieved, abandoned the lines and left of the trench, joined it with ours. When found it was untenable owing to machine guns enfilading it, had to abandon it, leaving it connected with ours, which rather adds to the interest of the position. One man who declared he was aUCK. He surrendered at that point the first day I was on. We lost several men from bombs—crude machine packing things—which are easily thrown by hand into our trenches. The enemy have the ‘best of the deal’ geographically, numerically—but thanks to the heroic performances of our infantry before we got here. The moral superiority of our men is established. They operate every
The Anzac battalions (9th & 15th) have greatly distinguished themselves but their casualty list will stagger Australia. The whole of the valley we hold is drenched with the blood of Australians - but the spirit of the men is splendid - especially the infantry whose contempt for danger would do credit to the best Regulars. We have had some rain - the position we hold is a watercourse, the billets in the gullies are even more uncomfortable than the trenches on the ridges under these conditions - so far the saturated ground has not been responsible for much sickness. There are great possibilities in this direction. There was a nine hour armistice last Monday to bury dead which were lying between the trenches - stinking as out. It is said 3000 men and a good number of wounded were buried. Water for drinking is scarce, washing forbidden (the small parties are sometimes allowed to go down to the blacks at night as a great treat) firewood practically non-existent - the ridge Hormel our valley are something like a breathing forest covered with overhanging holly bush & oak trees - climate good, outlook on the sea beautiful.

Best love to all. G.A.S.