

**Hand-written letter by Robert Harvey Eaton (Bob) to his sister Clara Eaton following the Battle of Katia**  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Katia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Katia)

The mounted brigade had been ordered to the area to protect the new railway and water pipeline being built from [Kantara](#) on the [Suez Canal](#) on 23 April 1916 during the [Defence of the Suez Canal Campaign](#) of [World War I](#).

*Safely back on the canal  
April 25<sup>th</sup> 1916*

*Dear Clara*

*I hardly know how to write to let you know the great trouble which has befallen our regiment, but I can honestly say I am one of the luckiest fellows in the world, to be alive to tell it.*

*On Saturday 22<sup>nd</sup> we moved out our 'A Squad' to relieve a Squad of the Worcesters at a place called Katia, they moving farther east. All went well until next morning, Easter Sunday (we were sleeping fully dressed that night). At 4 o'clock the order came to stand to arms, we being posted crescent shape in extended order around our camp in the direction in which we expected the enemy.*

*The morning was very dark and foggy and at 4.30 am we saw something moving straight to our front and the order was given to fire. The enemy opened on us at the same time and at 5 o'clock it began to clear. We could then see a small body of the enemy retiring.*

*All went well then for a time and a troop at a time fell away, fed and watered horses and had breakfast. By this time it was 9 o'clock, my troop being last to water horses at a well about a mile away.*

*We had hardly got through this when the enemies' guns opened on our camp. We galloped straight for camp, handed horses over, and took up a position in the firing line.*

*No sooner had we got into position then we saw the enemy in two lines of extended order advancing over the ridge about a mile away towards us, covering a frontage of about a mile. We immediately opened fire and this was kept up without a break, their big guns sending shrapnel and shells over the whole time til about 11 o'clock when they went quiet for a time.*

*The whole time they kept advancing and we were firing too. Between 12 -1 o'clock their guns opened fire again on us, they, having brought up their guns to within about 1,000 yards. By this time the enemy were no more than five or six hundred yards from us and what happened the next two hours is hard to relate.*

*On our right flank we could see a body of mounted men about 400 strong galloping straight towards us. These dismounted behind a ridge about 600 yards away and came up in extended order. No sooner had they got into position than about another such a number came charging down more to our right flank rear. These also dismounted under cover and came up in the same formation to about seven or eight hundred yards. In the meantime C Squad of the Worcesters and B Squad Gloucesters came up on our left flank. All this time our A Squad: about 100 had stood before the cruel fire from their two guns and the fire from about 2,000 Turkish rifles.*

*They still crept up from bush to bush and at about 3 o'clock they were within fifty yards of us we could see, with fixed bayonets. We stood it for about another 10 minutes or a quarter of an hour when we could see we were in a hopeless position when the order came 'every man for himself'.*

*I saw all our officers and the majority of the men throw up their arms and surrender and the Turks came on them with fixed bayonets.*

*What happened to me then was a miracle. I started to run back and grabbed a horse which was tied to a post about 50 yards from me and started to gallop away. I had not gone more than 30 yards when they shot the horse dead under me causing me to turn about 3 somersaults. I gathered myself together again and saw another loose horse close by, caught him and made off again.*

*Before I could get to the Worcester led horses under cover they had shot this one in four places, neck, knee, shoulder and hind quarters. I got to the horses alright and got another horse off them leaving the other to die. I then made off again for Romani 6 miles distance from where our headquarters were and reported what had happened. The order was then given to quit that place in a quarter of an hour, loading everything up of any value on camels and made off towards Kantara. All this time our B and D Squad: were fighting a rear guard action, C Squad Worcesters having surrendered with our A Squad: and the other two squads of the Worcesters were captured also as we have heard nothing of them since.*

*Two more of the survivors and I kept quietly on and we arrived at Kantara at midnight having covered about 40 miles that evening and I can tell you horses and ourselves were done up.*

*Up til now there are only 8 of A Squad men out of nearly 100 got out here so you can see things are pretty bad, I myself being one of the surviving eight.*

*Trusting you are all well  
Believe me to be your loving brother  
Bob*