**Amongst the archive material for the Lone Pine project there is a copy of a letter written by Company Sergeant Major George E Milne, 24th Battalion, while waiting to evacuate Lone Pine, in the second to last party to leave (B party).**

**18/12/1915**

In the early hours of the morning following tomorrow night, I trust, with a small party, to evacuate this Lonesome Pine and Peninsula. When I think of the graves which line the beach, it is very hard to have to leave them. We would rather stay and fight it out, but fate decrees otherwise. One has a peculiar feeling about this evacuation. If there are spies about, everything is “all up”. I am alone among my ammunition and bombs, and it is late. It is now after eleven, and I shall turn in and sleep awhile for the last time in Lone Pine, for tomorrow night there will be no sleep. May the Lord be with the poor chap who sleeps tomorrow night, and it left behind.

There may be history, marvellous history created between this minute and tomorrow night that I cannot foretell – but war is a peculiar thing. Just fancy – we are attempting to walk off the Peninsula, and not let our friends, the enemy, know anything about it.

**19/12/1915**

It is morning, and I have slept my last night in the Pine. A busy day is in front of me, and I shall finish some time tonight, D.V., W.P. If the daylight passes without anything unusual happening, I reckon on being a safe man.

\_\_\_ now are all calm, but anxious. It was my wish to be one of the small party to slip off early in the dark hours of the morrow, but my commander disallowed this. I go on with him in the last party but one. We are a small band here now. The Pine is deathly quiet and lonely, especially where I am situated at present. There is a certain grim fearsomeness about the whole affair which helps to busk a fellow up. Only yesterday one of our poor chaps was blown to pieces by one of those deathdealers – a Turkish 75.

It seems impossible that Johnny Turk does not know of the evacuation, especially when he is only five yards in front. If we are shelled by howitzers this afternoon, I’m afraid the game is up. I shall finish this tonight. I’m feeling very confident just now. Turks will not charge in the dark, and they certainly will not open fire at night.

**9pm.** Since I last dropped my pencil, strange to relate, the Turks gave us some “hot chicken” in the shape of big shells. This was entirely unexpected, especially so late in the day. We at once thought that our enemy was aware of our movements. Fortunately for us our particular position being so close to the enemy trenches, the shelling was mainly to the rear; a few dropped short however and made “mincemeat” of one or two of our communication trenches. These shells can be heard coming a long way off, and this is their only advantage to us. They make a hole large enough for a horse and cart to stay the charge after the shelling ceased, and we were ready for them as before. It was getting late (4pm), and darkness sets in at 5pm here. The shells fell less regularly, and eventually ceased, but nothing happened.

**15 minutes to Midnight** – Another party has just got away. Only 15 men, a Sergeant-Major and 2 officers are holding No. 1 section of Lone Pine. Quietness, intense quietness prevails, except for the snapping of rifles and the distant booming of our warships firing on Cape Helles. We had great jokes this afternoon. Each man, was he walked the trench, had his identification disc in his eye to act as an eyeglass, at the same time pulling on imaginary gloves. Childish, isn’t it? - but what else would you do after fifteen weeks in these Godforsaken lines of communication? It is getting close on to my time for slipping away, and past the dark tunnel where my little pal (my assistant) lies. What can I tell his people, if I return?

I must seal this letter before I go. I am very calm – it is deathly quiet. Where will I be in three hours time? Others have got away safely, and why shouldn’t we? I must get along now and throw a few Mills grenades at our front line, and then we will be going!

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Of the man who wrote this account: George Milne was an accountant when he enlisted on 27 March 1915 in Melbourne, Victoria. He had turned 22 years old 4 days before the evacuation. He served in the 24th Battalion (sailing from Australia on the same ship as Stan Savige) and after Gallipoli he served in France with the 46th Battalion attaining the rank of Captain. He was wounded in action and died in France on 5 April 1918 and is buried at Gezaincourt Communal Cemetery.

He had attended Scotch College and is commemorated with his name on the wall of the Memorial Hall. This letter was published in an edition of the *Scotch Collegian* in 1916. It was at a planting of a Lone Pine seedling at Scotch that a Legatee came across this letter and put it in the archive of Lone Pine Project.

One of those officers in the last party (C party) to leave Lone Pine, Gallipoli was Lieutenant Stan Savige and another was Lieutenant Brinsmead, they were both founding members of Legacy. The final evacuation groups were not expected to leave unscathed. Savige’s own account of the day mentions his Colonel’s surprise when the C party arrived unexpected on Lemnos. Imagine how different things would have been if that C party hadn’t made it.